



## UN HIV/AIDS Theme Group



Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS  
**UNAIDS**  
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The UN HIV/ AIDS theme group is composed of representatives from UNIC, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNODC, WHO and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education.

The theme group is currently chaired by UNODC. In addition to coordinating all UN system activities regarding HIV/AIDS in Iran, the Theme Group also endorses and monitors activities supported by the UNAIDS program acceleration fund (PAF). The following activities were implemented through PAF in 2002 – 2003.

### 1. NGO Gathering on the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS

An NGO participatory workshop on the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS was held on 5 November 2002. Participants included representatives from 65 NGOs in 15 different provinces, members of the government's National Harm Reduction Committee and members of HIV/ AIDS Theme Group.



The workshop had the following outcomes:

- Awareness rising on HIV/AIDS issues among the NGO community and the general public through the wide press coverage of the event.
- Participating NGOs, government representatives and UN focal points had the opportunity meet and network
- It increased the expectations of NGOs regarding the assistance they can provide and receive for HIV/AIDS initiatives
- A preliminary training needs assessments
- Recommendations by NGOs on how they can contribute to the National Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control.

## 2. World Aids Day 2002

*“Perform trainings; create the culture. Bring about change in the behavior. Protect the innocent youth. I would do whatever deemed necessary.”*

*- President Mohammad Khatami on World AIDS Day 2002*

To mark World Aids Day 2002, the UN HIV/AIDS theme group designed 15 HIV/AIDS awareness billboards for various key locations across Tehran. “Live and let live” is the slogan of the two-year World AIDS Campaign 2002-2003, which will focus on eliminating stigma and discrimination

The Theme Group also participated in a large-scale event organized by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education. Nearly 4,500 Health Liaison Officers and HIV/AIDS experts from across the country attended the event. The Minister of Health and Medical Education, the UN Resident Coordinator a.i., the WHO EMRO Regional Director, the UNICEF Representative, the UNODC Representative, the Head of National Prisons Organization, the Deputy Minister of Education and the Head of the State Welfare Organization were amongst the key speakers at the event.



### **3. Briefing meetings of the Theme Group with International Experts**

- Mr. Ossama Tawil, UNAIDS country team leader for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) was invited to Iran from 28 February – 7 March 2003. During his stay, Mr. Tawil visited 2 triangular (HIV/STD/IDU) clinics in the north of Tehran, Tajrish (Taleghani Triangle Clinic) and west of Tehran. Discussions were held with the management teams on the modus operandi of these clinics. Roozbeh Psychiatric Hospital, where a pilot Methadone Maintenance Project is being implemented, the site of the National Drug Abuse Institute, which is being established at the Farabi Hospital premises and Rajaie Shahr Prison where a tri-angular clinic has been established, were also included in the agenda. Prison officials made a presentation on the activities of the Prison Organization in Iran with regards to HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Tawil was also one of the speakers at a 3-day workshop on “**A Preparatory Consultation for Strategic Planning of Drug Abuse Treatment and HIV/AIDS Prevention for I.R. of Iran**” organized by UNODC. Participants at the workshop included representatives from Ministry of Health & Medical Education, Prison Organization, Ministry of Education, State Welfare Organization, DCHQ, Law enforcement, NGOs, UNAIDS and UNODC Vienna and all members of the TG.

- Dr. George Ionita, UNICEF Regional HIV/AIDS Advisor, was invited to make a presentation HIV/AIDS and on the activities of the UNICEF regional office and their support for the TG.
- Mr. Taufiqur Rahman, Fund Portfolio Manager of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM) held a briefing session for the members of the Theme Group on the implementation of GFATM \$16 million approved allocation for HIV/AIDS prevention proposals presented by the Government of Iran.
- Dr. Suresh Kumar, WHO consultant, recruited from the 2000 PAF allocation, prepared a report “HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care for Injecting Drug Users in Iran: Best Practices from Kermanshah.”

### **4. The 14<sup>th</sup> International Conference on the Reduction of Drug-Related Harm**

The Theme Group organized a team of 16 Iranian experts for the **14<sup>th</sup> International Conference on the Reduction of Drug-Related Harm** in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The participants were supported by UNODC, UNFPA and UNAIDS. A panel session titled: “HIV/AIDS and Drug Use in the Middle East and North Africa: Harm Reduction as part of an Effective Response” was also organized and facilitated by the Chair of the Theme Group. Dr. Minoo Mohraz, Dr. Azarakhsh Mokri, Dr. Parviz Afshar as well as Mr. Oussama Tawil and an NGO from Lebanon made presentations on Harm Reduction initiatives in the region.

### **5. EHYA Crisis Hotline**

The TG supported the EHYA NGO’s efforts to establish a Crisis Intervention Hotline. Currently 46 trained counselors are working full-time on a voluntary basis.

## 6. NGO Training workshop on “Counseling on HIV/AIDS”



An NGO training workshop on “Counseling on HIV/AIDS” was implemented by the Research Institute for Rehabilitation and Improvement of Women’s Lives, with support from the Theme Group on 6 - 8 July 2003 in Tehran. A training package was prepared and distributed to the participants. The objective of the workshop was to train trainers from different NGOs interested in working in the field of HIV/AIDS and drug use. More than twelve NGOs benefited from the workshop. The training exercise was evaluated highly by the participants and the Theme Group has received proposals for the implementation of similar activities in other provinces.

## 7. HIV/AIDS training session for UN staff and their dependants

Since the beginning of 2003, the Theme Group has organized six HIV/AIDS training sessions for UN staff and their dependants.



The sessions were given by Dr. Minoo Mohraz, Infectious Disease Specialist, University Professor and Expert on HIV/AIDS, Dr. George Ionita, UNICEF Regional HIV/AIDS

Advisor and Ms. Fariba Soltani Chair person of the UN HIV/AIDS Theme Group. Copies of the UNAIDS training manual “HIV/AIDS in the UN System Workplace” were distributed and participants were required to complete pre and post attitude questionnaires as well as an evaluation form.

The training has been evaluated very highly by the participants and the Theme Group has received requests from member agencies to implement the training exercise for their sub offices and to conduct similar sessions for children and adolescents.

#### **8. Other activities:**

- Participation in the Country Coordinating Mechanism meetings for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM) -Second Round Proposals.
- Assistance in the preparation of work plans and budget-tables for the GFATM proposal.
- Assistance in the preparation and drafting of the proposals of the NGOs for the third round of the GFATM.
- TG members made presentations on an HIV/AIDS sensitization event organized by Ministry of Education of Shareh-Rey district of Tehran province. More than 100 high school principals of that district attended the gathering.
- TG members actively participated in a HIV/AIDS sensitization event for the youth, organized by Blood Transfusion Organization.