



Regional Bureau for Arab States
HIV/AIDS Regional Program in the Arab States

Steering Committee Meeting Report

**The Private Sector's Response
to HIV/AIDS in the Arab Region**

Cairo
4th & 5th June 2006

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BACKGROUND

Following the Technical meeting organized in December 2005 on the Private Sector Response to HIV/AIDS and as per the participants' will to meet again, the UNDP/HIV in partnership with the Arab Labor Organization and in coordination with the International Labor Organization, organized the Regional Private Sector Steering Committee Meeting on HIV/AIDS to build on the commitments and decisions made in December 2005, and to push this pioneering initiative forward.

As indicated in the previous report, the Global Health Initiative of the World Economic Forum report reports that only 3% of businesses in the entire MENA region have a written policy for responding to HIV/AIDS¹. In addition, few firms prohibit discrimination against HIV-positive people and only 5% prohibit disclosure of HIV status². Consistent with other sectors in the region, HIV/AIDS is considered low risk to companies because of the low prevalence rate in the region and silence and misperceptions that still surround the disease. According to the same report, 77% of firms in the MENA region expect that there will be a negative impact to their businesses due to HIV/AIDS in the next five years. This is despite the fact that the region has a 300% increase in infection rates since 2002, and the many high-risk factors that make the region, including the private sector, vulnerable to the negative impact of this disease that have weakened economies in other parts of the world³.

Current and future workforces are at an increasingly higher risk for destabilization due to HIV/AIDS, as the epidemic disproportionately affects people during their most productive years. HIV/AIDS can increase the costs of doing business and reduce the long-term growth potential of markets. It can also impact the investment environment and inflows of foreign capital. As a vital part of society, **businesses in other regions of the world are increasingly responding to the epidemic**. In the Arab region, to the exception of some relatively isolated corporate initiatives, 3 out of the 22 Arab countries – namely Morocco, Egypt, and Jordan – have witnessed a coordinated response from the private sector through the creation of business coalitions, in some cases with the support of governmental bodies, local/international NGOs, and UN agencies. Other countries like Algeria or Bahrain, are fostering dialogue on the role of the private sector into the national HIV/AIDS response.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING (S)

These objectives have been presented and agreed upon at the beginning of the meeting

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- a) To set the foundation of a regional network of private companies willing to respond to HIV/AIDS efficiently and responsibly
- b) To define the strategy/workplan of this network and the most appropriate way to monitor the implementation of the HIV/AIDS policies
- c) To design the most efficient tools in order to expand this network
- d) To define more clearly the potential collaboration between private companies and other stakeholders already involved in the response to HIV/AIDS in the country you are operating

¹ *Business and HIV/AIDS : Commitment and Action ? A Global review to the business responses to HIV 2004-2005*, World Economic Forum/Global Health Initiative, January 2005

² *ibid*, p.23

³ UNAIDS/WHO report, July 2002

DAY 1

OPENING SESSION

Mr. Walid Badawi – Senior Policy Advisor, UNDP/Regional Bureau for the Arab Region

- Thanks to the Arab Labour Organization for hosting this meeting.
- Welcome to those who attended the first regional technical meeting for the Sector's Response to HIV/AIDS in the Arab Region organized in December under the auspices of the League of Arab States, and warm welcome to businesswomen, businessmen, and representatives of regional organizations who decided to join this pioneering initiative joining those engaged stakeholders in order to respond more effectively to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in a proactive and progressive way.
- This pioneering response will accomplish much in the interest of the Arab region, the interest of your country, and ultimately in the interest of your own business
- Brief summary of the HIV/AIDS situation in the Arab region:
 - Still low prevalence but 2nd fastest growing infection rate in the world in the presence of high risk behaviours and factors that foster the spread of the virus (unemployment, mobility of populations, high percentage of youth, etc)
 - Already several Arab countries are experiencing a general HIV epidemic (Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan).
 - According to the World Bank forecasts, more than 15 countries in the Arab region could reach an HIV prevalence higher than 4% in less than 10 years.
- This is why we are gathered here:
 - To learn from the experience of other countries and regions who were in the position the Arab region is in now, but who did not act in time
 - To join the rest of the Arab society already engaged in the Arab Region: Religious Leaders, Arts & Media professionals, Political Leaders, ILO, Human Rights experts, CSOs, and of course PLWH
 - To act proactively before we are forced to react with costly measures for the difficulty and hardship the AIDS pandemic can bring if not dealt with as a serious issue.
- We need to achieve optimum results and manage to maintain the HIV prevalence in the region to its lowest level to save money and most importantly save the lives of employees, customers and communities on which we depend.
- The window of opportunity the Arab region has to be a proactive leader in the prevention of an AIDS epidemic is now closing. I sincerely hope that we will be able to seize the chance we have to act now, in order to create an enabling environment for PLWH, a prosperous and sustainable environment for businesses; and simply a bright future for the Arab region.

