

DFID

Department for International Development

Evaluation Department

Formative Evaluation of
*Taking Action: The UK's strategy for
tackling HIV and AIDS in the developing
world*

EVALUATION DESIGN PAPER

SHORT VERSION

AUGUST 2005

consultation document

(Comments requested by 30 September 2005)

PREFACE

This is the short consultation version of a design paper for the planned 2006 evaluation of *Taking Action: the UK's strategy for tackling HIV and AIDS in the developing world*. The longer version contains more details on the evaluation questions, approaches and samples. It can be accessed at <http://www.dfid.gov.uk> **Comments are welcome on either version and should be addressed to the evaluation manager – j-murray@dfid.gov.uk.**

This design paper was developed in close collaboration between the Evaluation Department (EvD) of the UK Department for International Development and HLSP Consulting. The main authors are **Julia Compton** of EvD and **Bob Grose** of HLSP, and it draws on the valuable work carried out by an evaluation framework team from HLSP led by **Wendy Roseberry** with **Jim Bennett, Bob Grose, Susan Beckerleg, Jackie Mundy, Mark Pearson, Alan Whiteside and Monika Zabel**.

Because this is a design paper for a formative (lesson-learning) evaluation, great demands have been put on the Evaluation Steering Group – not only to define and prioritise the evaluation questions and indicate which approaches are likely to be feasible, but to promote the evaluation through their own work with partners, ensuring that important evaluation questions can be included in joint country reviews and multilateral review mechanisms. Sincere thanks are due to the members of this group for their commitment and thoughtful contributions. Many of them are very busy people who put in extra time to make comments and help with this design. The Evaluation Steering Group includes **Hans-Martin Boehmer** (Chair) (DFID Head of Human Development Group, Policy Division), **Jenny Amery** (DFID Asia Policy Dept); **Sandy Baldwin** (DFID United Nations, Conflict & Humanitarian Division); **Mike Battcock** (DFID Civil Society and Communications Unit); **Phil Cockerill** (DFID Policy Division, Global AIDS Policy Team, Statistics Adviser); **Madeline Church and colleagues** (UK Consortium on AIDS and International Development and member NGOs); **Jeanelle de Gruchy** (DFID, Africa Policy Dept); **Kerstin Hinds** (DFID Corporate Strategy Group); **Mary Jane Hunt** (DFID International Division, Cabinet); **Sue Kinn** (DFID Central Research Department); **Andrew Long** (DFID Central Research Department); **Jane Pepperall** (DFID Africa Policy Department); **Louisiana Lush** (DFID International Division Advisory Department); **Lisa Maguire** (FCO Global Economics Dept); **Malcolm McNeil** (DFID Europe Middle East and Americas Division); **Kay Orton** (Dept. of Health, HIV Services and Sexual Health Promotion);, **Sheila Round** (DFID Policy Division, Aid Effectiveness Team); **Carolyn Sunners** (DFID Europe Middle East and Americas Division) and **Tim Waites** (DFID Policy Division, Social Protection Team, Livelihoods Adviser). We are also grateful for the very helpful inputs from other 'friends of the evaluation' including **Robin Gorna**, Head of DFID Global AIDS Policy Team, **Angela Bester**, DFID South Africa; **Svetlana Pkhidenko**, DFID Russia, **Robin Owen**, National Audit Office, and our colleagues from EvD. Many more people have been interviewed - we thank them for their inputs and regret that they are too many to list here.

Many thanks are also due to **Masood Ahmed**, Director General (Policy and International), DFID, who is the 'evaluation champion' for this evaluation. Masood has outlined key evaluation questions from the perspective of the DFID Top Management Group and has also helped raise the profile of this evaluation.

John Murray of EvD is the manager of this evaluation. Any questions or comments should be addressed to him at j-murray@dfid.gov.uk

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE

The UK Government's new AIDS strategy (*'Taking Action: the UK's strategy for tackling HIV and AIDS in the developing world'*, referred to here as *'Taking Action'* or *'TA'*) was launched by the Prime Minister in July 2004. The Department for International Development (DFID) is the lead government department for implementing *Taking Action*, working together with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Department and Health (DoH) and others. The Government has committed significant funding for HIV and AIDS: at least £1.5 billion over 3 years, up from £270 million in 2002/3.

