



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



Technical Meeting Report



“The Private Sector’s Response to HIV/AIDS in the Arab Region”

Cairo
8th & 9th December 2005

TABLE OF CONTENT

DAY 1

TABLE OF CONTENT	2
BACKGROUND	4
OBJECTIVES OF THE TECHNICAL MEETING	4
OPENING SESSION	5
H.E. AMBASSADOR NANCY BAKIR – DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL, LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES	5
MRS. NADA AL-NASHIF – CHIEF REGIONAL PROGRAMME DIVISION, UNDP/RBAS	5
PRESENTATIONS & DISCUSSIONS	8
DR. EHAB EL-KHARRAT – HARPAS CONSULTANT	8
DR. KHADIJA T. MOALLA – HARPAS COORDINATOR	8
MR. PIERRE-ETIENNE VANNIER – HARPAS CONSULTANT	8
MR. FREDDY BECKER – POLICY AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS MANAGER, MIDDLE EAST, CASPIAN AND SOUTH ASIA, SHELL INTERNATIONAL LIMITED	9
MR. PATRICE LUCAS – DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL POLICY DEPARTMENT, LAFARGE GROUP	10
MRS. SABINE DURIER – PROGRAM LEADER, INTERNATIONAL FINANCE CORPORATION AGAINST AIDS	10
DR. ZEINAB HEADA – PROJECT MANAGER AWARENESS AGAINST AIDS (AAA), CARE INTERNATIONAL, EGYPT	11
MR. DAVID KIM – AFRICA MANAGER, GLOBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE, WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM	11
VIDEOCONFERENCE	12
MRS. ELIZABETH J. ASHBOURNE – SENIOR ADVISOR, WORLD BANK	12
MR. BRAD MEARS, CEO, SABCOHA; CHAIRPERSON, PABC	12
MRS. THÉRÈSE LETHU – DIRECTOR EUROPEAN OFFICE, GBC	13
MS. ELISABETH GIRRBACH – PROJECT LEADER, GTZ / ACCA	13
MR. CHRIS TRIMBLE – GLOBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE, WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM	13
QUESTION/ANSWERS & COMMENTS HIGHLIGHTS	14

DAY 2

MS. MANAL AZZI – HIV/AIDS CONSULTANT ,INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION	16
DISCUSSION/COMMENTS ON HARPAS RESEARCH: “SAVING LIVES, SAVING MONEY”	16
BRAINSTORMING SESSIONS	17
REPORTING BACK IN PLENARY SESSION	17
<i>Does the Arab Region have a need for the Private Sector to get involved in the HIV/AIDS response?</i>	17
<i>What are the OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, STRENGTHS & GAPS that the Private Sector can address and fill in the HIV/AIDS response?</i>	18
<i>What form should this take - basically?</i>	19
<i>What could such a network contribute? To your business, to your community and for the HIV/AIDS response...</i>	19

<i>What would be the purpose of a network of Private Sector members responding HIV/AIDS in the Arab world?</i>	19
<i>Vision?</i>	19
<i>Mission?</i>	19
<i>Goals?</i>	19
<i>How could it be viable?</i>	20
<i>What is your commitment?</i>	20
<i>Steps needed to move towards the formation of the network?</i>	20
ESTABLISHMENT OF A STEERING COMMITTEE	21
OBJECTIVES OF THE NEXT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING:	21
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE ACCORDING TO SUB-REGION:.....	21
NEXT STEPS.....	22
<i>Date & Venue</i>	22
<i>Funding</i>	22
<i>Material required for the next meeting</i>	22
OPEN DISCUSSIONS ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUES	22
<i>Media coverage of HIV/AIDS policies</i>	22
<i>The engagement of Small & Medium Enterprises and Informal Companies in the HIV/AIDS Response</i>	23
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	Error! Bookmark not defined.

BACKGROUND

According to the Global Health Initiative of the World Economic Forum report based on the second global survey of the business response to HIV¹, only 3% of businesses in the entire MENA region have a specific written policy for responding to HIV/AIDS. 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 no 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 impacts of the disease that have weakened economies in other parts of the world³.

According to interviews conducted by HARPAS with partners in the Global Compact and Private Sector Partnership, UNDP Focal Points in the region, ILO, and private companies operating in the region, there are a very limited number of initiatives whose aim is to foster the involvement of the private sector in the response to HIV/AIDS in the Arab region. From the data available and feedback from partners, there is evidence to show that there is a **great need for capacity building** in the private sector to respond effectively to HIV/AIDS.

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 business 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**. Some respond from a sense of enlightened self-interest and corporate social responsibility. Others respond because of the direct effects that AIDS has or could have on their own business operations, including increased costs, weakened business environment, threats to consumer base. In light of the findings of the research conducted by UNDP/HARPAS and to complement the regional initiatives involving Governments, Media, Religious Leaders and NGOs, **it is an appropriate time for private businesses operating in the Arab region to get involved in the response to HIV/AIDS**.

