



Minutes of the Annual Meeting of **aidsfocus.ch**, the Swiss platform on HIV/AIDS and international cooperation

December 1, 2009, 13.45 p.m. – 16.45 p.m., Kornhausforum, Kornhausplatz, Berne

Agenda

Part 1: Formal Part (13.45 – 15.00)

- 1. Minutes of the Annual Meeting 2008**
- 2. Annual Report 2008/09 (till June 2009)**
- 3. Accounts 2008**
- 4. Activities planned for 2010**
- 5. Theme of the **aidsfocus.ch** conference in spring 2010**
- 6. Election / confirmation of members of the Steering Committee**
- 7. Varia**

Part 2: Sharing of experiences and discussion (15.20 – 16.45)

Solution focused approaches in working with youth in the context of HIV, AIDS and violence in Southern and Eastern Africa. With an input by Irene Bush (terre des hommes), a short film and discussion.

Participants:

Steering Committee: Vreni Wenger (SRC, Moderation), Rao Satapati (CO-OPERAID), Daniel Bruttin (Swiss AIDS Federation), Kate Molesworth (STI), Coordinator: Helena Zweifel (aidsfocus.ch/ MMS).

Partners: Ulrich Bachmann (TearFund), Irene Bush (terre des hommes switzerland), Martina Durrer (Fastenopfer), Jochen Ehmer (SolidarMed), Viviane Fischer (IAMANEH), Gabriele Hansch (SRC), Stefan Hoffmann (Kwa Wazee), Tony Jungo (INTERTEAM), Franziska Lauper (terre des hommes switzerland), David Schwitter (World Vision Switzerland), Barbara Schär, Charles Senessie (AEMRN), Stefan Siebenhaar (Bethlehem Mission Immensee), Gabriela Wichser (terre des hommes switzerland).

MMS: Martina Staenke (Minutes).

Guests: Erich Friemel, Stefan Germann (World Vision International), Christa Graf, Rina Bohner Perolini, Nathalie Vesco (SDC).

Apologies: Frank Boshold (Kindernothilfe Schweiz), Patrick Durisch (Berne Declaration), Linus G. Jauslin (Aids & Kind), Jochen Kirsch (mission 21), Lis Füglistner (medico international schweiz), Yanik Marguerat (Fédération genevoise de coopération), Ignacio Packer (Terre des Hommes Foundation), Veronique Schöffel (cinfo), Sacha Sidjanski (Esperanza Medicines), Sibylle Vogt (Aids-Hilfe Bern), Maria Winiger (Caritas Schweiz).

Welcome

Vreni Wenger, member of the steering committee, welcomes the participants in the name of aidsfocus.ch and leads through the assembly. 15 of 31 partners are present as well as representatives from SDC, World Vision International and MMS.

Part 1: Formal Part

1. Minutes of the Annual Meeting, December 2, 2008

The minutes are approved.

2. Annual Report 2008/ 09 (till June 2009)

Vreni Wenger appreciates the report of the co-ordinator as a good and reader friendly summary of the achievements and activities of aidsfocus.ch in the period described.

The annual report is approved.

3. Accounts 2008

Helena Zweifel comments the slightly differing figures: On expenditures, higher figures were budgeted than actually used for example for the website and the e-Bulletin, because contrary to the original intention the website was not yet restructured. Equally on the income, higher partner organisation fees were budgeted than the accounts show. Aidsfocus.ch had hoped to find new members, but unfortunately this did not materialise, and besides, two organisations even left (MSF 2008/ IBK 2009).

The coordinator shares her view on how to generate additional income: The partner organisations could support aidsfocus.ch by paying special contribution fees. She mentions the example of the Swiss Red Cross, which supports aidsfocus.ch with an annual contribution of CHF 6000.- since many years and which has already promised to continue for the next three years (2009-2012). Another proposal submitted by Ignacio Packer at the last meeting of the steering group suggests the doubling of the membership fee on a voluntary base (CHF 1000.- instead of CHF 500.-). Terre des Hommes Foundation expressed its readiness to pay the double in future.