This 'formative' (lesson-learning) evaluation of *Taking Action* will run during 2006 and report at the end of the year (see page 6 for details). It will be carried out by independent consultants. This is a short version of the design paper for the evaluation. It sets out the main questions the evaluation will address and proposes some approaches to answering them.

The objective of this evaluation is to make recommendations in four areas:

1) to improve implementation and monitoring of the current strategy

Taking Action runs from 2004-2008. One important aim for this evaluation is to spot areas where implementation of the strategy is proving challenging, and to stimulate debate about how best to tackle these. This debate will be an important part of the evaluation process during 2006.

2) on indicators of success for the final evaluation of *Taking Action* in 2008/9

Taking Action represents a large commitment in resources for the UK Government. The final evaluation of the strategy, planned for 2008-9, will assess whether those resources have been well used for the purpose intended. This is far from straightforward, as the UK Government works within a complex international effort to tackle multiple facets of HIV and AIDS. For this reason, another important aim of this formative evaluation is to propose and discuss the indicators of success and approaches to the final evaluation.

3) for the UK Government's next steps on AIDS from 2008

Taking Action represents an ambitious attempt to tackle multiple facets of the HIV and AIDS crisis in the developing world. This evaluation will examine some of the experience gained to date and help the UK Government to decide on its future priorities and approaches.

4) regarding future UK (especially DFID) strategies on development issues

Taking Action and its spending targets were launched at a time when UK development aid is increasingly moving towards a 'country-led approach' to development. *Taking Action* is therefore an important test case for the following question, which is at the heart of current debates on how best to manage development aid: "As a donor country we have things we wish to achieve, policies we would like implemented, spending targets we need to meet. How do we square those with letting countries choose priority policies, sectors and manage donors themselves?" The evaluation should therefore throw up interesting lessons for other development strategies.

A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

The methodology proposed for this evaluation is influenced by three important needs:

- getting the high-quality information necessary to improve UK policy and practice, by answering the questions in the Table of Questions and Approaches (**TQA**) below.
- adhering to the UK's international agreements to harmonise with other donors and minimise the burden of evaluation on national governments and other partners
- covering the very large and complex area of tackling HIV and AIDS with a limited budget

In this context, it is proposed that:

- The evaluation will **not** normally seek to attribute specific development outputs or outcomes (for example: number of people treated with ARV drugs) to UK support, since the UK government is part of a large international effort to tackle HIV and AIDS, co-funding with many partners. The evaluation will instead concentrate on UK government *policy, systems and choices of partners*, and ask if and how these could be improved to get better and more cost-effective outcomes.
- Most of the information will come from critical analysis of the **data in existing reviews and reports**. There are already a large number of existing reviews of many aspects of HIV and AIDS work, including overarching international reviews by UNAIDS. The **TQA** (full version) indicates how these might be analysed to extract much of the information needed by the evaluation. For example, comparative analysis of existing reviews of different partner organisations may give useful information about their comparative effectiveness and efficiency.
- Some of the information (e.g. understanding decision making) will still need to come from **individual interviews and group discussions** with UK staff and programme partners. Video conferencing and phone interviews will be used whenever possible to cut costs and minimize the burden for country offices and partners.
- Whenever possible, the evaluation will tackle questions through **joint reviews** rather than individually. However, for this to work it means that country *Joint Assessment Reviews* and *reviews of international organizations* need to include sufficiently probing questions, for example on the performance of donors (including DFID) and multilateral partners, and to collect good quality information to answer these. EvD will be working with DFID country offices, international divisions and other key partners (e.g. FCO) to promote joint evaluation work and see whether the questions in the **TQA** can be covered.
- **Choice of countries for further study:** Country visits will be used to answer evaluation questions that cannot reasonably be answered any other way. The benefit of country visits is that they enable evaluators to verify and better understand information in reports, and to hear the views of local programme partners who might not otherwise have a voice in the evaluation. The challenge is to collect high-quality information while being aware of the need to minimize the time burden on partners. About six countries will be selected to represent various country contexts, for example countries emerging from conflict and countries where UK aid is largely channeled through budget support to the government, as well as a variety of HIV and AIDS conditions (early and established epidemics). The full version of this design paper includes the full list of proposed criteria for country selection.