OBJECTIVES OF THE TECHNICAL MEETING

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

- a) To provide a platform for visionary Private Sector leaders to discuss issues related to HIV/AIDS including how HIV/AIDS will impact their own business and community
- b) To present HARPAS research on the Private Sector and HIV/AIDS and obtain further input on this study including how best to address its findings
- c) To create an opportunity for networking with Private Sector members and UN agencies involved in this sector within the HIV/AIDS response

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

² *ibid*, p.23

³ UNAIDS/WHO report, July 2002

DAY 1

OPENING SESSION

H.E. Ambassador Nancy Bakir – Deputy Secretary-General, League of Arab States

- Amre Moussa's greetings to all of you- he is deeply interested in this subject.
- The last five years have been an important turning point for LAS. This turning point has marked the modernization and development of LAS.
- Today, the social sector of this work is being highlighted in many ways.
- Dr. Khadija T. Moalla and HARPAS have been able to achieve a breakthrough in cooperation with LAS. She has spoken in many platforms, such as the Minister of Health assembly and permanent committees such as the Committee of Women and Family.
- HARPAS and LAS have been able to achieve some success together. In the media there is an intensification of coverage of HIV/AIDS in different Arab channels including regional channels with great reach. And there is an increased demand for the Religious Muslim and Christian Kits published by HARPAS on HIV/AIDS.
- The Private Sector is a very important group – able to respond to initiatives with a speed free from bureaucracy. You are the initiators, innovators and pioneers.
- Also there is an “inside tip”- that H.E. Amre Moussa is one of the most able people supporting initiatives from this area – so seize this opportunity.
- H.E. Moussa will be honored to sign the introduction of the HARPAS draft document on the Private Sector's response to HIV/AIDS in the Arab region, which you are discussing in this consultation.
- HIV/AIDS is an important issue and needs a multi-sectoral approach.
- Conclusion – wishes for success in efforts and reaching outcomes in the HIV/AIDS response.

Mrs. Nada Al-Nashif – Chief Regional Programme Division, UNDP/RBAS

Overview: Businesses and development cooperation priorities as captured in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

International objectives such as peace, security, sustainable development, human rights and poverty alleviation, are increasingly interlinked. They have ramifications for all sectors of society and their achievement requires complex and collaborative solutions. Whilst governments must carry primary responsibility for achieving them, it is increasingly in the interests of business to be part of the solution.

There are growing international demands for companies to be more transparent and more accountable. Within this context, there are three broad reasons why it makes sound business sense to contribute towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Each of these is a crucial pillar for building successful and competitive private enterprises: First, investing in a sound environment in which to do business; Second, managing the direct costs and risks of doing business; third, harnessing new business opportunities.

Businesses can Support Development and Contribute to the Achievement of the MDGs through core business activities, social investment, and engagement in public policy dialog.

There is growing evidence that improving healthcare, fighting disease and increasing life expectancy are all essential for supporting economic growth, which in turn is crucial to long-term business success. Research has demonstrated that as a result of the epidemic many businesses are experiencing lower productivity, increased costs, declining profits and investments. There is growing evidence that targeted and well-managed corporate investments in protecting the health of employees, customers and local communities is worthwhile relative to the potential risks and costs.

Arab countries are approaching regional integration processes through the completion of GAFTA with a customs union scheduled for 2008 and common market in 2020. Arab nations will be opening their markets in an unprecedented manner, intensifying labor force migrations, debates surrounding intellectual property rights, and opportunities for economic growth. But there is a clear link that must be highlighted this potential prosperity and real economic development; if current trends in the region's business climate, policies and planning are to be catalytic they must tackle the increased number of HIV infections and AIDS related deaths.

The Arab region has one of the *fastest growing HIV infection rates in the world* – which some have placed as high as a rate of increase in new infections of approximately 300% over a period of two years, 2002-2004, second only to Eastern Europe. Increased infection rates, increased AIDS related deaths and weak structures for care, support and treatment demonstrate a disturbing trend in the region. According to the World Bank, AIDS-related deaths have increased six-fold since the early 1990s. HIV+ people who need Anti Retroviral Treatment to prolong their lives, by decades in some cases, usually have no access to these drugs. It is clear that if current trends continue in our region, the effects on economic potential and political stability could be devastating.

HIV/AIDS strikes the young, upwardly mobile and most productive members of our society. In the Arab region, with a youth majority population of almost 60%, those most affected and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS are between the ages of 15-49, placing current and future workforces at risk.

The impact of AIDS on economic prosperity and development cannot be ignored. The expected costs of HIV/AIDS in the Arab region are currently projected at 35% of current GDP over the next 25 years – estimates of the “cost of inaction” if trends continue. Smart, forward thinking businesses need to act now; UNDP's Regional Bureau for the Arab States has recognized your role as business leaders and critical partners in the regional HIV/AIDS response.

Examples of business involvement in fighting HIV AIDS. Many of these pioneering companies are represented here:

1. *Core Activities*
 - a. Provide affordable products and services. Example: *The Accelerating Access Initiative*
 - b. Implement workplace HIV/AIDS programmes: Example: *The Global Business Coalition on HIV & AIDS*
2. *Social Investment and Philanthropy*
 - a. Provide product donations: Example: *The Partnership for Quality Medical Donations (PQMD)*

- b. Support HIV/AIDS and other medical funds, NGOs or research institutes and AIDS orphans projects: Example: *The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria*
- 3. *Policy Dialogue and Advocacy*
 - a. Establish national business coalitions: Example: At a country level *The Thai Business Coalition for HIV/AIDS*
 - b. Participate in global public policy networks: Example: *The Roll Back Malaria and Stop TB Partnership*

UNDP is proud here to be working with the broader UN family to ensure value-added, on our part, as a neutral broker; with global credibility that comes from hard-earned trust with civil societies and governments; an extensive on-the-ground presence (for UNDP, in 166 countries) and increasing development resources of our own, now well over \$3 billion globally for UNDP alone.

