

## Taking up the challenge Of Comprehensive Treatment and Care for All

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The first aidsfocus.ch conference "Living with HIV/AIDS. Treatment and Care for All" on April 20, 2004, in Berne was a successful and inspiring event. It succeeded in making the demand for comprehensive treatment and care for all, including antiretroviral therapy, an issue of public discussion. More than 80 persons from 25 NGOs and development organisations, from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (BAG) participated at the conference. Six guest speakers from Switzerland and Africa presented a wealth of information and experience on AIDS treatment and care in resource poor settings in the South and East. In lively group discussions, the participants reflected not only on the challenges ahead, but identified options and activities for their organisations in promoting comprehensive treatment and care for all and expressed their personal commitment for further action.

The conference focussed on the sharing of information and experiences. It will be a challenge for aidsfocus.ch to sustain the energy created and to explore selected elements of the whole jigsaw of comprehensive treatment and care in more depth. The conference is conceived as a starting point in a process, in which Swiss NGOs will take up the challenge of the struggle for comprehensive treatment and care for all.

### Results from the working groups, which will guide the next steps

**The following clusters of key factors for success crystallized: "Technical" aspects**, such as simplified protocols and treatment, functioning VCT, uninterrupted supply of drugs, scaling up of ARV, coupled with **accessibility of treatment** (affordable drugs and free treatment, etc.) and **capable staff** (capacity building of local partners, contribution of non-medical staff) within a **supportive environment** (e.g. functioning public health systems, real commitment by local government, role of the media)

Each working group highlighted the importance of the commitment and **involvement of the community** (partnership with and participation of communities, feeling of ownership by the community). **Psychosocial support** could be provided by the community, by "buddies" or staff. Another important aspect is the **process of intervention** and underlying attitudes, e.g. human right based approach, involvement of PLWHA, respect for integrated approaches, adapted communication, counselling and support, and last but not least: **personal commitment**.

These success factors need to be worked upon in order to face the key **challenges and constraints**. In brief, the working groups identified lack of human and financial resources as the major constraint. Technical shortcomings, constraints in capacity to absorb, to deliver and to manage, demands of scaling up, corruption as well as socio-cultural values and attitudes are additional key constraints still to overcome.

### Options and roles of NGOs and development organisations

The "flower" which resulted from the inputs of the working groups reflects a flourishing community of practice with a broad range of approaches and a common goal: to improve the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS and to prevent the further spread of HIV/AIDS.

4 of the NGOs present actually work on the implementation of HIV/AIDS treatment and care programmes, including ARV treatment. The large majority of NGOs, however, will play a supportive role, be it by strengthening local health systems and capacity building or be it by providing psychosocial or socioeconomic support to people living with HIV/AIDS or people affected by it (especially orphans and vulnerable children). It does not show from the cards whether these organisations will continue their work regarding HIV/AIDS as before, or whether there will be a shift in focus towards more explicit support of promoting access to treatment for all and accompanying people going for treatment. Prevention will continue to play an important role.

A treatment specific issue and big challenge is the demand for access to affordable treatment, including free or cheap drugs. A number of NGOs is involved in advocacy and lobbying work on access, patents and prices.

### **Where to go from here?**

The field is prepared for future action. The working group on treatment ("Fachliche Begleitgruppe Behandlung") which was formed on October 2003 with the purpose to support and accompany the preparation of the conference did play an important role in the conceptualisation and the success of the conference. A shift in focus is perceived for follow up action:

1. The thread that was taken up with the conference needs to be pursued further, and the issues raised should be reflected and discussed more in depth and acted upon. A Working Group on treatment will be formed, composed of professionals of organisations operational in ARV treatment (e.g. SRK, MSF, SolidarMed, SwissAidsCare) and specialists, with the objective to share experiences and to discuss the challenges and critical issues in regard to treatment in resource poor settings (simplification of protocol, resistance, locally adapted monitoring systems, use of generics, etc.) The purpose of the group is to provide space for reflection and common learning in order to enable NGOs and their partners to promote and implement antiretroviral treatment in a package of comprehensive treatment and care in an effective and responsible manner. [aidsfocus.ch](http://aidsfocus.ch) will invite for a first meeting.
2. The annual conference on October 29, 2004, will take up the tread with the working group "Treatment" sharing information on their activities and experiences.
3. As a platform for exchange and learning, [aidsfocus.ch](http://aidsfocus.ch) accommodates a wider spectrum of issues and concerns and is open to all aspects in the continuum of HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care. Most Swiss NGOs play an accompanying and supporting role in regard to treatment and care by supporting local NGOs and health systems, CBOs, communities and people living with HIV/AIDS in a holistic manner. With the memory work project, [aidsfocus.ch](http://aidsfocus.ch) will take up a promising methodological approach to the psychosocial support of children and people living with HIV/AIDS, an approach that also plays a constructive role in the support of people preparing for and undergoing treatment.

