

OPERATIONAL GUIDE ON

GENDER



HIV/AIDS

A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH



Prepared for the
UNAIDS Interagency Task Team on Gender & HIV/AIDS

2005



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Foreword

The 2003 initiative of the UNAIDS Inter-agency Task Team on HIV/AIDS and Gender reflects the enhanced concern of the international community that the escalating impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on women and girls globally is occurring in the context of profound gender, class, age and other inequalities.

The Resource Pack sets out the status of the AIDS epidemic globally and how it links with gender based inequality and inequity. It analyses the impact of gender relations on the different aspects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and makes recommendations for effective programme and policy options. It includes a review paper for expert consultation 'Integrating gender into HIV/AIDS Programmes' prepared by Geeta Rao Gupta, Daniel Whelan, and Keera Allendorf, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) on behalf of the WHO, and 17 Fact Sheets with concise information on gender related aspects of HIV/AIDS, prepared by the different UN agencies involved.

The Operational Guide, developed by the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), the Netherlands, seeks to give guidance to development practitioners by providing a coherent conceptual framework from a gender and rights perspective and a set of guidelines, checklists and tools for programme implementation. The guide represents the work of the KIT Social Development and Gender Equity team and associates. These include Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay, Marguerite Appel, Nandinee Bandopadhyay, Rangan Chakravarti, Emma Bell and Sue Enfield. Mirjam van Donck deserves specific acknowledgement for writing the final version of the guide.

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1. About this Operational Guide

Why this Operational Guide?

It is increasingly recognised that HIV/AIDS thrives on and intensifies inequalities. Put differently, the inadequate realisation of human rights facilitates the spread of HIV and worsens the impact of HIV/AIDS. Gender inequality and poor respect for the human rights of women and girls is a particularly critical factor in the HIV/AIDS epidemic:

- ♦ In 1997, four out of ten people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide were women. By 2004, women made up almost 50% of people living with HIV/AIDS. In countries where heterosexual transmission is the main mode of HIV transmission, women are more likely than men to be infected with HIV. In sub-Saharan Africa, close to six out of ten adults (15-49 years) infected with HIV are women. The highest 'gender gap' in HIV infection rates is recorded between young women and men between 15-24 years old. Understanding why women and girls are more likely to become infected with HIV brings us into the domain of gender relations and gender inequality.
- ♦ Because a growing number of women and girls are being infected with HIV, women and girls will make up a significant proportion of those requiring appropriate treatment and care. For those women and girls who are pregnant or who are breastfeeding their babies, it is not only their own health and lives that are at stake, but also that of their babies. Past experience has shown that there are many barriers to the realisation of women's right to health and to life. One of these obstacles is the tendency of households to spend more money on medical treatment for men than for women.¹ Other barriers relate to inadequate reproductive and sexual health services; negative attitudes of health workers towards women and girls, resulting in poor treatment; and, women's neglect of their own health needs, amongst others.²
- ♦ Women and girls, more than boys and men, are likely to assume responsibility for those who are sick and in need of care, like orphans. Because young adult women are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS, it is often elderly women and young girls who step into these roles. The burden of care is particularly heavy and onerous when public and private support services are lacking or unable to cope with the demand. Other impacts of the HIV/AIDS epidemic also tend to affect women, men, girls and boys differently. For example, girls are more likely than boys to be taken out of school to help out in the household and as a cost-saving measure.
- ♦ HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination tends to intertwine with and reinforce existing prejudices and inequalities. Women and girls are often blamed for bringing disease and death into the family, regardless of whether and how they may have contracted HIV.

Both from the point of view of effectiveness and from the perspective of social justice, HIV/AIDS programming must therefore take account of the gender dimensions of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. At the same time, addressing gender equality is possibly the most effective strategy in reducing vulnerability to HIV infection and in enhancing the capabilities of individuals, households and communities to cope with the consequences of HIV/AIDS. When the human rights of women and girls are truly respected and when women and girls are able to engage their male counterparts as equal partners in the household, the community, the workplace, at school and in politics, the epidemic will cease to spread so rapidly and will no longer cause such devastation.