SHORT TABLE OF QUESTIONS AND APPROACHES (TQA).

| Question no./level | Question | Expected ‘evaluation product’ (W- working paper or S- section of main report) |
|--------------------|---|---|
| 1 | How is <i>Taking Action</i> being implemented to date? Can this be improved? | Recommendations to improve implementation and monitoring of the current strategy, based on 1.1-1.6 |
| 1.1 | What progress has been made on <i>Taking Action</i> ’s six “priority actions”? (<i>Closing the funding gap, Strengthening political leadership, Improving the international response, Better national programmes, Long-term action, Translating strategy into action.</i>) What are the lessons from these? | <p>S- Review of <i>progress</i>, challenges faced, lessons and recommendations. As <i>Taking Action</i> sets out over 90 activities and targets for the UK government under these six priority actions, only a limited sample will be examined for each – see Table A of the main design document for details.</p> <p>Key questions to cover: With which priority actions has the UK made clearest progress? Which have been the most challenging? Are there areas that need more UK attention and resources in the coming years? Are there areas that the UK should de-prioritise/ leave to others, and in what circumstances? Are there any interventions that have turned out to be inappropriate, and what are the lessons from these? The OECD-DAC criteria (see full version for explanation) should be considered throughout.</p> |
| 1.2 | Overall, does the distribution of current UK-supported HIV and AIDS activities reflect the priorities laid out in <i>Taking Action</i> ? If not, why not? | <p>W - Analysis of trends in DFID/OGD portfolio in 2006 since <i>TA</i> (2004-6). This should examine (at minimum) trends in the relative weight given to national and international work; to prevention, research, treatment, care and mitigation (including wider impact mitigation); to funding through government and civil society channels; to capacity-building; to programmes for universal access and those focusing on particular groups, and the balance between AIDS-specific actions and broader ‘enabling actions’ (e.g. predictable aid, health systems). Recommendations.</p> <p>Key questions to cover: Does the overall balance reflect <i>Taking Action</i>’s priorities? If not, what needs to change: the strategy, the implementation or both? Is the overall balance reasonable in terms of country needs/stage of epidemic and appropriate UK role? What hidden choices and opportunity costs are there?</p> |
| 1.3 | How is the UK government making decisions in practice, e.g. how are choices being made about partner institutions for tackling HIV and AIDS in developing countries? How can decision-making systems be improved? | <p>S - Analysis of decision-making at different levels of DFID and FCO, with recommendations for improvement.</p> <p>Key questions: How are needs and the UK’s comparative advantage assessed before taking programming decisions? How is the potential sustainability of actions (economic and institutional) assessed? How (if at all) are the 6 UNGASS targets highlighted at the front of <i>TA</i> considered in prioritising activities? How are changing external circumstances picked up, communicated and translated into changed policy and programming? What are the incentives for UK staff at different levels to implement <i>Taking Action</i>, both in programming UK funds and in influencing other institutions?</p> |
| 1.4 | What is the UK’s experience with moving to “country-led” aid instruments (see Objective 4 and next column for more explanation) regarding HIV and AIDS programming? What are the lessons on managing this? | <p>S - Review of effect of move to country-led aid instruments, e.g. Poverty Reduction Strategies, PR Budget Support, Sector Programmes, etc. on level of commitment and resources going to HIV and AIDS. Lessons from best practice; recommendations.</p> <p>Key questions: How do country offices manage the tension between promoting a country-led agenda and promoting specific priorities in <i>Taking Action</i>, e.g. human rights, equity, etc – what approaches have been tried and what lessons are there (see 1.5)? Do country offices have access to timely information on spending</p> |