Aidsfocus.ch relies as before primarily on the generous contribution by SDC of an annual CHF 76,000.-. In addition to the annual contribution by the Swiss Red Cross, the Swiss AIDS Federation contributed to the conference as well.

The accounts 2008 are approved.

4. Activities planned for 2010: World AIDS conference 2010 in Vienna

- Annual conference in April 2010
- New edition of the memory work toolkit, with a solution focused approach
- World AIDS Conference, 18-23 July 2010, Vienna
- Website and aidsfocus.news

Toolkit and World AIDS Conference

Building upon the success of aidsfocus.ch, it is planned to publish a new edition of the „Memory Work“ Toolkit. The coordinator reports that the Toolkit should be presented and

the World AIDS Conference in July 2010 in Vienna. Together with terre des hommes schweiz, which is also financially supporting the project, the texts will be reviewed and complemented by the solution-focused approach.

At the World AIDS Conference, it is also planned to cooperate with terre des hommes schweiz and to host an information booth and a poster presentation; perhaps this could serve as a kind of „Meeting Point“. Helena Zweifel invites all organisations to present their work for example in the form of a poster presentation. February 10, 2010 is the deadline to submit the abstracts.

Further Ideas and Inputs:

World Vision International: Stefan Germann reports that there will be an international symposium on children affected by HIV and AIDS two days before the conference. This may represent a good opportunity to introduce the new Toolkit. And, WVI is planning an exhibition of photography on children and HIV and AIDS in Eastern Europe and Central Asia intending to reflect the work that is being done there.

SolidarMed: Jochen Ehmer states that SolidarMed equally plans to represent its ART-treatment projects in Africa by means of a poster presentation.

Swiss AIDS Federation: On the occasion of a joint meeting of German Austrian and Swiss AIDS Federations and Alliances for action against Aids (in which aidsfocus.ch took also part), according to the report by Daniel Bruttin, it was not possible to agree on a joint action due to the differing focus in the everyday work of each organisation. However, the Alliances for action against Aids will organise a solidarity march open to everybody for participation.

Aidsfocus.ch website

The revision of the website has been planned for 2010. Owing to Kate Moldesworth, aidsfocus.ch has received an interesting offer that made realisation finally possible.

5. Theme of the aidsfocus.ch conference in spring 2010

The coordinator introduces the three themes proposed by the Steering Committee.

1. HIV/AIDS and its impact on developing countries
2. HIV/AIDS and food security.
3. Solution-focused approaches in working with people affected by HIV and AIDS

Discussion: Theme 1: Rao Satapati proposes to complement the first theme by the global economic developments and rename it: „HIV/Aids and the World Economic Crisis. Effects on the development countries“. Gabrielle Hansch emphasizes this proposal and refers to a report recently published by MSF called „Punishing success“. This report shows how dangerous it can get for the Aids patients when large donors (such as for example PEPFAR etc.) curtail their financial contributions to Aids patients.

Theme 2: Kate Molesworth particularly advocates theme 2. Food insecurity in Africa (and also in other world regions) has been a major driver for the HIV and AIDS epidemic. The focus should be on food security and livelihoods. Especially in terms of the ART Therapy, it is vital that food is provided to support ART programmes. In her opinion, the topic is very timely for several reasons: First, many NGOs and partners of aidsfocus.ch are involved in this approach in Africa. Secondly, there are discussions at UN-level about the value of food security support in approaches to HIV and AIDS; and the World Food Programme is currently rewriting its policy on HIV and AIDS.

Irene Bush opts for the theme 3, the solution-focused approach (SFA). Her experiences show that in particular Aids-affected youth benefit from this work in a very special way. For those organisations that are working with SFA, the approach seems to function like a „Mind Set“ as it is opening up new perspectives. Tony Jungo supports this approach as well, as in

connection with a new edition of the Toolkit, the theme would mean to focus on Memory Work as well as on the direct work with the clients.

