

NSA LEARNING REPORT COMMISSIONED BY UNAIDS  
“PRESENTING NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLANS ON HIV/AIDS (NSP) TO THE GLOBAL FUND  
THROUGH THE NATIONAL STRATEGY APPLICATION (NSA) MODALITY”

**Presenting**

**National Strategic Plans on HIV/AIDS (NSP)**

**To the Global Fund Through the**

**National Strategy Application (NSA) Modality**

*Experiences From the Three Countries  
in the HIV First Learning Wave (FLW)*

**A SYNTHESIS REPORT FOR UNAIDS**

**Peter Godwin (Lead Consultant),  
December 2009**

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## Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ART	Anti-Retroviral Therapy
ARV	Anti-Retroviral Drugs
CBO	Community-Based Organizations
CCM	Comprehensive Care Centre
CS	Country Study
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CV	Country Visit
DFID	Department for International Development
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DR	Desk Review
FBO	Faith-Based Organization
FLW	First Learning Wave
FMA	Financial Management Agency
GAVI	Global AIDS Vaccine Initiative
GFATM	The Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
GHI	Global Health Initiatives
HCW	Health Care Workers
HIV	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
HMIS	Health Management Information System
HR	Human Resources
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
HSS	Health Systems Strengthening
HTC	HIV Testing and Counselling
ICC	Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee
IDU	Intravenous/ Injecting Drug Users
JAPR	Joint HIV Programme Review
KAIS	Kenya AIDS Indicator Survey
KDHS	Kenya Demographic and Health Survey
KNASP	Kenya National HIV Strategic Plan
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MARPs	Most- at- Risk Populations
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MDHS	Malawi Demographic and Health Survey
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoT	Modes of Transmission
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSM	Men having Sex with Men
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
MTR	Mid-Term Review

NAC	National AIDS Council
NACC	National AIDS Control Council
NAF	National Action Framework
NASA	National AIDS Spending Assessment
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NOP	National Operational Plan
NSA	National Strategy Application
NSP	National Strategic Plan
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PLHA	People Living with HIV and AIDS
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission
RBM	Result Based Management
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach
TA	Technical Assistance
TB	Tuberculosis
TOWA	Total War against HIV
TRP	Technical Review Panel
TS	Technical Support
UA	Universal Access
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on AIDS
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USG	United States Government
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Testing
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Global Fund has established a “Modified Application Process for Supporting Country Programs”, called “National Strategy Applications” (NSAs). These aimed to create an incentive for countries to develop strong national frameworks. In 2009 the GF initiated the First Learning Wave (FLW) of NSAs. The first wave aims to draw policy and operational lessons in real time that enable the broader roll-out of NSAs. On 4 May 2009, following a selection process based on an assessment of the national strategy documents by the TRP, 3 countries Rwanda, Malawi and Kenya were invited to submit an HIV-focused NSA by the 31 August 2009 to the GF.

This Report aims to synthesize the specific country experiences and perspectives of the three pilot countries in preparing HIV National Strategic Applications to the Global Fund. The Report also aims to provide clear policy recommendations to the GF secretariat and UNAIDS as a key partner to countries that attempt to strengthen national AIDS planning, implementation and governance processes. The Report draws on three Country Studies (one for each FLW country), prepared in-country by local consultants and validated with stakeholders. In addition, a number of interviews, consultations, analytical and validation workshops and meetings are included in the study.

The Report looks at the NSA process itself: what happened; how effective and efficient a process was it, drawing primarily on the three country studies. This section also identifies ‘implications for roll out’ in each step of the process. It then reviews, in three areas, what impact the NSA process is likely to have had and how to strengthen this approach: is HIV programming now, or likely to be, more effective in the pilot countries; how have governance, ownership and participation been affected; and what are the chances for sustainable/predictable funding as a result. Finally it suggests a series of lessons learned and follow up actions for UNAIDS.

The FLW with regard to the HIV NSAs was generally a very positive experience: countries and partners appreciated the opportunities it presented. The process as experienced in the three countries in this FLW, however, as shown in this report, revealed both strengths and weaknesses in the modality. This report attempts to highlight both, and suggest ways forward.



## WHAT HAPPENED?

To document what actually happened, the Report assessed the FLW experience of the NSA by considering 8 aspects of the NSA process.

### 1. Invitation to countries to apply

In the FLW aspects of this process were unclear as to how countries were selected. This is important, as the eligibility of countries even to consider an NSA, whether by invitation or application, is the first of what becomes a series of decision points throughout the entire process, with implications for prioritizing, work load, allocation of resources both for countries and their partners, as well as GF itself. In addition, the scheduling and time frame for an NSA appears to be critical. Robust NSPs seem to take about 1 year to prepare. Experience suggests a period of some 18-24 months between GF approval of a grant and initial disbursements. If NSPs are to be prepared responsive to the NSA assessment process (ie based on the IHP+ 'attributes'), and relying on substantial NSA input for their implementation, planning for an NSA-supported NSP thus requires a time perspective of some 2-3 years.

#### **Implications for NSA roll-out:**

1. Selection, invitation or application for the NSA modality is an initial decision point with important implications for political, financial, institutional and human resource allocation decisions for countries and their partners. The process chosen (selection, invitation or free application) thus merits careful consideration by GF and its partners.
2. The time-frame for a successful NSA is an extended one. GF and its partners need a nuanced analysis of the time-scale of the potential costs and benefits to countries, and the 'readiness' of countries to consider an NSA.

