SOMMET KANANASKIS SUMMIT
CANADA 2002

TEAM REPORT

ICT for Health

CHAIRS

Government of Canada (CIDA)
UNDP
WHO

MEMBERS

Government of Canada
Hewlett-Packard
Inter-Agency Coalition on
AIDS and Development
International Development
Research Centre
OneWorld Africa
ResourceLinC

www.dotforce.org

ICT for Health

Mandate

The DOT Force mandate addressed by ICT for Health — Action Point 7 of the Genoa Plan of Action — is to examine ways to "enhance valuable uses of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in health education, knowledge sharing, monitoring, statistics and the delivery of care, and in meeting internationally agreed health targets, particularly in the areas of HIV/AIDS and other infectious and communicable diseases." The policy goal supported by ICT for Health is to "integrate and deploy ICT in health program delivery, with targets for health education, training and preventive detection." Particular attention is focussed on the expanded use of ICTs in the campaign against HIV/AIDS.

Stakeholder Engagement

A key initiative was to create a virtual network of organizations working to combat HIV/AIDS through the use of ICTs. The resulting network would build on existing initiatives and include partnerships with governments, the private sector, and non-profit and international organizations, and would be a focal point for the discussion of the use of ICTs in health and against HIV/AIDS. The DOT Force ICT for Health team formed an initial working group chaired by the Government of Canada (through the Canadian International Development Agency — CIDA) and co-chaired by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This group created a business plan that identified objectives for the international working group and for the creation of an ongoing network of health representatives to address the issue of health, HIV/AIDS and ICTs. The business plan focussed on building the network/coalition, creating a needs analysis survey and highlighting key initiatives.

In November 2001, the UNDP launched the Coalition for ICTs Against HIV/AIDS. The objectives of the Coalition and the DOT Force were discussed and plans established to combine the Coalition with the newly created DOT Force team on ICT for Health. The business plans for both were merged under a common plan of action. The DOT Force working group also recognized that the objectives were

---

Global summary of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, December 2001

Number of people living with HIV/AIDS	**Total**	**40 million**
	Adults	37.2 million
	Women	*17.6 million*
	Children under 15 years	2.7 million
People newly infected with HIV in 2001	**Total**	**5 million**
	Adults	4.3 million
	Women	*1.8 million*
	Children under 15 years	800 000
AIDS deaths in 2001	**Total**	**3 million**
	Adults	2.4 million
	Women	*1.1 million*
	Children under 15 years	580 000

UNAIDS

00 002-E-1 – 1 December 2001

World Health Organization

---

similar to those of the UN ICT Task Force (Sub-Committee on Health) and, at the UN ICT Task Force meeting in February 2002, it agreed to form a joint working group. The World Health Organization (WHO) became the co-chair along with the UNDP. This has resulted in enhanced membership, opportunities to involve developing countries and the private sector and to strengthen links to UN organizations. It has also formed the basis for ongoing activities beyond the time frame of the DOT Force.

Achievements and Initiatives

Although the working group focusses on a global scope, it acknowledges that the policy goal supported by ICT for Health is in alignment with the objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). With respect to health, the NEPAD report looks to ICTs to "mobilize resources for capacity building in order to enable all African countries to improve their health infrastructure and management." In response, the G8 leaders have identified knowledge and health as being among the five key areas for African development. Bearing in mind the effect of HIV/AIDS in the Africa region, the working group determined to maintain a global perspective with a strong focus on Africa.

Addressing the broad subject of ICT for Health, the working group focussed on two aspects in support of the mandate and goals: a needs assessment survey and possible initiatives for joint action.

Needs Assessment Survey

The Government of Canada (CIDA), with the support of the working group, undertook a needs assessment survey to examine ICTs from a health demand perspective and as a form of support in the fight against HIV/AIDS. This survey served to engage participation from a wider base of stakeholders with an emphasis on developing countries. The needs assessment report is available on the DOT Force Web site and will be disseminated through the networks of the working group members. It identified three areas where ICTs could be of most benefit in the health field and noted key examples on the appropriate ICT for each.

Education for Health Care Workers
The need for greater education and learning opportunities for health care workers was not restricted to any category of worker or to any particular field of interest. Rather, it was reflected in several common themes:
- access to journals, texts and databases;
- access to basic training material, especially for rural health workers;
- access to communication technology that enhanced the sharing of information and consultation with other professionals; and
- access to information with relevant local content and language.

The Internet, distance learning technologies and CD-ROMs in particular were identified as the optimum ICTs to meet these needs.

Preventive Information for the General Public (in particular for HIV/AIDS)
Support in the dissemination of preventive information for the general public, and in particular for HIV/AIDS, was seen as the most critical application for ICTs. While access to technology was an issue, the major concern was appropriate messages (e.g. local content, culturally and linguistically appropriate content) presented in a manner most effective in reaching and reinforcing messages to target groups. Radio was identified as a critical but under-utilized ICT. Television and CD-ROMs were also identified as important ICTs for communicating preventive messages.

Public Health Information Systems
The area of public health information offers significant opportunity for the use of ICTs. The need and capacity to collect and analyse information, measure outcomes, and disseminate information for decision making related to population-wide issues, especially HIV/AIDS, was specifically noted.