It is our hope that together, we can make a difference in the Arab world. And the good news is that if we start right away, we can do it by 2015 – halt and reverse HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths.

PRESENTATIONS & DISCUSSIONS

Dr. Ehab El-Kharrat – HARPAS Consultant

Dr. El Kharrat focused on clarifying the situation of HIV/AIDS in the Arab Region, including its modes of transmission, the factors of vulnerability in the region, the high risk behaviors among youth, the rights of young people challenged, and the Developmental Approach for responding to HIV/AIDS (Abolish Stigma and Discrimination, Build Capacity of Multiple stakeholders, Empower leadership on all levels, Start Community conversations, Own the problem and own the solution).

Dr. Khadija T. Moalla – HARPAS Coordinator

Dr. Moalla focused on the development aspects of HARPAS's activities, and the fact that HARPAS's goal is to create an enabling Human Rights environment, working in collaboration with Political leaders, Religious Leaders, Media professionals, legal experts, NGOs, Civil Society Organizations, and People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). She also detailed the three UNDP/HARPAS service lines, which are the creation of an enabling Human Rights environment, the Promotion of good Governance, and the Response to HIV/AIDS as a Development Issue.

Question/Answers & Comments Highlights

- Screening policy of Arab governments and violation of basic Human Rights
- Necessity to create a safe environment for screening
- Parallel between HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C
- Necessity to look outside the frame of the government - because governments are relatively in denial
- HIV has been introduced to the world differently - fighting stigma is the way
- Many studies show that compulsory testing for nationals or foreigners has increased the incidence of HIV/AIDS - the alternative is VCCT which means that you are encouraging people to get tested and then you could decide programmes accordingly

Mr. Pierre-Etienne Vannier – HARPAS Consultant

Mr. Vannier focused on the economic impact of HIV/AIDS, bearing in mind that economic losses are generated by losses of human lives. He presented the main outcomes of the HARPAS research: The Arab region is experiencing important socio-economic transformations, expanding its internal and external trade, which has social consequences. The profile of the Private Sector operating in the Arab Region has been defined (mainly SMEs, and important share of informal sector), and the reasons for private companies to get involved have been highlighted (potential loss of workforce, trade partners, and customers). World Bank projections of HIV prevalence in 2015 have been presented, and the results of a cost simulation conducted with several regional companies have been discussed. The added value of Private Sector's involvement has been detailed, as well as the current – and limited - response of the private sector to HIV/AIDS.

Question/Answers & Comments Highlights

- Concrete examples of responses displayed at the end of the publication
- Relevance or not relevance of compulsory testing in the workforce
- HIV/AIDS stigmatizes people - more than TB even though TB is more contagious.
- PLWHA in this region have been disempowered by myths

Then, the focus has been brought to the HARPAS cost simulation in collaboration with 2 companies operating regionally, defining the objectives (define & quantify clearly the comparative value of HIV/AIDS policies implemented by private entities, discuss and obtain input from participants regarding methodology and findings, enroll other businesses that would benefit from a cost analysis), the research question (is implementing HIV/AIDS policies in the workplace cost-effective?), the framework, the context, the methodology and the main results (HIV/AIDS policies in the workplace are long-term cost-effective investments in the countries studied).

Question/Answers & Comments Highlights

- Assumptions made for the simulation
- Projections are based on the context of the MENA region, taking into consideration the regional specificities
- The Arab region has a low-prevalence, but with high risk factors and groups at risk including a growing number of people having sex before and outside of marriage
- Need to present net profit as a percentage of the payroll
- Need to extend this cost simulation to other countries
- Need to establish a template for companies to be able to make this cost simulation for themselves
- Issues with insurance companies: exclusion clause of HIV/AIDS in insurance is problematic
- Need to simplify the results & interpretations of the simulation to make them more accessible & understandable to CEOs and decision makers.
- HIV/AIDS has to be considered as a strategic issue for private companies entering new markets
- When it comes to SMEs, the awareness and structure for response is not there. For SMEs, the challenge is to stay in business, and unless it makes economic sense, they will not respond to HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Freddy Becker – Policy and Employee Relations Manager, Middle East, Caspian and South Asia, Shell International Limited

Mr. Becker focused on Shell's guidelines for HIV/AIDS and their implementation in Africa, targeting Shell staff and their dependants, contractors, and the host communities. He also detailed the mechanisms of this response, and the lessons learnt out of their previous experience. Mr. Becker explained Shell's HIV/AIDS Roadmap, and showed interest in sharing their experience and working in collaboration with Governments and Chambers of Commerce in the respective countries where Shell is operating. He finally highlighted Shell's interest in guaranteeing policy consistency across the whole region, respecting the cultural realities but also the business results required by shareholders. The company needs a regional approach, but each country requires its own strategy. Shell is implementing HIV/AIDS policies in Oman, Qatar, Egypt and Dubai.