## 2 Decision making for the NSA in countries

In all three countries the NACs responded very positively. The other invited countries also responded very positively, immediately perceiving benefits. It is important to stress, however, that the leadership and ownership of the process very quickly passed from CCMs directly to the NACs, with important implications for the rest of the process. In all three countries the local UNAIDS Country Office was a very robust advocate for the NSA, willing to invest its political,

professional and TA capital substantially in the modality. Other partners were, in general, equally keen to see the NSA experiment.

**Implications for NSA roll-out:**

3. The key role of the NAC, as the 'owner' of the National Strategy, in the NSA process must be recognized. While the CCM is the official interlocutor with GF, it is the NAC which manages the NSP and thus the NSA. Where the relationships are good, there is usually no problem; if the relationship is poor, this could be a challenge.

### **3 Stakeholder involvement**

In all three countries, stakeholders were quickly involved with the NSA process. The TRP Reviews also all noted significant involvement and participation of key stakeholders, both explicitly described in the NSPs themselves, and in the NSP-NSA process. Participation of other sectors, beyond the health and AIDS 'sub-sector' has been extensive. Participation of development partners has also been keen. In all three countries, PEPFAR, the largest single contributor to the national response (apart from GF), was closely involved, took keen interest and was very supportive.

As important implication and outcome of the contradiction between the NAC as owner of the NSP and the CCM as apparent owner of the NSA concerns the more formal role of civil society as possible PR within the NSA. Neither Rwanda nor Malawi selected a CS PR – for reasons which their CCMs found good. In Kenya, while the Kenya Red Cross has been selected as CS PR, the relative roles and responsibilities of the two PRs within the NSA are not stated.

**Implications for NSA roll-out:**

4. It is important to distinguish between stakeholder participation in the NSP and in the NSA. While more and more stakeholders seem to be engaging with NSP processes and products it is unclear how effective CCMs have been in engaging stakeholders in the NSA. More nuanced understanding of the roles of NACs and CCMs in the various aspects of these processes is required.

#### 4 Desk Review – TRP comments

The Desk Reviews seem to have been primarily an initial assessment that sufficient work had been done on new NSPs to justify including them in the FLW. Essentially they only noted that sufficient national plans already existed to respond favourably to the ‘attributes’ structure they were using for the review. There seems at this stage to have been little critical ‘quality assurance’ of what was actually in the NSPs. It became, however, a source of considerable confusion and angst for some countries, who naturally accepted these comments as suggesting highly satisfactory NSPs. The Desk Review has emerged as a second important decision point in the NSA process. Four of the seven countries initially invited to submit HIV-focused NSAs were in fact screened out at this stage.

##### **Implications for NSA roll-out:**

5. GF will need to coordinate the desk reviews and the country visits so that there is consistency and development within their message.
6. GF and partners will need to clarify how far the ‘assessment’ (whether desk review, country visit or consolidation) is a one-off *quality assurance* process, which indicates precisely the level of ‘soundness’ achieved; or to what extent it can be *developmental*, where it is a supportive process to countries aimed at helping them improve their NSPs against a specific set of attributes.

#### 5 NSA FLW workshop in Geneva, 18-19 May 2009

While this workshop does appear to have clarified the process and steps to be taken for the NSA, it does not seem to have addressed what were already being noted as key issues: primarily, what the difference was between an NSA and a Round-based Application; in what form the NSA should present its Request for funding; and what an Operational Plan was. Most important among these issues was the explication of the GF’s concept of a “two-stage process”: the review of the NSP (stage 1, in two steps: Desk Review and Country Visit), which if found satisfactory would lead to an invitation to submit an application focused on the financial request for consideration by the GF Technical Review Panel (stage 2). The implication of this latter screening, while explicit in the documentation, was completely missed by almost everyone in the countries, and among their partners; who assumed that the ‘assessment of

soundness’ was primarily confined to the NSP assessment. Indeed, the criteria by which the TRP assessed ‘soundness and feasibility’ were never disclosed.

**Implications for NSA roll-out:**

7. Such workshops are essential to ensure that the process is fully understood and the various decision points and criteria for decision-making clear to all.
8. A wider range of partners need to be involved: not only country people, but also technical support providers such as the TSFs.
9. Technical support providers should consider developing their own guidance for managing the NSA process.

## **6 TRP Country Visit**

The TRP Review (both Desk Review and Country Visit) was seen as a primarily GF process: although various in-country people were included in the country visit team, it was very clear that this was a GF-led and -driven process for specific GF purposes. It was a dialogue between GF and stakeholders, not an 'internal' dialogue in any way. Thus while in some instances the TRP comments were seen as helpful stimulus to improve the NSPs, in general the responses within countries were often more limited: in many cases specific limited editing/addition to respond as minimally as possible to the TRP. The GF had made it clear, from the start, that this was a learning wave, was time-bound, and that the assessment was to be *exceptional*. Considering the detail becoming available for both the process and content of *joint assessment* through the IHP+ and partners (of which GF is one), the FLW ‘TRP Review’ falls short of what is required. The country visits were very short and highly limited.

**Implications for NSA roll-out:**

10. It is clear that National Strategies are far more difficult to make accurate and useful assessments of than was thought; the whole process of assessment used in the FLW needs to be re-thought.
11. Greater country ‘ownership’ of the assessment is critical if it is to have a significant impact on *‘improved quality, consistency and credibility of national strategic frameworks’* as expected by GF.