Stefan Germann shares another theme: **The future of the global HIV/AIDS response. Its implications for Swiss NGOs.** According to some critical minds, the financial crisis continues to have a negative effect on the distribution of international financial resources. If so, specifically projects in connection with HIV and Aids could be concerned, because the orientation of many Aids projects is criticised to be too one-sided ("exceptionalism response"). What does this development mean for the future of those NGOs that work in this field?

Jochen Ehmer considers this topic to have greatest relevance. In his eyes it is very important to discuss the road Swiss organisations need to take in view of the global changes that are to be expected in the future.

The discussion that followed led to the conclusion that no further theme should be considered, but theme 1 and theme 2 should be integrated under a new title.

Hence, the following themes were put to vote:

Theme 1: The global AIDS response:

- I. Macro level issues of the global changes.
- II. What are the special implications of these macro level changes for NGOs in the next years? Focus on micro level aspects such as treatment, treatment as prevention, food security, psychosocial programmes etc.

Theme 2: Solution-focused approaches in working with people affected by HIV and AIDS

Decision: The aidsfocus.ch conference on April 14, 2010 will be devoted to the issue of „**Macro level change and impact on NGOs**“ (9 votes for theme 1; 4 votes for theme 2;).

The coordinator invites all interested parties to join the accompanying group that prepares the Conference. Rao, Gabriele and Kate are ready to join the group. Stefan Germann will contribute with contacts. More interested parties are most welcome.

6. Election / Confirmation of the Steering Committee

The following members stand up for re-election: Vreni Wenger (Swiss Red Cross), Rao Satapati (CO-OPERAID), Ignacio Packer (Foundation Terre des hommes), Daniel Bruttin (Swiss AIDS Federation) and Kate Molesworth (Swiss Tropical Institute).

According to the report of the coordinator, Ignacio Packer will only be available for another year. Helena Zweifel would highly welcome if his office in the Steering Committee could be replaced by a representative again from the French speaking part of Switzerland.

Decision: All present-day members are unanimously confirmed in their office.

The coordinator thanks all members of the Steering Committee. In particular, she thanks Vreni Wenger who as member of the Core group is available to the coordinator for everyday business and urgent decisions and thus offers very appreciated support. A round of applause expresses the participants' gratitude for the commitment of Vreni Wenger and the other members of the Steering Committee.

Part 2: Sharing of experiences and discussion

Solution focused approaches in working with youth in the context of HIV, AIDS and violence in Southern and Eastern Africa. With an input by Irene Bush (terre des hommes), a short film and discussion.

The solution focused approach (SFA): The SFA was developed by Steve de Shazer and

Insoo Kim Berg as a therapy model. Apart from being a therapy-model, the solution focused approach is also a way of thinking. It is important to understand that the mindset is the most important and the most powerful part of it. If you are working with a SF-mindset you don't give advice, but you are listening very carefully and ask helpful questions, focus on what worked and focus on the next little step. People working with SFA are convinced that everybody has resources to make her or his life better.

SFA: Core Features

1. If it's not broken, don't fix it
2. If something is working, do more of it
3. If it is not working, do something different
4. Small steps can lead to large changes
5. The solution is not necessarily directly related to the problem
6. The language requirements for solution development are different from those needed to describe a problem
7. No problem happens all the time. There are always exceptions that can be utilized
8. The future is both created and negotiable

After this general introduction Irene Bush leads over to **Youth 2 Youth (Y2Y) project - Focusing on Solutions**. terre des homes schweiz (tdh) realized that due to the AIDS pandemic youth assume an important role in supporting each other in Southern and Eastern Africa. They have to cope with tasks and responsibilities of adults. Learning to discover one's own resources has shown also among vulnerable children and youth a potential, which has been broadly under-utilized. To initiate the program, tdh invited 6 youth volunteer-workers as well as African experts to a consultation on the curriculum. Therese Steiner, international expert on SFA facilitated this workshop and helped to develop and implement the youth program.