Identification and Development of Specific Initiatives

The following is a list of some activities to be developed which were highlighted by the international working group. They are categorized according to the findings from the survey.

Education for Health Care Workers
- Health InterNetwork — Demonstration Project Proposal for Africa (WHO)

The Health InterNetwork (HIN) aims to strengthen public health services by providing public health workers, researchers and policy makers with access to high quality, relevant and timely information through an Internet portal. The public health objective of this project is to improve the performance of health systems by strengthening the education and training of health professionals through the use of ICTs, with an initial focus on HIV/AIDS in Africa. The demonstration project of the HIN aims at creating learning centres to provide continuous education programs for health care providers which will be situated at schools of nursing, service training departments, teaching hospitals and nursing associations.

The intended beneficiaries will be nurses in training and those in practice. The project is intended to provide learning materials about HIV/AIDS for improving population health; to improve skills to enable an effective response to the HIV/AIDS health crisis in sub-Saharan Africa; and to strengthen the utilization of limited resources at the district level. The project will provide nurses the opportunity for access to other continuous education programs provided by other health providers. As a project output, the nurses will improve their communication and networking with other nurses in the region and globally.

Preventive Information for the General Public

- Twinning in HIV/AIDS Through ICT (ICAD and the Communication Initiative)

The Twinning Promotion and Facilitation Through ICT project will incorporate the use of ICTs as a means to improve the communication of lessons learned and best practices with respect to AIDS programming in Africa and facilitate twinning partnerships among AIDS service organizations (ASOs) in developed countries and similar organizations in Africa. Twinning partnerships between ASOs in developed, developing and emerging countries are being promoted globally as a way of enhancing the exchange of information, skills and expertise on HIV/AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support issues. The twinning concept acknowledges the global nature of the pandemic and supports the principle that community-based, non-governmental organizations, and research and other institutions can gain substantially from joint partnerships.

Twinning can be a cost-effective method contributing to improving the capacity and effectiveness of ASOs working to respond to the AIDS pandemic. The project will explore how dedicated Internet Web sites and discussion forums can be utilized to overcome communication gaps and support the development of activities such as joint programming, training and funding. The Steering Committee for this project includes representatives from Global AIDS Action Network, Asia Pacific Council of AIDS Service Organizations, Health & Development Networks (Thailand), ACCSI — Acción Ciudadana Contra el SIDA (Venezuela), AIDS Channel / OneWorld Africa, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Regional AIDS Initiative of Southern Africa / VSO South Africa.

- HIV/AIDS Awareness, Education and Prevention Edu-Telecentres for COMESA (Resource LinC)

The CAR Project, in a joint effort with the Secretary-General of COMESA, the Malawi Administration and the National AIDS Commission (NAC) in Malawi, will seek to implement Edu-Telecentres across the districts in Malawi, to be mirrored in Kenya, Uganda and Zambia, with other COMESA member countries to follow. Along with programs on HIV/AIDS, the CAR Project will provide programs to address women's empowerment, teacher training, distance learning and skills development, with ICTs as an integral component of the solution. The CAR Project

will identify gaps in the present HIV/AIDS education programs of Malawi's NAC, and develop a training plan within the communities to run a viable HIV/AIDS education and Edu-Telecentre program. The CAR Project will work with the NAC and the Malawi government to implement an innovative education program to address high-risk HIV attitudes and behaviours and to address gender issues, women's empowerment, job creation and skills development.

Next Steps

The following next steps have been developed by the international working group:

ICT for Health Working Group/Network: Continue to transition the DOT Force working group and the UN ICT Task Force (Sub-Committee on Health) as an ongoing group addressing ICT for Health. Further the development and integration of the Coalition for ICTs Against HIV/AIDS into the working group, with the aim of building a "network of resource networks" as a source of knowledge, examples of good practice and expertise for developing ICTs against HIV/AIDS initiatives. The working group will continue its efforts to increase the number of developing country participants.

Needs Assessment Survey: Promote the results of the Needs Assessment Survey and compare the results with initiatives put forward or already under way to determine gaps and areas for further development.

New Health and HIV/AIDS Initiatives: Work collectively to promote and further develop the initiatives listed above and other initiatives through interested stakeholders.

Connecting With Other DOT Force Initiatives: Given that many of these initiatives rely on education, access, local content, government's national health and HIV/AIDS strategies, the working group will examine cross-linkages with other DOT Force initiatives such as Local Content and Applications; Access and Connectivity; and Human Capacity, Knowledge and Education.

Connecting With Other Global Initiatives: Given that HIV/AIDS is a global issue, with serious consequences for Africa, the working group will examine methods of collaborating with other global HIV/AIDS initiatives and with regionally focussed initiatives such as the G8 Africa Action Plan and Education Task Force.

Reference Documents

- *Health, HIV/AIDS and Information and Communication Technologies: A Needs Assessment*

  This document is available at **www.dotforce.org**

- *HIV/AIDS and Information and Communication Technologies*, IDRC Report

  This document is available at **http://www.idrc.ca/ACACIA/HIV_AIDSfinaldraft.PDF**

- **www.sdnp.undp.org/ictaids**