Mr. Khalid El Balushi – Assistant Director, Arab Labor Organization (ALO)

- Welcome to all the participants and thanks to the organizers
- ALO one of the oldest organizations within the Arab League
- The ALO is looking forward to participating to a fruitful meeting with all the participants gathered here, in order to advance the HIV/AIDS response in the Arab region
- These premises do not only belong to the ALO but also to the entire Arab region
- Thanks to the Egyptian government for hosting this meeting.

SUMMARY OF COMMITMENTS MADE DURING THE TECHNICAL MEETING (December 2005)

Establishment of a Steering Committee:

- To be formed by members of the four sub-regions mentioned previously and relevant agencies
- To be flexible in regard to individual engagement & disengagement; one may only be asked to find himself/herself a replacement in order to sustain the continuity

Representatives of the Steering Committee according to sub-region:

- *GCC:*

Mr. Mohammed Badrul Ahsan, Standard Chartered Bank

Mr. Freddy Becker, Shell Intl. Limited

Dr. Aysha Ahmed Hussain, Gulf Air

- *Near East region:*

Dr. Adnan Badwan, Jordanian Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Co. - Jordan Chamber of Industry

Mr. Michel Bayoud, Boecker Public Health International

- *North Africa:*

Dr. Alaa El Din El Fouly, UNILEVER

Dr. Mustafa Ashour, BG Egypt

Mr. Patrice Lucas, Lafarge Group, will ask Mrs. Aicha Stitou Daoudi, Lafarge Morocco

- *Horn of Africa:*

To be determined

UNDP/HARPAS Commitments:

Until the SCM, HARPAS is in charge of maintaining the communication and preparatory background information necessary for the SCM, namely:

- One page Country Profiles
- Practical information for private companies on how to implement HIV/AIDS (contact details of NGOs providing awareness training, availability of A at country-level, etc)
- Database of companies potentially interested to engage in the HIV/AIDS response
- Finalize the cost simulation and the publication

These commitments have been fulfilled, and the material has been provided to the participants during the SCM.

UNDP/HARPAS LATEST ACTIVITIES

Summary of the HIV/AIDS Session organized by the UNDP/HARPAS during the Economic Forum (WEF) on the Middle East (20th May 2006)

Dr. Khadija T. Moalla, UNDP/HARPAS Regional Coordinator

- The HARPAS team has been advocating to have a session at the WEF
- The participants of this panel discussion were:
 - **H.E. Amre Moussa**, Secretary-General, League of Arab States, Cairo
 - **Mr. Nejb Zaafrani**, Regional Vice-President, Strategic Alliances, Middle East, Caspian and South Asia, Shell EP International, United Arab Emirates
 - **Dr. Ahmed Abaddi**, Director, Islamic Affairs, Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Islamic Affairs, and Advisor to H.M. King Mohammed VI
 - **Dr. Khadija T. Moalla**, Regional Coordinator and HIV/AIDS Policy Specialist, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Cairo
 - Session challenged **Ms. Shereen G. El Feki**, Presenter and Reporter, Power, Al Jazeera International, United Kingdom, and moderated by **M Shada Omar**, Anchor and Reporter, News, Al-Hayat-LBC, Lebanon
- WEF usually invite the highest rank of people participating
- The conference room was half empty (or half full), which reflects the lack of interest from the private sector.
- H.E. Amre Moussa was a great advocate.
- Mr. Nejb Zaafrani showed Shell's new commitment to take on in the Arab Region
- Dr. Ahmed Abaddi shared the Cairo Declaration and outlined the huge standards leaders are taking.
- During the session at the WEF, a businesswoman from Zimbabwe highlighted that the Arab region is - she was begging us not to make the same mistake that has been made in sub-Saharan Africa. She was advocating for the private sector to step up now. This was something said from the heart that moved the whole room.