| Question no./level | Question | Expected 'evaluation product' (W- working paper or S- section of main report) |
|--------------------|---|---|
| | | by partner governments and is this used? Have there been any cases of waning commitment to tackling AIDS (in the broad sense) from national governments – in what circumstances, and how has the UK responded – both at country level and through international institutions such as the Global Task Team? How have capacity gaps been addressed? Have country-led instruments led to any improvements in issues such as ability to utilise funds (budget execution), sustainability of programmes etc? |
| 1.5 | How is <i>Taking Action's</i> specific focus on “women, young people and vulnerable groups” being interpreted by UK government decision-makers? Is a significant proportion of funding and benefits reaching these priority groups? If not, how can this be improved? | <p>W - Analysis of decisions and challenges faced, and recommendations, based on a sample of the 40+ commitments made in <i>TA</i> (see Table B of main design document) Analysis of trends in DFID portfolio in 2006 since <i>TA</i> (2004-6) with reference to country and international data. Within the limitations of the data, an estimate of to what degree joint / country programme funding is going to priority group beneficiaries. Desk review of a sample of recent reviews of country programmes, and follow-up with country staff. Discussion of issues raised, and recommendations.</p> <p>Key questions: How does the UK government balance this focus on the most vulnerable with <i>Taking Action's</i> other focus on donor harmonisation and alignment with countries' own policies? (see also 1.4). What are the lessons from different approaches tried, e.g. for funding local civil society organisations to support vulnerable groups, for advocacy, etc?</p> |
| 1.6 | Are appropriate UK Government systems and staff resources in place to implement <i>Taking Action</i> ? | <p>S- Analysis of dedicated UK staff resources and systems for tackling HIV and AIDS in developing countries, as well as wider staff skills and time resources for addressing key 'enabling environment' issues (for example health systems, AIDS and rural livelihoods). Review of HIV and AIDS monitoring in DFID/OGD government information systems. Recommendations for improvements.</p> <p>Key questions: [<i>UK staffing</i>] Are the roles of different staff and the division of labour clear and coherent? Do staff have adequate knowledge and skills? Are decisions about staffing for HIV and AIDS-related work (both specific and 'enabling environment') based on assessment of needs and the UK's relative advantage vs. other donors? What lessons can be learned from different approaches tried to manage decreasing UK government administrative and staff budgets (“Doing More with Less”)? [<i>Monitoring and lesson learning</i>] What experience is there with UK systems for tracking, monitoring and lesson learning on HIV and AIDS? How well do UK systems fit with international systems? How are specific target groups monitored (see also 1.5)? How is non-health sector work and 'enabling environment' work monitored? What experience is there with communication strategies? Is up-to-date- guidance available for staff on key issues? How could systems be improved?</p> |
| 2 | How should the success of <i>Taking Action</i> be measured in the final evaluation of the strategy in 2008/9? | Proposed indicators and approaches for the final evaluation of <i>Taking Action</i> in 2008/9 |
| 2.1 | <i>Taking Action</i> includes over 130 specific commitments for UK government action (see 1.1 and 1.5). In the light of experience, are these still | W - Analysis of the indicators (explicit or implicit) already set out in <i>Taking Action</i> (these are also summarised in Tables A and B of the main design document), in light of findings on <i>TA's</i> current relevance (3.1) and lessons from its implementation (Q1). Recommendations for indicators and approaches for 2008/9 evaluation, including data sources and how data should be |

| Question no./level | Question | Expected 'evaluation product' (W- working paper or S- section of main report) |
|--------------------|--|--|
| | the most relevant targets against which to measure the success of UK strategy? If not, how should success be measured? | measured and reported (international or harmonised data sources whenever possible). |
| 3 | What lessons does <i>Taking Action</i> hold for future UK strategy on AIDS - and other development issues? | Recommendations for (a) the UK Government's next steps on tackling HIV and AIDS in the developing world (from 2008) (b) other future UK strategies on development issues, based on 3.1-3.3 |
| 3.1 | Is <i>Taking Action</i> (still, in 2006) the most relevant strategy for the UK to adopt to tackle HIV and AIDS in the developing world? Are there major outstanding issues that are not adequately addressed in <i>TA</i> (bearing in mind that the UK is only one player among others)? What are the implications for future AIDS strategy? | <p>S - Short review of current priorities, progress against key international targets, major constraints and bottlenecks to tackling HIV and AIDS, identified from international reviews and for about six diverse case study countries. Review of priority actions of <i>Taking Action</i> in light of this, with any recommendations for current and future strategy.</p> <p>Key questions to cover: What are the main constraints to achieving (a) the six international AIDS targets highlighted in <i>Taking Action</i> (p.1) (b) other important HIV and AIDS objectives identified at country level? Are there important policy or programming issues which are not being adequately addressed? (bearing in mind that the UK is only one player and should not be expected to tackle everything.) Has the international situation (biological or institutional) changed significantly since <i>TA</i> was published – and does <i>TA</i> adequately consider future scenarios? Are there particular areas of work (e.g. post-conflict, food security) that need more clearly formulated UK strategy? Are there areas of work that could be safely left to others?</p> |
| 3.2 | How are the potential tensions between top-down AIDS targets and a flexible, country-led approach being managed? What are the lessons (a) for future UK AIDS strategy (b) for other UK development strategies? | <p>S- Review of evidence on the pros and cons of the UK-specific AIDS targets in <i>Taking Action</i>, especially the UK spending targets, on (a) the HIV and AIDS multisectoral response (b) health systems development (c) mainstreaming HIV and AIDS into other work (d) opportunity costs for other development programmes. This should include a review of how AIDS spending is calculated and an assessment of the additional spending generated by the target. Recommendations for future AIDS strategy and lessons for other strategies and spending targets. See also 3.3 (basis of spending targets) and 1.3 (incentives).</p> <p>Key questions: What is the evidence on the advantages and disadvantages of having a special AIDS spending target? How has this been managed? Have any problems been experienced with 'absorptive capacity' (ability to execute the budget and carry out planned activities) and how has this been managed?</p> |
| 3.3 | Taking Action has several interesting features: it is a cross-Whitehall strategy, contains spending targets, and was developed through a consultative process. What lessons can be learned for developing future strategies (AIDS and other) from the <u>process</u> of developing <i>Taking Action</i> ? | <p>S- Summary of lessons from the <i>process</i> of developing the <i>Taking Action</i> strategy. Recommendations for future strategy development processes.</p> <p>Key questions: What were the main challenges in developing <i>TA</i> - e.g. time, evidence base, consultation? How did it fit with other strategies? How were spending targets set? <i>Taking Action</i> is a cross-Whitehall strategy, led by DFID - what have been the advantages and disadvantages of this, compared to separate Departmental strategies?</p> |

