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Achieving AGOA Objectives and Strengthening HIV/AIDS Programs

**Suggested Actions Identified in Background Papers
Prepared for HIV/AIDS Session of the
2001 and 2002 AGOA Forum Meetings**



This paper is one of four background papers prepared for the Plenary Session on HIV/AIDS, AGOA Forum, Washington, DC, December 10, 2003. The Africa Bureau of the U.S. Agency for International Development sponsored the preparation of the background papers.

Introduction

AGOA representatives met late in 2001, again in 2002, and now for a third time in December 2003. Background papers from previous meetings suggested a number of actions that AGOA member countries could consider to enhance the effectiveness of responses to the threat of HIV/AIDS.

This paper summarizes a few issues and actions, linking the actions specifically to (1) finance and planning ministries, (2) trade, labor, and commerce ministries, (3) the business sector, and (4) donors and assistance agencies. The delegates could discuss which key actions they would like to monitor and possibly report on at the next AGOA forum. They are welcome to recommend fresh approaches to maximize the benefits that can derive from a results-oriented, cooperative effort in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Key development policies and program that could be undertaken to strengthen HIV/AIDS programs by the ministries, agencies, businesses, and donors listed in this note:

1. Generating employment, especially for the most vulnerable groups, such as young women and those living with HIV/AIDS, through an increase in trade and development of appropriate labor absorption policies.
2. Developing manpower plans to reduce the manpower shortages, especially in health and education. The plans could especially focus on training the unemployed youth to acquire the needed skills.
3. Implementing workplace policies and programs both in the public and private sectors.
4. Strengthening public-private partnership to improve the implementation capacity of the public sector.
5. Developing and implementing prevention programs for migrant workers and mobile populations.

How Could Finance and Planning Ministries Respond?

1. Implement the Abuja Commitment of April 2001 to allocate at least 15 percent of public spending to health (refer to Background Table 1 and Figure 1 for results through 2001).
2. Assess how much governments can contribute to HIV/AIDS from debt relief savings (Uganda, for example, has already made substantial progress). Integrate plans to confront HIV/AIDS into overall frameworks for government programs.
3. Expand use of the AIDS Program Effort Index (API), which measures the strength of national HIV/AIDS programs, to include specific companies and representatives of key economic sectors as respondents.
4. Analyze and disseminate information about the impact of HIV/AIDS on economic development and of the development process on HIV/AIDS.

5. Assess the manpower availability for implementing developmental programs, especially in health and education, and adopt innovative measures to reduce the shortages.
6. Develop an employment-oriented growth strategy by (1) accelerating economic growth through investments in key growth sectors and (2) employment among vulnerable groups in sectors that absorb labor.
7. Develop mechanism to coordinate donor assistance and public-private partnership.

How Could Trade, Labor, and Commerce Ministries Respond?

1. Assess challenges to trade and commerce posed by the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the areas of intellectual property rights, trade practices, tourism, the workplace, and international competitiveness.
2. Enhance employment opportunities for youth, particularly among women, while incorporating HIV/AIDS education and prevention programs into their training and job preparation programs.
3. Generate employment through the expansion of export opportunities via coordination among private and public sectors, nongovernmental organizations, and donors (ministries of finance in Zambia and education in Malawi are positive models).
4. Improve customs regulations and speed up transit of long-distance trucks to lessen risks of long stays at border crossing areas.
5. Enhance workplace prevention programs in those industrial sectors (e.g., apparel and handicrafts that benefit most from trade liberalization and increased exports).
6. Ensure provision of effective HIV/AIDS services in cross-border areas.

How Could Businesses Respond?

1. Address discrimination, stigmatization, and denial related to HIV/AIDS (methods used in Uganda and India are models to consider).
2. Expand and strengthen workplace policies and programs in treatment for TB, sexually transmitted infections, and opportunistic infections.
3. Promote transfer of business competence from companies already benefiting from sound treatment of HIV/AIDS issues to those companies newly aware of effective workplace actions and policies that address HIV/AIDS.
4. Strengthen the capacity to work with legislators on specific legal and operational policy changes that can reduce stigma and discrimination directed against people living with HIV/AIDS.
5. Protect the private sector labor force and maintain a healthy business production climate within the overall terms of corporate social responsibility.
6. Support collective action and diversity among economic sectors and differing perspectives on HIV/AIDS issues.
7. Disclose the company's treatment of HIV/AIDS within its corporate documents and pension plans, thus adding transparency and fairness to company transactions.

How Could Donors and Assistance Agencies Respond?

1. Link development frameworks and poverty reduction programs to the multisectoral HIV/AIDS strategy, recognizing the need to strengthen institutional capacity.
2. Develop more effective coordinating mechanisms between donors and governments to respond to the impact of HIV/AIDS.

References from Earlier AGOA Meetings

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