## 7 Preparing for the NSA

Preparing for the NSA was the most innovative part of the whole process and the biggest change in current NSP processes and practice, and the most demanding on countries and involved three key steps: costing the NSP sufficiently robustly to meet the standards indicated in the TRP Assessment, conducting the ‘gap analysis’ to determine what was going to be asked for in the NSA, and preparing the National Operational Plan, which would show how it fitted within existing operations of stakeholders. None of these had been done before to this level of thoroughness in any of the three countries. It gave a whole new validity to the NSP; not simply an ‘advocacy document’ around which publicity and AIDS awareness can be generated, but rather the serious basis for resource mobilization. In all three areas (costing, gap analysis and operational planning) countries struggled.

### **Implications for NSA roll-out:**

12. Preparation for the NSA is a critical stage in the process which needs to be identified and supported.
13. Costing an NSP is a complex issue with significant ramifications: models and tools are not well developed; but countries will require very considerable technical support in these areas.
14. The opportunity provided by the gap analysis and national operational plan (NOP) to bring all partners’ contributions within the national results framework is a powerful one and needs to be supported and encouraged by all partners.
15. Models for NOPs are not well defined; GF and partners need to give careful consideration to what are appropriate models and how countries can be supported to develop them.

## 8 Finalizing the NSA

‘What is an NSA?’ This came to the forefront in all three countries when it was time to fill in the NSA form. Much of this confusion derived from the misunderstanding alluded to earlier – about the clear “two-stage process” of the NSA as designed by the GF. What is the country applying for in this NSA: funding for the full ‘gap’; funding for specific parts of it? Countries struggled with this. A major part of the problem, which needs to be resolved between the GF and its partners (primarily UNAIDS), is the wide variation in planning models being used. These various models have implications for how countries set targets, estimate resource needs, and

calculate gaps – all of which are fundamental to good planning and resource mobilization; and to their NSA. There was little clear guidance, from the GF, from UNAIDS, from ASAP, as to which model to use, for what purpose, when. Countries ended up using a mish-mash of several models. This makes consistency across the three NSAs very difficult, even consistency within them.

**Implications for NSA roll-out:**

16. Very clear guidance about the NSA process, what the application itself can or should cover, how it is linked to the NSP assessment process, how it will be assessed needs to be issued; not only by the GF, but also by global partners supporting countries, so that the appropriate support can be delivered at country level.

17. Technical assistance provided to countries to develop NSAs needs to be very well versed in the NSA modality and its guidance.

## **OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE EXPERIENCE**

The NSA process (as defined in this paper) has undoubtedly generated considerable excitement and buy-in among all partners. It is clearly seen as the way forward for. The challenge for countries has been understanding just what an NSA is, and the process needed to prepare and submit one – and later manage it.

The FLW was accepted by GF and partners as a hurried, preliminary approach to the ‘end-state’ NSA modality. The FLW was thus very much seen as a first learning opportunity for the GF to experiment with a new funding modality. While this was made clear by the GF from the start, it must be recognized that for countries it was also seen as a real opportunity to access substantial funding – for them it was not so much a learning experience as an exciting, genuine new approach. And as such they took it very seriously. All parties involved found it an extremely positive and rewarding experience – both with regard to the emphasis on improved strategic planning it produced, and as an opportunity to seriously fund their national HIV responses. Considerable misunderstanding occurred, however, between GF and countries and partners about just what the NSA was to be, and how it would be produced and managed.

One of the most important ‘learning areas’ for the NSA modality is the ‘assessment’ of National Strategic Plans as suitable bases for large-scale funding. This is based upon the approach being developed by IHP+ of Joint Assessment of National Strategies (JANS). The JANS envisages a thorough and managed process through which sustained and comprehensive joint ownership of national strategies and associated plans is developed by both country and external partners; resulting in a variety of possible outcomes and decision issues for all. To fit the constrained time-frame and idiosyncrasies of the FLW, however, a highly modified process was used by the GF for the assessment.

### **BETTER HIV PROGRAMMING?**

Has the NSP-NSA process helped to improve planning and HIV programming?

Considering the general development of the global AIDS response in the last few years, the new NSPs would have been expected to be better than their predecessors. Some of the specific innovations include: the emphasis on combination prevention and treatment service delivery in the Kenya strategy matched with the emphasis on community-level responses; the robust logic of the Rwanda RBM-based results framework and the emphasis on civil society roles in implementation; the broad multi-sectoral response in Malawi, incorporating the national social transfer programme as the impact mitigation strategy.

For all three countries, the fact that they were involved in a national strategy application process, in which the *strategy itself* became the critical object of assessment with regard to funding, had a significant effect. They made very considerable efforts to ensure that their strategies were of quality, both with regard to content and process. There is little evidence, however, that the specific GF NSA modality mechanisms (eg the TRP Review) had much direct effect. All three strategies were substantially and substantively already designed before being submitted for the Desk Review. The TRP comments do seem to have helped the countries address the more egregious gaps or weaknesses in the strategy documents – at least as seen from a GF perspective; but not to significantly revisit fundamental weaknesses (eg the lack of a proper results framework, opacity in governance, weaknesses in decentralised implementation capability, lack of multi-sectoral capability, etc).

