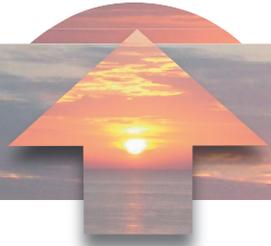


The road towards universal access



Scaling up access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support

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Pragmatic solutions towards universal access in Asia and the Pacific islands

Regional consultation on scaling up towards universal access, Pattaya, Thailand, 14-16 February 2006



“We remind everyone that nearly all of the HIV epidemics in the Asia - Pacific region are most devastating in communities like migrant workers, sex workers, injecting drug users and others which are already vulnerable because they are marginalized and often criminalized.”

Ms. Habiba Akhter, Executive Director, Ashar Alo Society and Civil Society spokesperson on the opening day.

Flagging obstacles and identifying concrete solutions at national level

The Asia-Pacific regional consultation on scaling up HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, with the aim of coming as close as possible to universal access to treatment for all those who need it by 2010, brought together representatives from governments, non governmental organizations, faith based organizations, groups of people living with AIDS and the private sector from countries in Asia and the Pacific Islands. Their objective was to flag national and regional obstacles to scaling up HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, and propose national, regional and global solutions to address them. They have also worked to identify pragmatic actions to move the AIDS response further.

Creating a regional AIDS watch-body

Creating a regional AIDS watch-body that would oversee the commitments of governments, civil society, donors and others concerned in the AIDS response was a central recommendation that emerged from the discussions.

Creating a regional mechanism for prices negotiations and procurement

Other bold recommendations touched upon pricing and availability of commodities. Twenty-one countries in the region pay 21 different prices for the same medicine. As a result, participants endorsed the idea of a regional mechanism for price negotiations and procurement and for a regional technical support mechanism to support country-level programmes. Delegates strongly recommended increasing the production capacity of generic manufacturers within the region.

Closing the funding gap

At national level, the participants called upon governments and donors to close the funding gap and prioritize HIV and AIDS within the region

- by increasing domestic funding, using levies and other innovative mechanisms
- by making donor funding unconditional – including those relating to the provision of preventative services to populations at risk and
- by shifting donor funding from projects to programmes.

Addressing stigma and discrimination

They also recommended decriminalizing certain high-risk activities and called for time-bound legislation and policy reform to reduce and ultimately eliminate discrimination in the workplace and in health care and educational settings. Participants also recommended that health care and community networks provide wide scale confidential testing and counseling services for all those who need it. In order to address gender discrimination, the delegates recommended that governments promote gender-sensitive policies and programmes.

An inclusive process

Civil society played an active role in the consultation and made a strong case for an enhanced role at national and regional levels. Delegates recommended equal representation and decision-making power to civil society in national policy and decision-making bodies and suggested that capacity building and strengthening human resources for civil society are included in the national budget.

As the UNAIDS Special Representative to the Pacific and Speaker of the Fijian Parliament, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, said at the opening ceremony: "Only three or four years ago, no-one in Fiji had openly admitted living with HIV. Now people living with HIV are one of our greatest assets in fighting HIV and AIDS."

Thirteen countries in the region have already held national consultations on scaling up towards universal access. Other countries have already planned their consultations before the end of March 2006. Countries were urged to use the outcome of their consultations to set targets and revise plans, in full consultation with civil society and people living with HIV.

The full recommendations of this consultation and the finalised country reports will be synthesized into a regional report for the Asia and the Pacific Region and will inform the development of a global report on moving towards universal access for consideration at the United Nations General Assembly in May-June 2006.

