



## Mainstreaming measures against HIV/AIDS

Implementing a new strategy within the  
Provincial Government of Mpumalanga / RSA



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## Executive summary

### *HIV/AIDS in South Africa*

South Africa has one of the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence in the world. Mpumalanga, as a result of a variety of factors, is one of the most seriously affected provinces. Nowadays, the epidemic is one of the main developmental challenges the country is facing. The South African population and its economy are in many ways heavily affected by the epidemic. Besides the severe impact of the epidemic on the health sector, HIV/AIDS impacts on all sectors of the government.

### *Impacts of HIV/AIDS on the society*

Labour productivity and labour availability is decreasing; skilled labour in particular is getting scarce. Moreover, with the shortage of qualified teachers due to AIDS, and the increasing number of children that are caring for their family members, and thus, failing to attend school frequently, this trend will increase. Staff turnover rates increase, and agricultural land remains fallow and/ or agricultural systems change towards labour extensive and less nutritious production. The growing number of orphans challenges the social service system by increasing demands for foster parents and foster care grants. Together with the expected decreasing interest of international investment in the country, and with increasing government expenditure for social and health related services, HIV/AIDS impacts heavily on South Africa's economic growth. With a still increasing HIV/AIDS prevalence, these effects are predicted to become even more severe in the future.

### *HIV/AIDS policies*

After the end of the apartheid system, the new South African government had launched a number of policies in the fight against HIV/AIDS. However, in the still on-going process of restructuring and developing structures, plans often overestimated implementation capacity of the new government, thus implementation tended to lag behind.

*All sectors working hand in hand in the fight against HIV/AIDS* International experience has shown that a country will be most efficient and effective in the fight against HIV/AIDS when all sectors (different departments of a government, and different role-players, such as private sector, civil society and government) and the governmental spheres work hand in hand.

*The project* After the HoDs of all departments of the Mpumalanga Government had decided to “mainstream” governmental measures in the fight against HIV/AIDS, they requested support from the GTZ-MRDP, in March 2003. The MRDP (a co-operation between GTZ and the Provincial Government of Mpumalanga, located in the OoP) engaged the SLE-team to support selected departments of Mpumalanga Government to address the needs of the population in terms of protection, care and mitigation evoked by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Hence, departments need to respond in the design and co-ordination of their programmes to the impacts of the epidemic, as part of a coherent Mainstreaming process.

Five departments started with the Mainstreaming process with the support of the SLE-team. The other departments will follow at a later stage. For the follow-up process, GTZ-MRDP will provide support to the government.

*Mainstreaming definition* In contrast to Internal Mainstreaming, which aims to manage the epidemic at the workplace (e.g. workplace policies), External Mainstreaming of measures against HIV/AIDS is directed at the population/ the clients of the government.

The concept of External Mainstreaming measures against HIV/AIDS was based on the following working definition:

External Mainstreaming measures against HIV/AIDS means all departments determining:

1. How the epidemic is likely to affect their department's goals, objectives and programmes;
2. How the spread of HIV is caused or contributed to by their department;
3. Where their department has a comparative advantage to respond in
  - limiting the spread of HIV and
  - mitigating the impact of the epidemic.

*Participative approach*

In order to achieve ownership of the Mainstreaming process within the government, and because government employees are the experts as regards contents, their involvement in the planning of the workshops and their participation at workshops was indispensable.

*Workshop concepts*

After an initial workshop with representatives of all departments; department-specific workshops; as well as a workshop with the persons responsible for so-called "transversal issues" (TIU) (which includes amongst others HIV/AIDS) from all departments, followed.

For each departmental workshop, the focus and the purpose would be different, because departments do not only differ in the content of their programmes, but also in their structure and the way they are functioning. Hence, besides the special workshop concepts for the initial and the TIU workshop, concepts needed to be adapted for each departmental workshop.

- Initial workshop* The initial workshop mainly aimed to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS, to bring departments together to discuss HIV/AIDS, and to get a common understanding of what External Mainstreaming measures against HIV/AIDS within the government means. It served as a platform to exchange experience and to show what the departments are already doing to fight the epidemic.
- Departmental workshops* At the departmental workshops, in line with the Mainstreaming definition, departments reflected on the one hand how HIV/AIDS affects their programmes and goals. On the other hand, employees analysed the department's programmes regarding their impact on the epidemic. Activities were developed and put into operational plans, to mitigate the epidemic's impact on their programmes and goals, and in order to avoid unintended negative side effects of programmes that facilitate the epidemic. Moreover, emphasis was put on improving already existing partnerships, and encouraging new co-operation with other departments and stakeholders, in which stakeholders benefit from each other's comparative advantages. At these workshops it was important that representatives with decision-making power from all the different programmes of the respective departments, participated.
- TIU workshop* The workshop with the TIU provided a platform on which participants exchanged experience and found ways of improving co-operation among them, in order to become more powerful and to strengthen their position.