## aidsfocus.ch: Options for NGOs (the “flower”)



### Clinical systems

Comprehensive treatment and care pilot programme in Swaziland (SRK)  
 Formation, monitoring of treatment, témoignage (MSF)  
 ART services scaling up (MSF)  
 Blood safety (SRK)  
 Integrate ART in health systems (SolidarMed)  
 Embarking on HAART at district level (MSF)  
 In future: Health services related to HIV/AIDS (A. Schweizer)  
 Should do more on therapy to help people live with their family longer (Bethlehem Mission)

### Health Systems

Strengthening local health systems (SolidarMed)  
 Basic medical care in rural areas, strengthening local institutions in health care (SolidarMed)  
 Be partner for capacity building: Health Service Personal (Bethlehem Mission)  
 Strengthen partnership with comprehensive care capacities (NGOs, PLWHA) (MSF)  
 Facilitate links between FBOs and medical actors (Tear Fund)  
 Aide à la décentralisation (MSF)  
 Appui aux structures (IAMANEH)

### Psychosocial support

Psychosocial support of vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS (TdH)

Psychosocial support for orphans (A. Schweizer)  
 Organize training programmes in psychosocial counselling / Memory work at national level (CO-OPERAID)

Psychosocial support for OVC (TDH-Lausanne)

### Socioeconomic support

Socio-economic support and reducing poverty (Fastenopfer)  
 Take care of and accompany AIDS patients, feeding scheme (Bethlehem Mission)

### Human Rights/ Stigma

Lobbying and advocacy on Human Rights (TDH Lausanne)  
 Strengthen civil society, community building, Human Rights (Bethlehem Mission)

### Involvement of PLWHA and communities

Strengthen CBOs (TdH)  
 Access to information, triage to treatment (IAMANEH)  
 Travail avec les jeunes (IAMANEH)  
 Partenariat avec ONG locales, décentralisation (IAMANEH)  
 Community based health initiatives (SolidarMed)  
 Provide Africans in Switzerland with opportunities to be active in their countries on HIV/AIDS (SAF)

### Prevention

Prevention of HIV (SRK)  
 HIV/AIDS Prevention in Eastern Europe (IAMANEH)  
 Prevention (Fastenopfer)  
 Prevention (TDH-Lausanne)  
 Information on prevention in schools (CO-OPERAID)

### Multisectoral approaches

Mainstreaming AIDS (sdc)  
 HIV in emergency situations (sdc)

### Policy

Promotion de stratégies PeC VIH/sida dans le système de Santé (IUED)  
 Formation et recherche, politiques publiques (IUED)  
 Internat. dimension of Swiss Aids Strategy (BAG)

### Advocacy

Lobby CH gvt: funding, implement DOHA, patent (FGC and BAG)  
 Lobby, advocate international/ multilateral organisations (MSF, MMS)  
 Pression, mise en concurrence (prix) (MSF)  
 Pression (brevets, ressources, prix médicaments) (Déclaration de Berne)  
 Information public suisse (Décl. Berne)

### Coordination, Networking and partnerships

Sharing experience and information (FGC and MSF)  
 Be partner in regional, national and international networks (Bethlehem Mission)  
 Coordinate in Mozambique with MSF to learn from their ARV experiences, etc. (SolidarMed)  
 Partner support (IAMANEH)  
 Facilitate partnerships between NGOs N-S, S-S (UNAIDS)

### Technical support

Support logistique et administrative (TDH-Lausanne)  
 Technical support (SDC, STI)