Question/Answers & Comments Highlights

- Companies that do not have full medical capacity should resort to different sources
- Need to preserve the talent of an employee by taking care of him/her and providing ARVs as long as necessary
- Strong issue of stigma in the region which generates a need for confidentiality
- Importance of involving top management
- Possibility to extend HIV/AIDS policies through the supply chains including the contractors

- Possibility for companies of the same sector to pressure insurance companies?
- Possibility for Chambers of Commerce to put pressure on the insurance companies in the name of their members?
- Certain organizations give preference to sub-contractors that have an HIV/AIDS policy
- Importance to include SMEs in HIV/AIDS strategy

Mr. Patrice Lucas – Director of Social Policy Department, Lafarge Group

Mr. Lucas presented Lafarge’s HIV/AIDS policy in Africa. He explained how the Lafarge top management’s strong commitment plays a crucial role in the response to HIV/AIDS. Indeed, the need for an HIV/AIDS policy came from the bottom and the top recognized this as a key issue. Lafarge is a “multi-local” organization and is strongly involved in local communities since the company is producing for local markets. Lafarge’s HIV/AIDS policy has an ethical approach with strategic roots, and HIV/AIDS is recognized as a business issue since 2001. The company formalized its group guidelines and its Africa guidelines in 2004 and started to use management tools to monitor its programmes. Before taking action, the company needs to make a risk assessment and refer it to its shareholders. It often works with external medical support. Lafarge is currently monitoring the implementation of its African roadmap, and it is willing to implement the program to other regions. In regard to the Arab region, Lafarge operates in Morocco, Jordan and Egypt.

Question/Answers & Comments Highlights

- Challenge of insuring access to treatment after discontinue of work – ethical and practical implications
- Preferable to work with private or public health providers
- Interest in partnering with NGOs which technical expertise in responding to HIV/AIDS

Mrs. Sabine Durier – Program Leader, International Finance Corporation Against AIDS

Mrs. Durier detailed the reasons for the IFC to consider HIV/AIDS as a priority, as well as the impact of AIDS on private companies: reputation risk, financial impact, and the threat to the company’s viability. She explained the fact that many companies do not know about the impact of HIV on their activities, and most often do not know how to respond to HIV. The risk factors for private sectors operations are numerous, including when the workforce is separated from the family for a long periods of time, when it is in transit area, when the Employees’ salaries higher than surrounding community. Ms. Sabine Durier explained that the mission of IFC Against AIDS is to protect people and profitability by being a risk management partner, HIV/AIDS expert and a catalyst for action where HIV/AIDS threatens sustainable development, through the principles of guidance, training, and expansion. She also detailed different ways for private companies to respond to HIV/AIDS (appointment of an HIV/AIDS focal point, creation of a steering committee, adopting a short but effective policy statement, identifying NGO to provide services, development of training sessions, condoms availability in certain places, etc).

Question/Answers & Comments Highlights

- Sensitivity of condom issue can be addressed through education
- How to use condom needs to be addressed too (gender unified sessions)
- Possibility to train employees on health and other Sexually Transmitted Infections in addition to HIV/AIDS
- Possibility for the IFC to work on an AIDS programme is there is a demand

- Pharmaceutical companies are willing to be seen as health care companies, but they have to comply with their shareholders' demands
- There should be sexual education in schools, and HIV/AIDS should be included in the discussion on health issues
- Certain companies initiated an e-learning session which takes you through an entire orientation process and allows confidentiality
- Peer education is a powerful tool to convey the HIV/AIDS prevention messages

Dr. Zeinab Heada – Project Manager Awareness Against AIDS (AAA), CARE International, Egypt

Dr. Heada explained that the AAA project aims at maintaining low HIV/AIDS prevalence by raising community awareness and encouraging corporate social responsibility. Thus, CARE's strategy is foster Partnerships Promoting a Multi-sector al Response, to empower communities and expand access to reproductive health services and information, to strengthen advocacy and legal protections of rights, as well as to end discrimination. CARE also channels contributions to support community based HIV/AIDS awareness activities, tailors AAA orientations to employees' culture and situation, and supports development of HIV/AIDS workplace policies and programs. Dr. Zeinab Heada emphasized on the AAA's achievements, and described the establishment and the role of the Friends of AAA, an advisory group of companies committed to community based HIV/AIDS related efforts created to support tackling HIV/AIDS in Egypt, and the Expanded Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in Egypt which focuses on the private sector.

Mr. David Kim – Africa Manager, Global Health Initiative, World Economic Forum

Mr. Kim focused on the private sector's potential contribution to HIV/AIDS responses, and on the needs to generate effective and sustainable Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for HIV/AIDS. He detailed the GHI's HIV/AIDS activities: Tools for businesses (Guidelines and reference material for workplace control of TB and HIV/AIDS, Guidelines for building Business Coalitions against HIV/AIDS, Guidelines for PPPs against HIV/AIDS, Guidelines and best practices for Supply Chain HIV/AIDS Programs), case studies for workplace programs and other PPPs on HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria, support to national and regional business coalitions on HIV/AIDS, global business survey on Business & HIV/AIDS, Global Coordination/Funding Mechanisms: Permanent member of the Private Sector Delegation to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, and "Matchmaking" and "Brokering" services for PPPs. He focused on the importance for private companies to take seriously into account the partnerships and strategies that are already in place before engaging in the response to HIV/AIDS. He explained how private companies could contribute to HIV/AIDS responses, notably through the development and production of commodities and/or the funding of AIDS responses, but especially through workplace policies. For a more sustainable response, it is important to involve the private sector as a core partner in the AIDS strategy with appropriate forms of engagement. The domains of possible business action are 1) taking workplace programmes to communities, 2) business supply chain, which appears a natural next step for private companies. He finally explained the main challenges for PPPs, and gave recommendations for generating more efficient PPPs.

