



Refocusing action in the maturing response to HIV/AIDS in Botswana: insights and lessons learned from the mid-term review of the National Strategic Framework for HIV/AIDS

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Issues:

As national responses to HIV/AIDS mature, they risk becoming stagnant. It is essential that countries continually learn and adapt through periodic reviews to refocus action and maximize impact. However, comprehensive multi-sectoral reviews are rarely undertaken. Instead, routine monitoring, surveillance and various programmatic evaluations and recommendations assist most countries with higher level strategic decision making.

Description:

To gain a clearer picture of its response, Botswana undertook a comprehensive Mid-term Review (MTR) of its National Strategic Framework (NSF) for HIV/AIDS. The MTR assessed five inter-related areas:

1. programmes & services;
2. capacities & capacity building;
3. coordination;
4. funding & financial management; and
5. monitoring & evaluation.

The aim was to learn from what was being done in the response, and recommend critical actions to achieve the priority objectives contained in the NSF.

Lessons learned:

Several key issues emerged. First, it was recognised that while facility based initiatives were doing well, many people were either not being reached with specific services or had limited access. Strategies to expand scope and coverage are critical. Second, the current imbalance between care/treatment and prevention risks the overall sustainability of the response and requires urgent attention. Third, focused action for greater impact depends on close operational level coordination and systems must be developed to achieve this. Finally, lead sectors lack many of the structures and capacities necessary for an effective response. Such deficiencies are becoming increasingly significant.

Next steps:

The MTR produced important recommendations for both long- and short-term action at all levels. Some of these have already been picked up by Botswana's development

partners. These recommendations must continue to guide Botswana as it moves toward institutionalising joint planning and reviews, and in the development of its next Strategic Framework. Perhaps, too, the experience and lessons from the MTR may find resonance with other countries.

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