Summary of HIV/AIDS related activities from other stakeholders in the Arab region

Dr. Ehab El Kharrat, UNDP/HARPAS Senior Technical Advisor

- Stories and examples on the fact that AIDS is related to misinformation and myths
- Summary of Risk factors and forecasts on HIV/AIDS evolution in the Arab region
- Circle of HIV/AIDS Vicious Circle – HIV is not contagious but infectious
- Religious Leaders response to HIV/AIDS
- Media Response to HIV/AIDS
- Response from a legal point of view
- PLWH response

WORKING GROUP EXERCISES

Study of some companies HIV/AIDS Guidelines (Shell Thailand, Standard Chart Bank, Lafarge, Coca-Cola, Unilever)

General Comments regarding these guidelines:

- A guideline should not leave grey areas and should define clearly the diseases/are covered or not by the company's policy
- The objectives of the company's policy need to be clearly enumerated
- A guideline needs to be in accordance with national legislations
- A company should not commit to a guideline that it cannot respect (cf. ex mandatory testing in the guideline, and implementing in a country where the legislation requires this type of practice).
- A guideline should be based on the respect of universal Human Rights
- If an employee is being provided ARVs by the company and his/her contract terminated, what happens next?
- A guideline should not exceed one page

Study of HIV/AIDS Country Profiles for the Arab region (including epidemiolog situation, multisectoral response, and key contact details)

General Comments regarding these Country Profiles (CP):

- This information should be provided online to private companies willing to res HIV/AIDS
- The information should refer to UNAIDS CP
- They should have a FAQ page and then link country by country examp business coalition examples, as well as how other sectors that have tackled the a national and regional level
- The CP should also include country level best practices
- The CP should provide a SURF model on-line so that businesses may pose q to the group
- Private companies need to be redirected towards National Business Coalit HIV/AIDS (if established)
- The CP need to include the national legislation/legal framework regarding HIV
- The description of HIV/AIDS-related services provided by NGOs, UN a and/or governmental agencies to the attention of private companies need exhaustive

BRAINSTORMING SESSIONS

- *What should be the network's organizational structure?*
- *What should be the network's priorities and objectives?*
- *What should be the Members' benefits and duties?*
- *What should be the network's expanding strategy?*
- *Which documents will the network need to engage private companies in the HI Response?*

What should be the network organizational structure?

The two options that have been considered are:

- A loose structure
- A formal structure

Pros and Cons of a loose structure

Pros	Cons
Flexible	Chaotic
Faster steps if it is termed as 'volunteers' who may have access to broader networks	Lack of focus
Convenient for the time being as a start	Clarity of roles and responsibilities unclear
Easier to engage people	Lack of commitment
Easier to avoid/circumvent politics and related conflicts and formalities	Will not be effective considering the lack of knowledge and awareness in the region
Roles are not solidified - easier to avoid inertia	Does not allow to form a learning organization/information-sharing not clear
Easier at a regional level to link country levels despite differences	High level leaders will not be easy to engage
	Pressure on governments will not be as strong
	Lack of ability to speak with one voice
	Fully relying on UNDP to steer - no accountability, buy in, performance indicators on deliverables, not paying for what we are not moving forward fast enough
	we are not deciding to engage and do it
	There are always changing faces in the meetings

Based on the analysis of a loose structure, participants finally agreed that a formal structure would be the most appropriate structure in order to coordinate the private sector's response to HIV/AIDS.

What are the network priorities and objectives?

These issues have been first discussed during the technical meeting in December 2005, redefined during the steering committee meeting, as follows:

- Education/Knowledge
- Awareness
- Provide best practices
- Provide training tools/advocacy
- Provide access to technical support for building of national networks/coalitions
- Leadership
- Advocacy Role
- Removal of stigma/discrimination
- Provide Care
- Internal Networking
- Create a model for policy (give examples)
- ILO Guidelines and other manuals for guidance to provide important information
- Define relationship/partnership with stakeholders (especially government)
- Enforce national and regional response and ensure synergy (global, regional, national)
- Negotiate incentives for best practices with governments
- Develop structure on cost benefits

What are the Members' benefits?

- Access to information / training programs
- Long-term benefits from preventative action that translates into profit
- Access to cost stimulation techniques
- Power of the collective
- A vote
- Good PR
- Augment social responsibilities
- Networking opportunities among business people
- Shape the future of the region

What are the Members' duties?

- Fees (cf. board meeting report below)
- Endorse mission/vision (cf. board meeting report below)
- Adherence to Corporate Social Responsibility norms and Human Rights Standards
- Implement HI/AIDS policy/commit to action plan towards HIV/AIDS policy implementation
- Reporting on implementation
- Sharing information flow

What should be the network's expanding strategy?

- Approach National Business Coalitions on HIV/AIDS
- Approach Chambers of Commerce and Industry
- Organization of an Annual prize (at a later stage)

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The Private Sector's Response to HIV/AIDS in the Arab region

- Organization of a Big-Bang Launch
 - Venue: Cairo, Egypt (TBC)
 - Date: 27th November 2006
 - The agenda will be divided into 3 phases:
 - 1) 2-hour session: presentation and official launch of ABCAR with the influential participants
 - 2) 3-hour session: Training Session on HIV/AIDS with all the other participants
 - 3) Evening/late afternoon: fund-raising event (Golf, football match, co etc – to be further discussed)

Which documents will the network need to engage private companies in the HIV/AIDS Response?