VIDEOCONFERENCE

Videoconference with key participants of the ICASA (International Conference on AIDS and Sexually transmitted infections in Africa) in Abuja, Nigeria

Speakers:

Mrs. Elizabeth J. Ashbourne – Private Sector Partnerships, AIDS Campaign Team for Africa, Senior Advisor, World Bank

Mrs. Therese Lethu – Director European Office, Global Business Coalition against AIDS (GBC)

Ms. Elisabeth Girrbaach – Project Leader, GTZ / ACCA

Mr. Brad Mears – CEO, South African Business Coalition against HIV/AIDS (SABCOHA); Chairman, Pan-African Business Coalition (PABC)

Mr. Chris Trimble – Global Health Initiative, World Economic Forum

Main Points addressed:

Mrs. Elizabeth J. Ashbourne – Senior Advisor, World Bank

- Discuss the activities of the GBC, collaboration with the Private Sector and the response in the Arab Region and overview of launching of Pan African Business Coalition
- We have been working in Africa for the last five years including a 1.5 billion dollar grant programme supporting AIDS activities and funding for the Private Sector - but there are no programmes for North Africa
- The way in which we started working was not about building business coalitions - asked to engage the Private Sector in the national response
- Started by introducing the most influential Private Sector companies to the government
- By creating space for them to come together, there was recognition that employees are also citizens of countries and require certain support and protections - this allowed a partnership to evolve
- Following that, there was also a review of associations and coalitions in the country
- It also involved the Chambers of Commerce
- There are 17 business coalitions in Africa – all national which have started cross learning and conferences at the regional level
- There is also a “Guidelines for building business coalitions”

Mr. Brad Mears, CEO, SABCOHA; Chairperson, PABC

- There is an agreement among the 17 Business Coalitions in Africa to collaborate much more closely and to create a formalized network
- Strong partnerships lead to strong Business Coalition; where the Private Sector is weaker it is more difficult to develop Business Coalitions
- Aim is to use the stronger coalitions to share information and resources to strengthen others in different countries
- Businesses came to realize that with common economic policies, we need common strategies in the Private Sector to address HIV/AIDS

- The Pan African Business Coalition aims to develop dialogs to foster sub-regional dialogs with governments on how we deal with HIV/AIDS
- We can start acting as a gate through which multi-lateral organizations can partner with businesses and can have a stronger response within the 17 Business Coalitions as there is strength in numbers
- We are happy to share the strategy document with those interested in the Arab States

Mrs. Thérèse Lethu – Director European Office, GBC

- GBC has great potential to support national coalitions and regional ones
- It has a strong position with governments and other powerful partners
- The main advantages is our network
- Most of our members are working in your countries
- We can work with the head office and the local offices – and maybe identify some champions in order to help the network at country and regional level
- We also can share expertise in management and other fields of competencies from global to national level
- There are many success stories and best practices and so there is no need to reinvent the wheel

Ms. Elisabeth Girrbaach – Project Leader, GTZ / ACCA

- The GTZ work is international cooperation for sustainable development- operating world-wide
- GTZ provides viable, forward looking solutions for political, economic, ecological and social development in a globalized world
- Support complex reforms and change processes
- All activities are geared to improving people’s living conditions in a sustainable way
- Working to address the MDGs including addressing HIV/AIDS
- Example: In Madagascar – which is a low prevalence country – the GTZ started one year ago to implement HIV/AIDS workplace programmes
- It was mainstreamed into wellness programmes and integrated in primary health context
- GTZ contacts: www.gtz.de

Mr. Chris Trimble – Global Health Initiative, World Economic Forum

- Want to clarify the status quo of why the Business Coalition exists and the needs in the Arab region and what kind of support they need including the provision of information
- Via research and mapping the Business Coalition has seen that successful coalitions have planned their launch very well – almost a year in advance as in Tanzania and Mozambique to assess business needs, what service providers are there and international partners
- Using this as a foundation, successful coalitions then create a strategic plan
- If the Arab States are at this stage, this region can use the well developed tools in other parts of Africa

Question/Answers & Comments Highlights

Q. *Should these Business Coalitions be put together for HIV/AIDS or should they be a part of an existing Business Coalition for the broader MDGs or other health related issues?*

A. In lower prevalence regions, this is often a good way to go. It can attract more attention, but can be more difficult to launch.

Comment: There was no intention to set up Business Coalitions in Africa. We started with more obvious groups – with labor unions, chambers of commerce or other places that had AIDS groups; if the Chamber of Commerce is strong in MENA then this may be a good thing to consider

Comment: it is also important to have the focal points in these associations.

Comment: the reason why some of the HIV/AIDS organizations have been slow to get off the ground is that they have created everything from scratch; we don't need to reinvent the wheel and need to partner.

Comment: in terms of the growth of the epidemic as it has matured, we see the Business Coalitions are creating models not only focusing on HIV/AIDS but also tuberculosis - I can see some Business Coalitions broadening their mandates to more health issues in the coming years.

Q. *What would be your advice within the context of MENA where there is still great denial, low prevalence rates but a great lack of information and implementation of National Strategic Plans that include responses to HIV/AIDS; do you think a regional level coalition can work in this context?*

A. This is not an either/or situation. Throughout West Africa you have low prevalence and yet there has been an interest in forming Business Coalitions with or without international organizations. When you are dealing with a lot of stigma, it depends on the organizations to make it unacceptable to hide the disease.