It is also clear that the possibility of an NSA was major encouragement and or stimulus to the countries to develop new NSPs: in all three countries the lure of the NSA added very significant urgency and pressure to the NSP development. But this should be noted not only as an opportunity, but also as a significant threat. The timeframes this created (some six months from start to finish) put extraordinary pressure on the review and development of the NSPs,

and had a seriously detrimental effect (certainly in Kenya and Malawi) on both the quality of analysis that went into the new NSP, and the process of consensus building, inclusion and ownership that should underlie them. Deadlines are always a two-edged sword, forcing difficult trade-offs between quality, process and delivery. The experience from the FLW-NSA, however, suggests that with regard to such important processes as the development of effective national strategies, the NSA deadline was a significant hindrance.

Analysis of the three NSPs reveals weaknesses in many areas. These primarily are in the use of **RBM; evidence-informed HIV programming; costing** and the '**gap analysis**', and **governance structures**.

## **OWNERSHIP, LEGITIMACY, GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

The NSA experience has raised important issues regarding ownership and governance of national strategies, and participation of stakeholders in their development and use for resource mobilization.

The issue of governance with regard to the GF is difficult. GF governance mechanisms, primarily the CCM, are an innovative approach to *country* governance, as opposed to *government* governance; and remain essentially uncharted territory. NACs are charged to develop National Strategic Plans. This responsibility, and these plans, are legitimized by the NAC's institutional mandate – given by the State usually through Executive or Parliamentary processes. NACs and their NSPs thus have State legitimacy. To a greater or lesser extent, NAC are also usually legitimized, through such mechanisms as Partnership Forums, Advisory Boards, Councils, etc, to provide the kind of 'country', national response legitimacy that the GF aims for through the CCM. In the three countries observed, CCMs are mainly legitimized by virtue of GF monies; stakeholders who do not participate in, benefit from or need GF money, need not accord them any relevance or legitimacy beyond their oversight of GF-funded activities. And indeed many state institutions make this clear. To the extent that a fully inclusive national response can acquire the largest amount of legitimacy, it needs to be enshrined in the National Strategic Plan (NSP): all state actors must recognise this legitimacy; non-state actors have a choice, depending on their need for legitimacy. The key instrument for legitimizing elements, programmes, activities etc is the NSP. This has three implications linked to the NSA modality:

1. Stakeholders who DO wish to engage with as much legitimacy as possible need to engage with the NSP and try to ensure that the NSP provides an acceptable context and platform for them. For civil society the trade off is between legitimacy (by being included in the NSP



and its institutional framework) and independence (by maintaining their distance from the NSP). The risk is where GF funding distorts this trade-off by making funding available outside the boundaries of the NSP and its institutional frameworks – which in effect the CCM and dual track-financing does. The NSA modality provides a significant risk mitigation strategy for this.

2. Processes or mechanisms such as Joint Assessment of National Strategies, Partnership Compacts, Basket Funds etc, that require legitimacy, must seek it within the context of the NSP and its institutional frameworks. The CCM does not provide sufficient legitimacy, except where these are related only to GF monies. The NSA modality must therefore find a way to engage more directly and formally with the NAC and its institutional architecture to ensure that the Assessment of the National Strategy is legitimized. If not, it risks remaining purely a GF-driven funding requirement managed by the CCM, with potential for significant loss of legitimacy.
3. An effective NSP is thus a key tool for achieving several risk mitigation aims. It thus behoves all partners to work together to ensure that countries are supported to develop sound and robust NSPs, drawing on all the conceptual frameworks, models, tools and resources available. Unfortunately these are presently weakly understood in many quarters, difficult to access, and largely uncoordinated among partners and stakeholders. By taking the NSA modality beyond simply a funding mechanism and elevating it to planning and resource mobilization modality, the risk of countries continuing to work with inadequate NSPs is reduced.

The issue of ‘legitimacy’ has important implications for participation – and particularly the participation of civil society, which is on sufferance in most NACs but is mandatory in CCMs. Civil society in the countries tends to see the NSA as an opportunity, based upon and reflecting greater involvement in the NSP.

In many countries governance of the national response remains opaque. This is a vital area to be addressed in ‘Second Generation NSPs’; and with regard to NSA roll-out. The NSP architecture and the institutional frameworks it supports is complex and highly varied across countries; both state-managed and non-state managed (eg GF related architecture). These issues were indeed noted by the TRP Reviews in the FLW. These governance issues are an area where NSA roll-out faces major risks unless the assessment process is strengthened sufficiently to identify and address them early enough to be dealt with.

## SUSTAINABLE/PREDICATABLE FUNDING

One of the fundamentals of Paris, and one of the original cornerstones of Universal Access, is predictable funding. The NSA has thrown this problem into high relief. All the countries found the process revealing about how unpredictable their funding was; even such a major funding source as PEPFAR cannot guarantee funding beyond the year for which it has congressional approval; and few other donors can make the kind of substantial commitment that a national strategy requires. On the face of it, the five-year commitment for grants from GF makes it the most suitable funder for an entire national strategy.

Predictable funding requires accurate and credible costing combined with strategic and astute resource mobilization. Yet costing and resource mobilization for national strategies remains an incoherent business at present. The experience of the countries in the costing of their strategies is revealing: both Kenya and Malawi struggled with different models – in spite of considerable previous experience. Despite conventional wisdom, costing and resource allocation modelling is still an imprecise area – and the models that exist tend to require considerable technical support, and are not easily applicable – especially within a constrained time-frame.

Three issues have probably challenged the validity and credibility of the NSA modality most; and have perhaps the greatest implications for its further use.