PROPOSED OUTPUTS AND TIMING

The table below shows proposed outputs and timing. Interviews and field visits are expected to take place between approximately Feb-Oct 2006.

| Proposed date | Proposed product | Proposed topic | Proposed coverage | TQA questions |
|---|--|---|---|---------------|
| Feb-Mar 2006 | Inception report | Consultants' Inception Report for the formative evaluation of <i>Taking Action</i> | Preliminary review of written material; preliminary analysis of secondary data sources and identification of key data gaps; detailed methodology for field work phase | All |
| May 2006 | Working Paper 1 | Taking Action: a mapping study of UK funding and activities to tackle HIV and AIDS in the developing world. | Analysis of trends in UK Government funding and activities related to HIV and AIDS (in particular the DFID portfolio) since <i>Taking Action</i> (2004-6). Comparison to a baseline study carried out in April 2004. | 1.2, 1.5 |
| August 2006 | Working Paper 2 | Taking Action to Reach Women, Young People and Vulnerable Groups | Analysis of decisions and challenges faced, and recommendations, based on the mapping study (above) and a sample of the commitments in <i>TA</i> | 1.5 |
| December 2006 | Working Paper 3 | Measuring Success: Indicators and approaches for the final evaluation of Taking Action in 2008 | Analysis of the indicators (explicit or implicit) already set out in <i>Taking Action</i> , in light of findings on <i>TA</i> 's current relevance and lessons from implementation. Recommendations for indicators and approaches for 2008/9 evaluation, including an appraisal of the main data sources and proposals as to how data should be measured and reported (international or harmonised data when possible). To include a review of methodological lessons learnt from the current evaluation. | 2.1 |
| Feb-Oct 2006 | Short reports (if agreed) | Short country and other visit reports if appropriate. | To be decided by the Evaluation Steering Group. Likely to include short country summaries to feed back to the countries visited. | -- |
| Draft - Oct 2006 Final Report - Dec 2006 | MAIN REPORT | Formative evaluation of <i>Taking Action: the UK's strategy for tackling HIV and AIDS in the developing world</i> | The draft will be widely disseminated for comments. <i>Dissemination events for the final report are yet to be agreed – suggestions are welcome from those interested in participating.</i> | All |
| Jan 2007 | Recommendations | In DFID, EvD sends recommendations to operational departments, based on report recommendations | Relevant operational departments of DFID must respond to recommendations to outline the follow-up action they plan to take – or in some cases to explain why they do not agree. | All |
| Jul 2007 | Follow-up report | EvD follow-up of recommendations | Six month follow-up by EvD of action taken | -- |
| 2008-2009 (to be agreed) | <i>Final evaluation of Taking Action</i> | | <i>Evaluation questions and approach to be agreed, based on 'Measuring Success'.</i> | -- |