Comment: Companies also find comfort in being together, so that no individual company has to take the risk; they also tend to want to be recognized for their particular achievements.

Comment: You end up breaking that silence especially when big companies want to make HIV/AIDS as a part of corporate strategy.

Comment: If many countries don't have National Strategic Plans (NSPs) or are not implementing them, then form a regional working group, see what issues there are country by country, what kind of support is needed at all levels and the business interests in each country and then follow-up with a country by county strategy; having a regional coalition will not be an end point as each country has specificities.

Comment: there is a complex argument around the idea of low prevalence. For example, South Africa in 1990 had prevalence of less than 1%; now we have 30% and up to 40%.

One of the things that are a critical opportunity in this region is that the Private Sector can lead the way now. If you want the Private Sector's response to be more effective than other countries and regions, the earlier you act the more effective.

Comment: also coalitions with broader interests is something worth discussing; I am wondering who from the companies would participate in a multi-disease programme as mentioned before in the conversation; it may not include Human Resource managers or could only include doctors which is limiting – if you make it only about health then it can be problematic because HIV/AIDS it is not a only a health issue but is a development issue.

Comment: Perhaps a good way to initiate a Business Coalition is to mainstream this through occupational health and safety committees because the business sector is more receptive to occupational health issues.

Comment: also the Private Sector is often more receptive to HIV/AIDS rather than other diseases such as Malaria, because the modes of transmission are less contagious and can be controlled through education and awareness.

Comment: If you talk about mainstreaming with companies through occupational health and safety, it is much slower at a company-by-company basis so it would be interesting to see how you could build a coalition around that strategy.

Q. Is there a government that is already there in the Arab States that has an NSP and further, is progressive, willing to work with the Private Sector?

A. There are 14 different countries that have NSPs; President Bouteflika of Algeria has spoken about the need to work with HIV/AIDS, President Al-Bashir of Sudan and King Mohammed VI of Morocco; H.E. Suzanne Mubarak has endorsed an initiative and LAS has endorsed HIV/AIDS as three major health priorities in the region. So these policies need to translate into action on the ground.

Comment (Shell): in the last three months we've engaged with Oman, Qatar and Dubai; they want us to implement educational programs and policy design but other organizations should also step in.

Comment: in many African countries, companies such as UNILEVER have taken the lead here as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility.

Q- In closing, what would your recommendations be?

A. Start the regional strategy process very early on. There is also a cursory link between the African Union, World Bank, GTZ and GBC.

A. As advice, don't be discouraged if it gets confusing- it took us some time working with representatives from 17 countries and of course in this region there is a lot of diversity to handle that can also be leveraged well; It is also useful to work with Chambers of Commerce, Trade Unions and Businesses to make individual strategies to create regional strategies.

Comment: you have made an excellent start; the agenda raises many of the key issues that should be part of a regional strategy; we will do our part in the beginning stages with you by sending documents, information and resources for support in building this network further

DAY 2

Ms. Manal Azzi – HIV/AIDS Consultant, International Labor Organization

Ms. Azzi focused on the basic facts about HIV/AIDS, and the factors generating stigma in the Arab region. She explained why AIDS is a workplace issue, and described the impact and the costs generated by HIV/AIDS on the world of work (employees and companies), as well as the ILO Response. She described the ILO Code of Practice, its objectives and its key principles (no discrimination, no compulsory screening, confidentiality, healthy work environment, rights to programmes of prevention and care, no dismissal, gender equality).

Question/Answers & Comments Highlights

- Need to keep the confidentiality of PLWHA and provide non-discriminatory practices
- Importance of voluntary screening
- Issue of insurance coverage

Discussion/comments on HARPAS research: “Saving Lives, Saving Money”

The participants agreed on the cover page and discussed the cost simulation.

- Since the target audience of this report is decision makers, then it makes sense to include the cost simulation.
- It would be relevant to percentages to reflect the cost benefits and to compare with other research that have been done in other regions (ex. Sub-Saharan Africa; India; Indonesia).
- The message we want to carry here is the importance of Leadership. One or 2 companies do not represent the whole region, and it would be interesting to extend this cost simulation to other companies.
- The results should give a range: “the percentages of cost effectiveness range from X to Y”. Readers will be more comfortable with this kind of analysis.
- The Arab region could be divided in sub-regions, with a cost simulation for each sub-region: GCC, North Africa, Horn of Africa, and Near East region.
- It has to be looked at from an entrepreneur point of view. Private business people want a simple tool to fill it out, and to get results.
- This tool can be very useful for convincing SMEs.
- This simulation should be given a human face through interviews of PLWHA in the workplace and how they see it.

