

Malawi

As one of the poorest countries on earth, Malawi has been severely afflicted by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Current HIV prevalence rates are estimated at 25% in urban areas, 27% in semi-urban and 12% in rural areas. The number of people living with HIV/AIDS in Malawi at the end of 1999 was estimated as 800,000, and another 70,000 died from AIDS that year. 390,000 children under the age of fifteen had lost their mother or both parents to AIDS. 40,000 children were themselves living with HIV/AIDS.

Since 1985, when the first confirmed case of AIDS was diagnosed, the Government of Malawi has implemented a number of policy, institutional, and operational strategies to prevent and mitigate the spread of HIV/AIDS through two medium term plans. Despite some notable achievements made during the implementation of the two medium term plans, the spread of the epidemic continued to increase.

In 1997, with UNDP support, the Malawi Government, decided to develop a comprehensive Malawi National HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework for 2000 to 2004, to more strategically guide HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation programmes and activities in the country. The Strategic Framework sets out the key challenges; goals, objectives and activities for nine thematic areas identified through a nation-wide HIV mobilisation and consensus building process and, therefore, reflects those generative operational issues, problems and concerns for Malawi.

The Strategic Framework planning process has four phases:

- ? The first phase involved community mobilisation and institutional consultations to break the culture of silence on HIV/AIDS and uncover issues surrounding the epidemic.
- ? The second phase involved analysing the issues and information gathered through the earlier consultations and creating a draft Strategic Framework. The draft Framework was then subjected to a number of planning workshops for public criticism from a cross-section of Malawi society, at both the community and national level.
- ? The third phase was a consensus building phase where results of the planning workshops were consolidated into a Final Draft of National Strategic Framework for HIV/AIDS. The Strategic Framework was completed and officially launched in October 2000 at a ceremony presided over by the President of Malawi.
- ? In the fourth phase, the process of developing District HIV/AIDS Plans is the major activity, along with the public awareness campaigns and mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS in the public and private sectors.

The Framework acknowledges the need to focus on prevention whilst simultaneously facilitating options for treatment and care, and includes:

- ? Emphasis on reducing HIV infection among young people.
- ? Improving institutional support to National AIDS Control Programme and increasing its capacity.

- ? Involvement of all sectors through mainstreaming, with a particular focus on responding to the loss of personnel.
- ? Focusing on orphans to improve their situation and support their development.
- ? Greater collaboration between the TB and AIDS Programmes.
- ? Focusing on communities to build capacity, particularly in support of agricultural productivity and food security.
- ? Capitalizing on locally available resources and leadership.

In March 2000, the Malawi Government, with support from UNDP, hosted a Resource Mobilisation Round Table Conference to fund the Framework. The Round Table, which attracted many bilateral and multilateral development partners as well as national and international non-governmental organisations, generated US\$110 million in pledges towards the targeted initial requirement of US\$121 million to meet the costs of implementation.

UNDP Malawi is also providing significant support to the Government in facilitating the mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS into national development planning processes. Particular attention has been paid to the integration of HIV/AIDS priorities in the formulation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, a necessary step in qualifying for debt relief. UNDP, with guidance from the UNAIDS Secretariat, is currently supporting government efforts to achieve a target of 30% of debt relief savings to be allocated to for HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation activities.

Efforts to mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in poverty reduction strategies is also occurring at local levels. By the end of 2001 about 40 district, town, municipal and city assemblies will have included HIV/AIDS in their local poverty reduction strategy initiatives.