- A one-page brochure
- An electronic brochure (3 or 4 power point slides)
- A one-page “Arab Business Declaration of Commitment” (to be drafted by Steering Committee based on the comments provided during the SCM, submitted to steering committee members, and validated by board members)
- Fact sheets about HIV/AIDS
- Best practices and success stories
- Resource list (consultants for technical support)
- HIV in the workplace (ILO)
- Poster for workplace
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on HIV/AIDS

It has been agreed upon that these documents will not be disseminated before the organization is being legally established.

REPORT OF ABCAR BOARD MEETING (04/06/06)

(AIDS BUSINESS COALITION IN THE ARAB REGION)
For an Early Response

Interim Board members:

Dr. Mustafa Ashour – BG (chair)
 Mr. Freddy Becker – Shell (vice-chair)
 Ms. Odette Iskander – EME
 Ms. Aicha Stitou Daoudi – Lafarge
 Mr. Mohammed Badrul Ahsan – Standard Chartered Bank
 Mr. Mohamed Ali – Abbott Laboratories

Interim Board membership’s term: one year
Period covered: 4th June 2006 – 4th June 2007

Upon the termination of this period, new board members will be elected. The new members will be elected for 2 years (renewable). The next elections will be held in June

Duties and Responsibilities

- Hire a competent secretariat team who will be in charge of implementing the decisions
- Validate the organization strategy and work plan designed by ABCAR Secretariat
- Coordinate the organization of the coming Regional Workshop (dates suggested 27/11/06) including:
 - Strategy/marketing campaign to promote the Regional Workshop
 - Identification of potential participants
 - Identification of potential partners willing to collaborate in the organization of this regional event (cf. GBC, ILO, World Economic Forum/Global Initiative, etc).
- Each board and steering committee member should engage a minimum of three companies by the launch.
- Enforce national and regional response, and ensure synergy
- Define relationship with other stakeholders (especially governments)
- Validate training/advocacy tools to engage companies in the response to HIV/AIDS
- Validate and finance the establishment of ABCAR website (design and suggested by the Secretariat)

Yearly membership fees for new members

Gold membership:	<i>USD 4,000</i>
Silver membership:	<i>USD 2,000</i>
Bronze membership:	<i>USD 500</i>

Every member will have an equal voice, regardless of its financial contribution.

Companies who are not members of ABCAR will still be provided with all the information required to implement HIV/AIDS policies, without benefiting from ABCAR services. Non-members are welcome to attend ABCAR meetings, providing they cover their expenses.

Board members should meet twice to three times a year. Conference calls can be held or whenever needed, based on the secretariat and board members' availabilities.

ABCAR Vision

- The private sector is an eligible actor in the response to HIV/AIDS in the Arab Region
- Region free from new HIV infections
- Decrease AIDS stigma and discrimination

ABCAR Mission

The mission of the network is to inspire, mobilize and equip the private sector to become an eligible actor in the HIV/AIDS response in the Arab region, in coordination with the national coalitions and competent bodies.

ABCAR Goals

- Education/Knowledge
- Awareness
- Provide best practices

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The Private Sector's Response to HIV/AIDS in the Arab region

- Leadership
- Advocacy Role
- Removal of stigma/discrimination
- Provide Care
- Internal Networking
- Share with governments
- Create a model for policy (give examples)
- ILO Guidelines and other manuals for guidance to provide important resource info

Next steps

1. Establishment of “ABCAR” as a legal entity
2. Opening of a bank account (authorization will be given to the secretariat certain amount, above which a chairperson’s authorization will be required)
3. Financial contributions will be provided to the newly created regional orga ABCAR by the board members and new members in order to start operating
4. New members will be approached as soon as the material to engage business p the response to HIV/AIDS is ready
5. New memberships will allow the organization to expand operations

Timeframe:

2006

2

Tasks	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
1. Creation of ABCAR as a legal entity	■	■											
2. Opening of a bank account		■											
3. Approach new members				■	■	■	■	■	■	■			
4. Design and finalization of material		■	■	■									
5. Organization of Regional Workshop		■	■	■	■	■							
6. Regional Workshop						■							
7. Follow-up partners & participants						■	■	■					
8. Elections of a new board													
9. Finalization of Work plan		■	■										
10. ABCAR Brochure & poster		■	■	■									
11. Business Declaration		■	■	■	■								
12. Recruitment Power Point		■											
12. Provision of SCM members financial contributions		■	■										