BRAINSTORMING SESSIONS

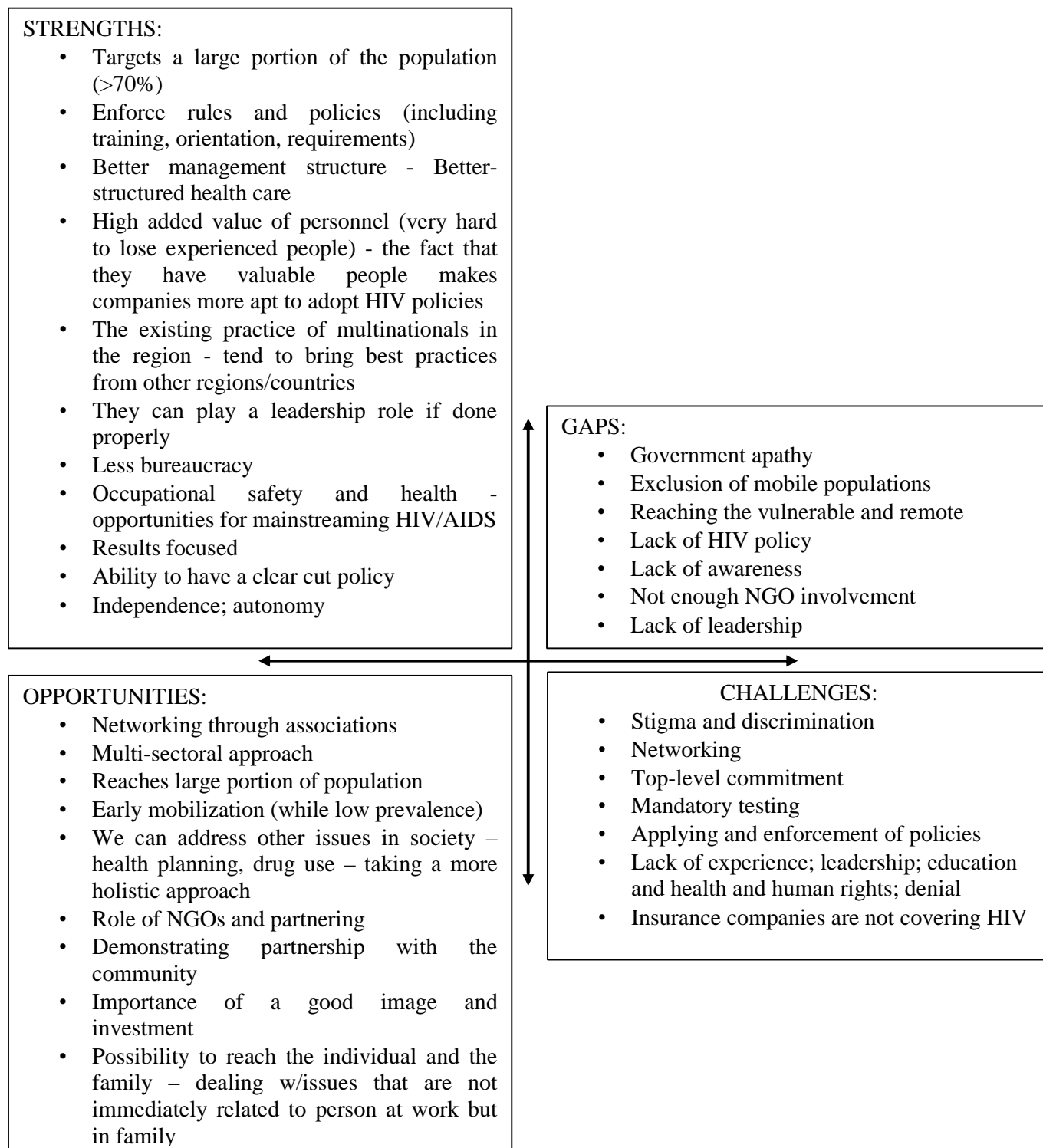
- *Does the Arab Region have a need for the Private Sector to get involved in the HIV/AIDS response?*
- *What are the OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, STRENGTHS & GAPS that the Private Sector can address and fill in the HIV/AIDS response?*
- *What form should this take - basically?*
- *What could such a network contribute? To your business, your community and the HIV/AIDS response...*
- *What would be the purpose of a network of Private Sector members responding HIV/AIDS in the Arab world?*
- *Vision? Mission? Goals?*
- *How could it be viable?*
- *What is your commitment?*

REPORTING BACK IN PLENARY SESSION

Does the Arab Region have a need for the Private Sector to get involved in the HIV/AIDS response?

- Must identify who are the players: Religious Leaders, media, etc.
- The Governments have limited resources and very little knowledge compared to the Private Sector
- Importance of workplace in terms of health
- People spend most of their time at work
- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Vulnerability of people in the Private Sector may be higher
- Possible issues with insurance
- The eventual economic effect on the PS- this is not a short term but medium to long term planning
- Reducing economic impact
- Community partnerships
- Crucial role of leadership
- Ability and efficiency to identify problems and solutions
- The private sector is already involved in other regions - so why not the Arab States?

What are the OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, STRENGTHS & GAPS that the Private Sector can address and fill in the HIV/AIDS response?



What form should this take - basically?

- Express Commitment
- Develop internal policies
- Business Coalition – any kind of coalition
- Supply chain – including SMEs and local communities (quick effect and broad coverage)
- Linking with NGOs - increases Private Sector coverage and reach
- Engaging the health industries (insurance; pharmaceutical; hospitals)
- Get the Private Sector to advocate – gaps in public sectors reaction can be filled by private sector
- Workplace health education policy
- Networking – carry the message to others (person to person or via associations)
- Cost analysis
- Securing management commitment
- Creating a timeline for goals

What could such a network contribute? To your business, to your community and for the HIV/AIDS response...

- Create knowledge
- Relieving the pressure of individual companies to be an empowered group of leaders
- Creates a global movement that the private sector in the Arab world should join
- Sharing resources
- Economy of scale- resources would be divided over network members
- Diffusing stigma
- Setting TRENDS
- Solidarity (you'll find two competitors on the same poster)
- Catalyze government (push them to do more)

What would be the purpose of a network of Private Sector members responding HIV/AIDS in the Arab world?