- Matching accurate/precise costing of a national strategy with available funding to get an accurate '**gap analysis**'. Tools for doing this are weak, difficult to use, and not well understood at country level – by any of the stakeholders. The current 'costings' in this FLW should thus be treated with extreme caution.
- The **context** of the HIV/AIDS resource envelope at country level is seldom considered: whether this is in relation to overall government spending and investment plans, to health sector financial planning, to external development assistance; or to global patterns of donor assistance, the current global financial climate, and global economic development issues.
- The **sustainability** of AIDS funding, particularly with respect to expanding care and treatment programmes, health systems strengthening programmes, and impact mitigation social transfer programmes, is quite unclear.

The issue of predictable funding, and how countries develop and use resource allocation tools as part of their NSPs, is one that requires considerably further work.

## **LESSONS LEARNED AND WAYS FORWARD**

A number of lessons learned for UNAIDS and its partners are identified: these primarily relate to the importance of the NSA modality as one of the ways countries can strengthen and support their national response, both as a resource mobilization strategy and as a mechanism helping to strengthen strategic and operational planning. They also stress the vital importance of strengthened technical support for countries considering using the modality, both in general terms and in specific areas like RBM and costing. Such support should come primarily from UNAIDS, but should be carefully coordinated with other TS providers and partners.

Some specific steps for UNAIDS to go forward as the NSA modality is rolled out are also suggested. These primarily revolve round the establishment of a platform with GF and selected partners to determine how to provide support for NSA roll-out; and the need to put in place some internal mechanisms and processes which will help to ensure that the next wave of NSAs are highly successful.

## 1. BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Developments in the health and AIDS sectors

Donor funding for health programmes, and associated AIDS programmes, in Sub-Saharan Africa has risen dramatically in the last decade; yet service delivery systems continue to function poorly, changes in community responses remain fragmented, and health outcomes remain weak<sup>1</sup>.

With respect to HIV and AIDS, while countries have seen rapidly expanding numbers of people accessing ART and OI treatment, incidence remains stubbornly high as prevention programmes stutter, socio-economic change to reduce vulnerability is painfully slow, and social welfare systems for impact mitigation are in their infancy. Yet more and more is known about the dynamics of the HIV epidemic, hundreds of thousands of committed workers of all kinds provide an extraordinary range of services, and institutional frameworks for national responses proliferate.

The fundamental problem with HIV programming in most countries relates to *planning*: both *strategic planning*, in terms of how countries identify priorities and allocate resources to them, and *operational planning*, in terms of how countries get the many players coordinated within a single framework with coherent work plans. HIV programming has tended to be successful, by and large, when both strategic planning and operational planning have been successful: these can then be reasonably easily funded, and reasonably effectively implemented.

With respect to HIV and AIDS, National Strategic Plans have been recognized as particularly important as they are the vehicle through which five things can be established:

- Aid Effectiveness (Paris Principles) are realized: ownership, harmonization, alignment, results, mutual accountability
- Consensus on strategic priorities and resource allocations
- Coordination of the multi-sectoral response (beyond the health sector alone)
- Coordination with(in) other development frameworks (eg MoH, PRSP, etc)

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<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Taskforce on Innovative International Financing for Health Systems, IHP+*

- Creating operational coherence: ‘making the money work’, effective implementation, achieving UA targets, etc

In recognition of these fundamentals, three streams of development innovation are gathering momentum. First is a concern for how to make more effective assessments of countries’ strategic plans, both as a way of identifying (and expanding the use of) good planning models and practices, and as a way of ensuring coherence in financing and implementing them. Second is increasingly recognition of the importance of greater attention to performance-based funding – better framing of results to be achieved, better measurement of progress, greater accountability. And third, recognition that the sector comprises a wide range of players, both in government and outside it, and operationalizing their respective contributions in harmony is essential.

Specifically these innovations are taking shape in the IHP+ focus on ‘Joint Assessment’, a concern among donors and countries for strengthening the application of Paris principles in programming, and in increasing concern for the greater engagement of civil society and the private sector in strategic programming and implementation.

## 1.2 The GF and National Strategy Applications

At its Fifteenth Meeting in April 2007 the Global Fund Board requested a review of the Global Fund’s architecture to fully support the financing of a single, national strategic framework through the establishment of a “Modified Application Process for Supporting Country Programs”, called “National Strategy Applications” (NSAs).

National Strategy Applications aimed to “create an incentive for countries to develop strong national frameworks”. The anticipated benefits of the NSA approach are:

- Improved **alignment** of Global Fund financing with country priorities, national programmatic and budgetary timeframes.
- **Reduced transaction costs and paperwork for countries** (in comparison to repeated funder-specific proposal development).
- **Improved harmonization** with other donors that have agreed to use the same criteria for reviewing national strategies.
- A focus on **managing for results** and **accountability** within national strategies.

- Opportunity to extend **multi-stakeholder inclusion** to scope of national strategy.
- In the longer term, **improved quality, consistency and credibility of national strategic frameworks**.

In order to conduct the phased roll-out of this NSA approach, the GF initiated the First Learning Wave (FLW) of NSAs in 2009. The first wave aims to draw policy and operational lessons in real time that enable the broader roll-out of NSAs. On 4 May 2009, following a selection process based on an assessment of the national strategy documents by the TRP, 3 countries Rwanda, Malawi and Kenya were invited to submit an HIV-focused NSA by the 31 August 2009 to the GF.