- Challenges* The willingness and commitment of government employees alone does not determine the success of the Mainstreaming process. A number of external factors may also play a crucial role:
- Departments are under-staffed
  - Departments are (over-) burdened with other important developmental issues
  - The young government is in a decentralisation process; responsibilities and functions are in many cases not clearly defined, as yet
  - HIV/AIDS is not seen as a priority by many politicians, and not a suitable issue to gain votes in the up-coming elections.
- Opportunities* The HIV/AIDS Mainstreaming process enhanced the integration of different departments, which will make the service delivery more effective. The importance of using the comparative advantages of the various stakeholders working in different areas, and strengthening these, became evident. In addition, the many ideas that came up during the workshops can be used as a base for the Provincial AIDS Committee that will be formed in the near future.
- Recommendations* From the experience gained during this project, conclusions were drawn and recommendations formulated:
- Workshop concept:*
- Awareness creation*
- Besides the more concrete outcomes of the various workshops, they provided space to create awareness on the impact of HIV/AIDS among participants. Together with an input at the beginning of each workshop; informative material (flyers, handout etc.); and with enough time for discussion, the workshops were an eye-opener to many participants. The participatory manner in which workshops were designed and conducted created ownership of the outcomes and the process, which is essential for the success of Mainstreaming.

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- Facilitation*
- Besides their methodological skills, facilitators need background knowledge on HIV/AIDS and its department-specific impact, and on the departments' programmes, structure and function.
- Adaptations to the concept*
- The concept needs to be adapted to the special characteristics of each department.
- Initial workshop*
- An initial workshop with all departments will be a good base to build upon. Experience can be exchanged and it indicates that HIV/AIDS is not the task of only a few departments.
- Departmental workshops*
- When presenting results at the departmental workshops, it is more important to focus on quality rather than quantity. Putting activities into operational plans should be priority when conducting a workshop.
- Clarifying the idea of External Mainstreaming*
- In order to avoid hesitation towards getting involved in Mainstreaming measures against HIV/AIDS, one should frequently point out that Mainstreaming does not necessarily mean a new budget and that programmes and core functions do not need to be changed, but that departments should look at them with an HIV/AIDS lens.
- Keeping the process going:*
- Senior management involvement*
- Upper-level commitment and participation of senior management at workshops is an important factor in the process of Mainstreaming. Awareness creation for those who have decision making power and authority might be necessary even before starting with the workshop phase. Besides their influence on planning and implementation of activities, their involvement will motivate sub-ordinates.
  - Initially it might be sufficient to get some key representatives from the upper-level on board, that are committed and that drive the process.
  - Having a political buy-in or a political champion within the government will favour the process of Mainstreaming measures against HIV/AIDS. Prior awareness creation among political heads is recommended.



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- A supporting structure is essential to keep the Mainstreaming process going, especially for the follow-up. This structure should be placed “above” all departments and should have a mandate to co-ordinate them.
- TIU and HIV/AIDS Committees*
- In addition to the HIV/AIDS committees within each department, a co-ordination committee at higher level is recommended.
  - At each departmental workshop a task team that feels responsible, at least for the follow-up of the workshop, should be formed.
  - Using the existing structures within the departments, the TIU should be involved in External Mainstreaming measures against HIV/AIDS and their position strengthened. Also in the regions a similar position should be established.
- Capacity building*
- Capacity building within the departments for issues such as fund raising and HIV/AIDS-related communication skills might be necessary. Conceptual capacity to drive the process, to monitor its dynamic and to adapt the Mainstreaming strategy to the changing environment is essential for a sustainable process.
- General Remarks*
- At the workshops, and afterwards, co-operation with other stakeholders should be encouraged, further.
  - The decentralised structures of a government need to be incorporated into HIV/AIDS Mainstreaming. The different participative/ democratic structures should be used for this purpose.
  - Before starting with External Mainstreaming measures against HIV/AIDS, it is preferable that a department has a functioning workplace policy.

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- Next steps:*
- The intradepartmental unit which co-ordinates HIV/AIDS-related activities (and other Transversal Issues) should become a directorate (or a sub-directorate in smaller departments) with a dedicated budget.
- Short term*
- Medium term*
- A political champion should be found to strengthen the Mainstreaming process of measures against HIV/AIDS within the government and to represent this topic to the public.
- Critical reflection*
- The facilitation team reflects on its experience gained while working with employees of a government on the issue of HIV/AIDS. The hierarchical structure of a government did not always make the work easier. This made it even more necessary to integrate key persons of the departments in the process to create ownership. Nevertheless, conducting workshops was a positive experience, because it was possible to change the mind-set of the participants: HIV/AIDS was no longer seen as a medical issue only. HIV/AIDS is not just a topic like other development issues, because it is a particularly personal and intimate topic.