- Join forces
- Momentum and speed of response
- Again sharing resources

Vision?

- “The private sector is an eligible actor in the response to HIV/AIDS in the Arab Region.”
- Region free from HIV/AIDS
- Decreasing HIV infections, AIDS-related deaths, and AIDS stigma

Mission?

- The mission of the network is to inspire, mobilize and equip the private sector to be an eligible actor in the HIV/AIDS response in the Arab region

Goals?

- Education/Knowledge
- Awareness
- Provide best practices

- 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 information

How could it be viable?

- CEOs included in all major meetings
- Links with other sectors and UN agencies
- Communication mechanisms
- Budget Allocations
- Regional exchanges (south-south/sub-regional)
- Advocacy

What is your commitment?

Personal Commitments:

- Will talk with others in their neighborhood
- Will ask family members what they know about AIDS
- Will join group that deals with AIDS
- Dr. Adnan Badwan: “I am willing to sponsor one meeting in Jordan to reach the working class people with HIV/AIDS information and awareness raising”.

The person/company interested in organizing a national event is encouraged to contact the local UNDP HIV/AIDS Focal Point. For national initiatives, the UNDP/HARPAS can also provide a consultant to support country level trainings.

Business Commitment:

- Go back to business unit manager
- Creating affordable HIV products
- Include HIV/AIDS in occupational health policies
- Discuss with CEO and see what company as a whole can take
- Create HIV/AIDS policy
- Keep in touch with relevant UN agencies

Both groups came up pretty much with the same comments and recommendations in regard to how the response of the Private Sector should be organized, as follows:

Steps needed to move towards the formation of the network?

- Need Company buy-in
- Include big companies and CEOs who will be HIV/AIDS Champions
- Create a Declaration
- Action Plan to implement Declaration
- Focal Point – 2 or 3 people to follow-up on what the network does
- Phased Planning

- Identify the proper members of the network and make sure they are aligned with vision, mission and goals
- Create appropriate mechanisms for networking/communication mechanisms
- Assign accountability for various responsibilities
- Create a steering committee based on verbal agreement and trust/mutual respect

ESTABLISHMENT OF A STEERING COMMITTEE

Both groups agreed that a steering committee should be established. This entity will need:

- To be formed by members of the four sub-regions mentioned previously and relevant UN agencies
- One person and a back up
- 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

Objectives of the next steering committee meeting:

- Work on creating a sales kit: how to approach a huge company?
- Determine an appropriate date & venue for the organization of a larger regional meeting that will have a more structured network (the second half of 2006 suggested).
The purpose of this regional meeting will be:
 - *To foster networking*
 - *To engage more companies in the HIV/AIDS response*
 - *To present strategy & action plan defined by steering committee*
- Identify & nominate HIV/AIDS champions
- Identify participants of the larger regional workshop
- Draft a survey to inquire about HIV/AIDS in private companies on a sub-regional level (feedback via e-mail)

Representatives of the Steering Committee according to sub-region:

GCC:

- Mr. Mohammed Badrul Ahsan, Standard Chartered Bank (Mr. Badrul confirmed the full support of his regional office since the meeting).
- 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

NGO and Intl. Organizations representatives:

- Dr. Zeinab Heada, CARE International
- Ms. Saskia Kermaekers, PharmAccess Foundation
- Mr. David Kim, Global Health Initiative / World Economic Forum will confirm with his HQ the possibilities to provide documentation & support

UN representatives:

- Ms. Manal Azzi, ILO
- Dr. Khadija T. Moalla, UNDP
- Mrs. Sabine Durier, IFC against AIDS/World Bank

Next steps

The participants agreed that the next step should be a steering committee meeting.

Date & Venue:

The next 2-day Steering Committee meeting will be held on the second week of March 2006 (suggested dates: **14th & 15th March 2006**, TBC).

The venue will be Beirut, Lebanon or Amman, Jordan (TBC).

Funding:

- Each organization will self-fund
- Dr. Adnan Badwan may host the meeting with Mr. Michel Bayoud (TBC)

Follow-up & Communication (until next Steering Committee meeting):

Mr. Pierre-Etienne Vannier, HARPAS, will be in charge of maintaining the communication and preparing the background information necessary for the next meeting, which will be attended by the representatives of the private sector, the ILO, and the UNDP/HARPAS.

Material required for the next meeting:

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

Open discussions on the following issues

Media coverage of HIV/AIDS policies

- Due to the low prevalence situation, the association of a company's name with preventative measures has a positive impact in terms of public perception
- Most of the companies are willing to get a media coverage of their HIV/AIDS policy, since it usually reflects a visionary stance
- The communication to any action to the media needs to be clear. It is recommended to wait for the steering committee's decisions
- In any case, the disclosure of a company name due to its HIV/AIDS response needs the company's prior agreement

- The HIV/AIDS Champions should contact the media

The engagement of Small & Medium Enterprises and Informal Companies in the HIV/AIDS Response

- Supply chain programme as a advanced model
- Companies that engaged SMEs in the response have been successful in implementing their own company programs
- Easier to advocate with large companies before engaging the supply chain
- Strategy should be able to involve SMEs at a later stage
- Need to form a nucleus of companies which will be highly committed to the HIV/AIDS response, and which will be able to identify the supply chain
- Chambers of Commerce are the most efficient way to identify SMEs
- The engagement of the private sector has to be gradual