### 1.3 Scope of this Report

In the context of the overall, global developments in the sectors already alluded to, and the specific “most significant innovation in the process of applying to the Global Fund since the organization was created”<sup>2</sup>, this Report aims to synthesize the specific country experiences and perspectives of the three pilot countries in the first learning wave of NSA in preparing HIV National Strategic Applications to the Global Fund. The report does not look at the NSA experiences with regard to Malaria or TB.

The Report is intended to provide a broad overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the NSA process<sup>3</sup>, as experienced by the three FLW countries applying for the modality. In addition, the Report is intended to provide clear policy recommendations to the GF secretariat and UNAIDS as a key partner to countries that attempt to strengthen national AIDS planning, implementation and governance processes.

This Report is part of, and the first output from, a larger study being conducted to contribute to improved guidance for and support to countries in the development of national strategies for the response to HIV/AIDS that provide a solid basis for the alignment and harmonization of donor support, including the Global Fund, guide the strengthening of national systems and drive the scale up of the national response to come as close as possible to Universal access for all to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support. The study process comprises the following activities:

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<sup>2</sup> GF Strategy "Accelerating the Effort to Save Lives", Geneva 2007, p. 36

<sup>3</sup> In this report the ‘NSA process’ is used to cover both the work done on the NSPs in the three countries once they were selected for the FLW and their actual application for a NSA grant.

- **Collecting and systematizing** in a comprehensive manner the available documentation and feedback regarding the country experiences in developing NSP/NSA (process & products) - On the basis of documentation and country and stakeholder feedback and consultation **to describe** the country experiences in developing NSP/NSA (process and products);
- On the basis of documentation and country and stakeholder feedback and consultation **critically analyzing/assessing/evaluating** the country experiences in developing NSP/NSA (process and products) against the principles of AID effectiveness, GTT, GF principles and policy, IHP+ attributes, etc. A simple analytical framework was developed as a 'question guide' to help focus this analysis; this is in Annex 2. Note this was not a quantitative study so explicit quantification of responses was not intended.
- On the basis of documentation and country and stakeholder feedback and consultation **critically analyzing/assessing/evaluating** the country experiences in developing NSP/NSA (process and products) in relation to a number of critical issues for the scale up and to sustain the national response towards Universal Access.
- Based on the above and country and stakeholder expectations **identifying and validating lessons learned** from the first learning wave of NSA, **and formulating and validating recommendations** to guide countries and partners in the development of future national strategies on HIV/AIDS and submitting NSAs.

The Report draws on three Country Studies (one for each FLW country), prepared in-country by local consultants and validated with stakeholders. The author of the Report was fortunate to have considerable ground experience to bring to the Report: he had been part of the team that designed the Kenya National Strategic Plan (KNASP) that would be submitted to the GF for its NSA; he had also helped prepare the NSA itself for Malawi. This provided a critical practical realism to the description of the experience to balance the abstract analysis.

In addition, a number of interviews, consultations, analytical and validation workshops and meetings are included in the study. Large numbers of people were interviewed extensively at 'country level' - the people interviewed are listed in the country reports. It would have been egregious to have attempted to re-interview everyone the country consultants spoke to; this report therefore largely mentions the additional people from whom additional information was obtained.

Some initial comments on earlier drafts felt that the report was 'negative'. This was not the intention; the report attempted to synthesize the experience reflected in the country reports. Understandably, given the timeframe for the NSA, that fact that it was a 'learning experience',

and the relative lack of experience in dealing with the intricacies of national strategic planning, it was never going to be an impeccable, outstanding success without blemish. The report does reflect, however, the very positive involvement and approach of almost everyone concerned to make the NSA work - the fact that there were many trials and tribulations in actual execution is a simple fact.

#### 1.4 Immediate questions

This Report, in the first instance, tries to document the FLW countries experience, and answer some of the immediately pertinent questions about the NSA modality:

- How has the FLW of NSA modality been received in the countries as a preliminary cut at an innovative funding modality?
- How have countries managed the NSA process?
- What has worked well, and what hasn't?
- Has it strengthened the relevant strategic plans, and thus AIDS programming?
- How far has it impacted on or been impacted on by key issues such as Paris principles, governance and participation, sustainable financing?
- What are the priority issues to be addressed for further roll-out of the NSA modality?

#### 1.5 The country context

The three FLW countries (Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda) all have significant HIV epidemics that have spread widely in the general population; they are neither the hyper-epidemics of parts of Southern Africa, nor the concentrated epidemics of other parts of the world.

Country	Prevalence	PLHA	ART coverage
Kenya	7.4% 15-49yrs (KAIS 2007)	1,300,000	38-45%
Malawi	12% (2007)	809,833	55% (2008)
Rwanda	3.0% (DHS 2005), 4.3% (ANC 2007)	149,000	76%



HIV prevalence in the three countries is geographically diverse; and incidence shows no current signs of reducing. In spite of advances in data collection in the countries<sup>4</sup>, the actual dynamics of the epidemic are still not well understood in all three countries. All have made significant progress in rolling out ART, PMTCT and HTC; and initiating social protection programmes. Each has a robust civil society participating in the national response.

