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# Technical Assistance for the World Food Programme's HIV and AIDS Response



**Capitalisation Series: SDC Supported Projects and Activities in HIV/AIDS**

A fact sheet elaborated in the frame of the 2009 SDC Backstopping Mandate with support from the Swiss Centre for International Health of the Swiss Tropical Institute

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## Introduction

The United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP) is active in over 80 countries worldwide. Since 2000 the WFP has directly engaged in the HIV and AIDS response with HIV and AIDS specific activities in over 40 countries. The agency also plays an important advocacy role and engages in internal mainstreaming through its HIV and AIDS in the Workplace programme.

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## Project Description

The goal of WFP's HIV and AIDS initiatives is to provide food and nutritional support to food insecure individuals and families who are infected with the virus and affected by AIDS. Main activities range from the provision of nutritional support to treatment and care programmes, as well as support to orphans and children affected by AIDS, school feeding programmes, food for work and assets, and coordination of prevention education with relief operations activities. The establishment of effective partnerships and gender mainstreaming are essential elements in WFP's HIV and AIDS activities.

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## Outcomes and Achievements

In order to optimise learning approaches of providing food security and nutritional support in response to the epidemic in food deprived countries, in November 2006 SDC supported WFP in its Mid-Term Evaluation of the Southern Africa Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation. Fieldwork for the evaluation was conducted in Malawi, Mozambique, Lesotho and Zimbabwe which are among the countries with the highest incidence of HIV and AIDS in the world.

Outcomes of the evaluation highlighted the vital role of food in the regional and national responses to the HIV epidemic in southern Africa. The generalised epidemic is driven by, and in turn, exacerbates a complex dynamic, perpetuating food instability and social inequalities that threaten the future recovery of the nations most heavily affected. As the virus is prevalent among the most productive members of society, food production has become inadequate and the resulting food insecurity leads to negative short-term coping strategies including the sale of production assets (cattle, seed, land, etc) and high-risk transactional sex to meet basic food needs.

On the basis of the findings of the Mid-Term Evaluation, SDC decided to support WFP in its broader and in-depth Thematic Evaluation of HIV and AIDS Interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa. The evaluation was conducted with additional field visits to Eastern (Uganda, Tanzania) and Western Africa (Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso) to complement previous findings from Southern Africa.

Specific HIV and AIDS activities were implemented in more than half of the countries assisted regularly by WFP and represented approximately 4% of the agency's overall food deliveries, and 2% of the total assisted beneficiaries. WFP's

advocacy efforts contributed to the inclusion of food assistance and nutrition support in the national AIDS planning documents in 32 countries where it is operational. Regarding the results of WFP HIV and AIDS activities, the M&E systems in the four case study countries were only partly developed and implemented. Consequently, there was very little evidence of analysis and reporting of results to convey the effectiveness of interventions and to guide the ongoing development of approaches. An unpublished study from Zambia reports a significantly higher increase in weight and adherence to treatment among food deprived HIV patients on antiretroviral treatment (ART) after 12 months of receiving WFP food assistance compared to a similar control group without nutritional support. Quantitative data also indicates that WFP take-home rations contribute to increased school enrolment and attendance among orphans and vulnerable children.

The overall assessment was that the World Food Programme plays a distinctive role in providing food and nutritional support to food deprived people living in HIV and AIDS affected households. As such, it requires appropriate human and financial resources to enable staff to fulfil WFP's responsibilities within the UNAIDS Division of Labour, as well as to achieve its own corporate objectives. The evaluation highlighted a constellation of factors that constrain staff in operationalising the WFP's HIV and AIDS policy and fulfilling its roles and responsibilities as a lead agency within the UNAIDS Division of Labour (DOL). The Thematic Evaluation made recommendations to WFP management concerning strengthening human resources and adapting staffing mechanisms to enhance and maintain adequate in-house HIV and AIDS expertise.

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## SDC Partnership

SDC is a donor to the World Food Programme, and committed to integrative and cross-sectoral responses to the global epidemic in collaboration with its partner countries and international organisations. SDC funded the HIV and AIDS specialist of the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Southern Africa Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation and the Team Leader of the broader and in-depth Thematic Evaluation of WFP's HIV and AIDS Interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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## More about this Project

Thematic Evaluation: [www.wfp.org/content/thematic-evaluation-wfps-hiv-and-aids-interventions-sub-saharan-africa](http://www.wfp.org/content/thematic-evaluation-wfps-hiv-and-aids-interventions-sub-saharan-africa)

WFP's approaches in response to HIV and AIDS: [www.wfp.org/hiv-aids](http://www.wfp.org/hiv-aids)