

Mainstreaming HIV and AIDS into Action on Human Settlements: Connections, Capacity and Challenges

Authors: San Patten and Priya Gopalen



"When housing co-op members die from AIDS related diseases or leave loans unpaid, you suddenly find yourselves on the front lines of the AIDS crisis. We have to integrate HIV and AIDS issues as part of the whole process of housing and shelter provision."
- National Cooperative Housing Union, Kenya



DID YOU KNOW?
1.2 billion people – 1/3 of the global urban population – live in slums. The UN Millennium Development Goals only aim to improve the lives of 100 million by 2015.
HIV prevalence in urban areas is 1.7 times the prevalence in rural areas (UNAIDS, 2008).

CONNECTIONS

Housing as a determinant of health

The links between inadequate living conditions and HIV and AIDS are multiple and complex. Actors in the human settlements sector are increasingly recognizing the impact of HIV and AIDS on their efforts to provide safe and sustainable housing in urban slums. Likewise, an important determinant of health for those affected by HIV and AIDS is housing conditions.

Some of the connections between housing and HIV and AIDS:

Evictions and homelessness: How do you provide home-based care when there is no home?

Overcrowding: Increases risk of opportunistic infection and exposes children to sexual activity very early

Discriminatory inheritance practices: Puts women and children in the streets

Limited or no access to water and sanitation: Increases the disease burden and presents challenges to providing care; and how do HIV-positive mothers mix infant formula?

Stretched household budgets: Funds to pay rent, housing charges and micro-loans for land or housing are diverted to ARVs and medical care.

CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP

In February 2009, in Nairobi (Kenya), Rooftops Canada, Habitat International Coalition and Mazingira Institute/ Settlement Information Network Africa co-hosted a *Regional Workshop on HIV, AIDS and Housing*. Rooftops Canada and its partners have worked on mainstreaming HIV and AIDS into housing programs. This workshop followed five years of mainstreaming programs and a regional assessment of this work in 2008. The workshop themes focused on gaps identified in the assessment and building capacity in the areas of:

- ✦ Mainstreaming HIV and AIDS: What does this really mean in operational terms?
- ✦ Networking, advocacy and lobbying for effective mainstreaming
- ✦ Planning, monitoring and evaluation
- ✦ Training and sustaining trainers, animators and peer educators
- ✦ Facilitating and sustaining grass roots initiatives
- ✦ Inclusion of women, youth and people living with HIV within programs

Overall, the workshop helped to advance "HIV and AIDS mainstreaming" from an over-used buzzword to an operational concept manifested through partnerships, alliances and capacity building.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

Alliances, networking and partnerships:

Organizations whose primary objective is ensuring land and housing rights are forced to respond to HIV/AIDS. However, they are not AIDS organizations. To fulfill their core business, housing organizations need to build alliances to provide services, to engage in advocacy and lobbying, to provide mutual training and support, and to access additional resources. Sometimes, where the need is very pressing and where there are no available partners, the organization has to step in to support such initiatives even if it falls outside the core business.

Inclusion of vulnerable groups:

Inclusion of women, youth, children, people living with HIV and with disabilities contributes to program effectiveness. Marginalized groups contribute knowledge from their lived experience to strengthen programs and reduce stigma.

THANK YOU to the 28 participants from 11 countries who shared their expertise and experiences in responding to HIV and AIDS within the human settlements development agenda. Financial support for the workshop was provided in part by the Government of Canada through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

For more information or to download the complete workshop report, visit www.rooftops.ca or email info@rooftops.ca



WHAT IS MAINSTREAMING?

Mainstreaming means adapting an organization's core programs to take into consideration the impact of HIV AIDS. Organizations need to understand the impact internally and on its constituencies, and see mainstreaming as changing how things are done, not what is being done. Using water imagery, participants drew pictures of the meaning of "mainstreaming." The concepts that were depicted in the drawings included:

- ✦ Different lenses (e.g., HIV and AIDS, health, gender, youth, etc.) to analyze and act on housing issues
- ✦ Housing as a core business with established infrastructure and resources into which HIV programs and considerations are integrated
- ✦ Analyzing HIV and AIDS as one of the contributing factors to housing problems
- ✦ Consideration of the possible turbulence or obstacles such as policy barriers, financing, competition for resources, or bureaucratic stagnation.

CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO HIV MAINSTREAMING

- ✦ Lack of leadership and organizational commitment
- ✦ Lack of clear understanding on why mainstreaming is necessary and how to do it without overwhelming the core business.
- ✦ Lack of understanding amongst both HIV and housing sectors – responsibilities and relevance to the other sector, funding competition.
- ✦ Limited capacity and resources – human, financial, information, relationships
- ✦ Historic sectoral silos – health, housing, food etc. – in civil society, government and donor agency policy and funding.
- ✦ Cultural taboo and stigma makes it hard to include PHAs. Without their input and inclusion, it is difficult to mainstream.
- ✦ Policy barriers, gaps in funding, and bureaucratic stagnation