They all have substantial and largely un-harmonized and non-aligned resource envelopes already:

- **Kenya**, where some 83% of AIDS funding is from PEPFAR (over 0.5 billion US\$ per annum), only 5% from GF, and Government of Kenya 5.5%;
- **Malawi**: where the GF grants, accounting for 44% of current funding, are ‘pooled’ with other donors, excluding PEPFAR which is 28% of current funding and Government of Malawi 1.3%<sup>5</sup>;
- **Rwanda**: where Government of Rwanda will contribute 13% of the total cost of the NSP, PEPFAR 53% and GF 26%.

The three countries revisited their national strategies as part of the NSA process; they have a variety of governance structures. Malawi has one of the strongest NACs in Africa, managing a substantial pool fund; Kenya has a NACC recently emerged from a period of major mis-governance, but making perhaps the greatest efforts as stakeholder inclusion; and Rwanda where the NAC is a much weaker body, largely limited in power and scope, overshadowed by a strong health sector and powerful GF architecture.

They all benefited from substantial and varied technical assistance and support to develop the NSP/NSA. Their experience is invaluable in assessing the effectiveness of the NSA modality from the start.

## 1.6 Structure of this Report

To capture the lessons learned from this process so far, this Report looks at the NSA process itself: what happened; how effective and efficient a process was it, drawing primarily on the three country studies (CS). This section also identifies ‘implications for roll out’ in each step of

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<sup>4</sup> All three have done MOT (Modes of Transmission) studies; all have recent DHS data; and Kenya has done the KAIS – Kenya AIDS Indicator Survey

<sup>5</sup> Figures for 2011-13 from Malawi NOP submitted as part of NSA

the process. We then review, in three areas, what impact the NSA process is likely to have had and how to strengthen this approach: is HIV programming now, or likely to be, more effective in the pilot countries; how have governance, ownership and participation been affected; and what are the chances for sustainable/predictable funding as a result. Finally we suggest a series of lessons learned and follow up actions for UNAIDS.

## **2. THE NATIONAL STRATEGY APPLICATIONS – What happened?**

We assessed the FLW experience of the NSA by considering the process. We considered eight aspects of the NSA.

### **2.1 Invitation to countries to apply**

Initial invitations to participate in the First Learning Wave (FLW) of National Strategy Applications (NSA) were made to 23 countries for three diseases, from all regions. For HIV, nine countries were invited: 5 from Africa (Malawi, Nigeria, Kenya, Swaziland, Rwanda), one from Asia (Cambodia) and 3 from the rest of the world (Cuba, Djibouti, Algeria). Invitations were determined based on:

- Having a strategy with a timeframe at least until 2012;
- Not having made a successful Round 8 application for the same disease;
- The judgment of partners & GF Country Programs, taking into account factors like recent strategy review, strong in-country partner support, etc.

Invitations were sent to CCMs in countries on 13 February, with a reply deadline of 13 March. In the event seven countries were selected for the FLW for HIV; two (Nigeria and Cambodia) did not take up the invitation. Following the Desk Review Swaziland, Cuba, Algeria and Djibouti were rejected. Thus in the end 3 countries participated all the way through the process: Kenya, Malawi and Rwanda.

Aspects of this process are unclear, however. Cambodia, for example, did not have a costed strategy beyond 2010; it was assumed by, apparently, GF itself, however, that extending this would not be a significant problem for the country, and so it was invited to apply. In fact the country itself recognized the scale of work required, and declined the invitation. In another opaque example, Kenya had an incomplete strategy at the time of the invitation, and was in the process of finalizing it.

This is important, as the eligibility of countries even to consider an NSA, whether by invitation or application, is the first of what becomes a series of decision points throughout the entire process, with implications for prioritizing, work load, allocation of resources both for countries and their partners, as well as GF itself. Preliminary estimates suggest that the direct cost of reviewing and preparing a NSP can well be in excess of \$1 million<sup>6</sup>. The NSA costs on top of that appear to be at least another 10%.

**KENYA CS:** *The process of KNASP III development has been costly; at \$800,000 for the KNASP and \$400,000 for the National AIDS Spending Assessment.*

In addition, the scheduling and time frame for an NSA appears to be critical. Robust NSPs seem to take about 1 year to prepare. Experience suggests a period of some 18-24 months between GF approval of a grant and initial disbursements. If NSPs are to be prepared responsive to the NSA assessment process (ie based on the IHP+ ‘attributes’), and relying on substantial NSA input for their implementation, planning for an NSA-supported NSP thus requires a time perspective of some 2-3 years.

**MALAWI CS:** *The NSP/NSA by design is a long drawn out process that has the potential of taking national stakeholders’ time off equally important national processes. “How then can we draw the balance between making provision for ample time to complete the process and ensuring that the process is not too drawn out that it takes national stakeholders’ time off equally vital national processes?” For NAC Planning and M&E Unit and other sections in and out of NAC, the NSP/NSA was 6.5 months of “full time” NSA work.*

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<sup>6</sup> Cf *Uganda at the crossroads with AIDS; a compendium of processes and evidence used in developing the Uganda national HIV & AIDS Strategic Plan (NSP 2007/8 – 2011/12)*, compiled by Tom Barton and Malayah Harper, UNAIDS, draft, November 2009. Anecdotally preparation of Kenya’s NSP cost more than \$1 million.

The FLW was accepted as a hurried, preliminary approach to the ‘end-state’ NSA modality<sup>7</sup>.