The premise of the Operational Guide is that in order to enhance the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS programming:

- i) Inequalities based on gender relations have to be acknowledged and addressed;
- ii) The reduction of these inequalities should be integral to the strategic response to HIV/AIDS (as much as it should be integral to development programming in general);
- iii) The strategic response has to be informed by the experiences and perspectives of women and girls and should contribute to their empowerment;
- iv) The role of men and boys in promoting gender equality must also be addressed.

Purpose of this Guide

The Operational Guide tries to make the relationship between gender, human rights and HIV/AIDS obvious to those working in the development sector. More than that, it seeks to give guidance to development programmers and practitioners on how to keep these complex linkages in mind when going about their daily business. The Operational Guide gives this support by providing a coherent conceptual framework and a set of guidelines/checklists and tools. The checklists aim to provide HIV/AIDS programmers and other development practitioners with a tool to assess the extent to which their work contributes to gender equality. The tools are meant to help development programmers deepen their understanding of the linkages between gender, human rights and HIV/AIDS and respond strategically to these challenges. Of course, tools and techniques are hardly ever universally applicable. When applied in practice, the techniques and approaches presented in this Operational Guide have to be adapted to local circumstances.



The checklists and tools in this Operational Guide will be most valuable and effective if those directly affected by the proposed programme or intervention are involved. However, in choosing the tools and techniques an attempt has been made to propose tools that can be used by development programmers individually or collectively to initiate a gender and rights-based approach to HIV/AIDS programming and to development work more generally. From here, more participatory techniques and tools can be employed to deepen and entrench this approach.³

The Guide complements the paper *Integrating Gender into HIV/AIDS Programming* enclosed in this resource pack, which provides valuable information on what a gender approach to development entails. The paper also presents a more in-depth analysis, backed up by concrete examples, of how gender mediates vulnerability to HIV infection and how the impacts of HIV/AIDS (including the need for treatment and care) affect women, girls, men and boys differently.

Another useful resource in the resource pack is the fact sheet titled *HIV/AIDS, Gender and Human Rights*. This fact sheet summarises how human rights relate to HIV/AIDS, which human rights are most pertinent in relation to HIV/AIDS, and what human rights instruments and other important documents exist to address the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS.

Who this Guide is for

The Operational Guide aims to be helpful to people working in the development sector, whether they find themselves in government, international development organisations, NGOs or community organisations. It specifically targets those working in the field of HIV/AIDS, but it also hopes to be of use to development programmers and practitioners in a more general sense.

Whereas the first target group (HIV/AIDS programmers) is probably obvious for a Guide concerned with HIV/AIDS, the suggestion that it is also intended for those not working explicitly on HIV/AIDS may need some explaining. The starting point of this Guide is that gender, human rights and HIV/AIDS are inseparable from development. This is particularly the case in countries with a severe HIV/AIDS epidemic. It also applies to those countries where the epidemic is still latent, but where the possibility exists that HIV may spread rapidly in the near future. Recognising that these development challenges are interconnected means, for example, that those concerned with reducing poverty need to understand:

- ♦ How poverty affects women and men, girls and boys differently;
- ♦ How poverty is a manifestation of the inadequate realisation of basic rights to shelter, food, health, education, income, and so on;
- ♦ How poverty enhances vulnerability to HIV infection;
- ♦ How HIV/AIDS enhances poverty and how this is experienced differently by boys and girls, men and women.

Structure of the Operational Guide

The next section summarises what a gender and rights-based approach to HIV/AIDS means. It clarifies the key concepts and the linkages between these concepts. Because the emphasis in this Guide is on practice ('what' and 'how to') rather than theory, Section 2 is deliberately kept quite short. For those interested in more information, Appendix 1 describes the conceptual framework underpinning the Operational Guide in more detail.

Sections 3-6 identify four critical operational areas of development programmers: Programming (Section 3), Funding Support (Section 4), Communication (Section 5) and Networking & Advocacy (Section 6). It could be argued that participation and monitoring & evaluation are also important operational areas that should be taken into account. The approach adopted in this Guide is that participation and monitoring & evaluation are not

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