The aim of this consultation was to find out:

- a) What kind of skills youth need to work better in the communities?
- b) How shall we set up this program to involve youth in the work of their organisations?

After these consultations, tdh designed the capacity-building program in solution-focused approach according to the needs of the youth.

The main objectives of the project are:

- To refine the quality of interventions working with children and youth
- To facilitate an institutional learning, how organisations can strengthen the role of children and youth, mobilizing their resources and capacities in their programs

At the end of the pilot course in May 2008 the 24 participants of the Y2Y program presented their projects to the directors of the participating organisations. It was a touching moment, because they have achieved far more than tdh has expected (example of their work is shown in a short film).

After the film Irene Bush invites the audience to participate in a partner exercise on "highlights" in order to practice the approach with the help of the following guiding questions:

- Ask your colleague to choose a situation at work when she or he was successful.
- Explore in details with the ,w' questions how they did it: How, what, when, where with whom...
- What did you do, that it turned out well, what else was important?
- What was remarkable in that particular situation?
- How did it start?
- Which of your competence and strength were helpful?
- What would others say did you do that was helpful?

Discussion: Convincing and productive! This was the first spontaneous reaction of some of the participants after concluding the exercise. Irene Bush explained that she has had the

same feeling after she made this experience for the first time. And in particular, the following example had convinced her: In a meeting led by Insoo Kim Berg it was about counseling a father of a family who had beaten up his wife into the hospital ever so often. Berg asked the following introductory question: „How did you manage not to kill the woman?“ Irene was mostly impressed by this question because it shows that even in seemingly hopeless situations there may be one last resource – even if it is a tiny one.

As was shown by the partner exercise and what was time and again mentioned in the course of the discussion, the solution-focused mindset requires another basic attitude: It is not beneficial to let oneself be drowned in the present difficulties, much rather, it is important to change the perspective and to turn to something positive that lies ahead. In order to practice this mindset in one's own organisation, tdh has introduced the 50:50-rule for example for team meetings: positive and negative reports must be balanced. Even the annual planning has a different focus: No business as usual with the analysis of the difficulties, but the success stories are put in the limelight; hence, the attention turns to the resources – according Irene's experiences this is a wonderful thing.

When she was asked about the practical implications of the approach in view of the almost 40 Million people infected by HIV worldwide, Irene repeats the essence of the method: It is true that this approach is not to be seen as a cure-all, but the people receive a strategy to apply which makes it easier to cope with difficult situations. By particular ways of working with the people and the attitude you show to them they feel that THEY already carry the solution in themselves. They are the experts, they themselves carry the resources in themselves that simply need to be mobilised. It is the particular perspective, which makes the SF approach so attractive in development cooperation, because if the people concerned are themselves the experts, then all solutions will be adapted to each cultural background and to the context of the people.

When Helena Zweifel asked whether something of the approach discussed earlier could be applied in one's own organisation, two participants came up with a similar view. They rate the approach as a valuable method to plan projects as it requires a completely different approach: Instead of implementing one's own plans and ideas in development cooperation, it is much rather important to ask the people concerned directly what they need and how they view the support. This is a challenge to all experts working in the field of development cooperation, because this kind of project planning requires time and patience – but may be rewarded with a higher success rate.

11. Thanks and farewell

Helena Zweifel expresses her thanks to Irene Busch for her valuable input and to all participants for their coming. She invites everyone to an Apéro following the official part and afterwards to the Public screening of the film "Memory Books. Damit du mich nie vergisst", followed by a discussion with the filmmaker Christa Graf.

For the minutes:

Basel, December 2009

*Martina Staenke
Medicus Mundi Switzerland*