Three of the characteristics of this FLW were:

- Review of national strategies would *exceptionally be* performed by Technical Review Panel, since joint assessment tools and procedures were not operational in time for FLW;
- There was particularly high time pressure, as there was a strong incentive to bring FLW NSAs for Board approval alongside Round 9 in November 2009 to ensure that invited countries had the same opportunity to access funding as other countries, not part of the FLW;
- Already “under-way” national strategies would be used, even though they were developed without prior knowledge of the assessment attributes developed by IHP+.

It was accepted that the anticipated ‘end-state’ NSA would be a much more thoughtful, comprehensive, shared enterprise.

The FLW was thus very much just that: a first learning opportunity for the GF to experiment with a new funding modality. While this was made clear by the GF from the start, it must be recognized that for countries it was also seen both as a real opportunity to access substantial funding and as an opportunity for a new way of doing business – for them it was not so much a learning experience as a genuine new approach. And as such they took it very seriously and invested heavily, politically, financially and institutionally.

**Implications for NSA roll-out:**

1. Selection, invitation or application for the NSA modality is an initial decision point with important implications for political, financial, institutional and human resource allocation decisions for countries and their partners. The process chosen (selection, invitation or free application) thus merits careful consideration by GF and its partners.
2. The time-frame for a successful NSA is an extended one. GF and its partners need a nuanced analysis of the time-scale of the potential costs and benefits to countries, and the ‘readiness’ of countries to consider an NSA.

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<sup>7</sup> From Geneva Workshop slides

## 2.2 Decision making for the NSA in countries

The response to the invitations to participate in the FLW indicates an immediate inconsistency in the NSA modality that has potentially serious implications, and will be discussed in further detail again. While the official recipient of the invitation was the CCM, it was the NACs in each country which, in effect, responded – albeit through the CCM. Throughout the FLW, GF has stressed that its primary interlocutor and partner in-country is the CCM; in reality, however, since the modality deals with *national strategy*, it is the NACs that are the primary partners<sup>8</sup>.

In all three countries the NACs responded very positively. In Malawi the decision to participate in the FLW speeded-up the NAF Mid-Term Review process with a view to meeting NSA deadlines.

**MALAWI CS:** *The NSA provided a real opportunity, stimulus and incentives in three [sic] ways. Firstly, the FLW was seen as a considerable opportunity to bridge the resource gap in financing the activities of the NAF. Secondly, the alignment and harmonization principle that embodies the NSA was very persuasive and thirdly, Malawi was in the process of reviewing its national strategy and the possibility of having that strategy funded through the NSA even before it was finalized was just too good to turn down and lastly, it was thought during the initial stages that the NSA would be easier than the round-based applications.*

Similarly in Kenya, the possibility of participating in the NSA was an added incentive for the work leading to a new KNASP; but this was recognized as a risky strategy.

**KENYA CS:** *By about July 2008, communication on the impending NSA had reached the country. UNAIDS advocated alongside NACC within the CCM for Kenya's involvement in the NSA. When communication on the NSA reached the country in November 2008, the CCM after much discussion was convinced that the country should submit an application. The country's large financing gap, especially for ARVs was seen as a major reason to engage, while her less than robust relations with the Global Fund deterred some.*

In Rwanda, which was much further along with the development of its NSP, it was seen as an opportunity to align funding with strategy:

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<sup>8</sup> This of course will not create problems for IHP+ and national strategies, since IHP+ will be dealing with established government-led systems, and not new, parallel systems as set up by GF.

**RWANDA CS:** *“The decision to apply for NSA was based on the fact that we envisioned NSA an opportunity for us to have a fully funded National Strategic Plan other than rounds which fund earmarked programs included in the proposal”*

*“Its obvious, funding a national strategy is far better than rounds that essentially why we opted for NSA, by this modality Rwanda will be able to achieve the ambitious targets set out in NSP”.*

The other invited countries also responded very positively, immediately perceiving benefits.

**UN interviewee:** *Both countries had previously benefited from GFATM proposals, funding was channelled to the various projects and efficiently contributed to some parts of the response. However, GF funding hampered long term and sustained response at decentralized level. Achieving results of the national strategies is the results of a combination of various components, i.e prevention, treatment, cares, epidemic analysis, etc. Irregular funding through GF and project mode funding approach have resulted on absence of harmonization between parts of the response funded through GF and those not included.*

It is important to stress, however, that the leadership and ownership of the process very quickly passed from CCMs directly to the NACs, with important implications for the rest of the process.

**KENYA CS:** *The proposal to apply was proposed to the Interagency Coordinating Committee (ICC) through NACC (also a member of the CCM) for clearance. The ICC advisory committee under NACC made the initial decision and recommendation to the CCM to formally express interest in the NSA modality. The CCM recognizes the disease ICCs as its technical consensus building and policy arms. The HIV ICC is as organ under NACC, while the latter is the legally mandated custodian of KNASP. The ICC advisory committee was therefore the obvious choice because of its legal mandate extended from NACC, wider representation of HIV stakeholders in-country and linkage to both NACC and the ICC.*

**MALAWI CS:** *Specifically, NAC has provided leadership and coordination of the NSP/NSA pilot process. The Commission has fairly galvanized stakeholders, constituted critical working NSP/NSA teams, progressed with a sense of decisiveness, stayed on course and met critical GF NSA deadlines. At a political level, the leadership has been supportive and there is heightened sense of taking more national responsibility than before.*

**UN interviewee (Djibouti and Algeria):** *NAC and MOH took the leadership, convened CCM, NAC Secretariat and the working group that was supporting the elaboration of the NSP. The national partners solicited UNAIDS (MENA RST) and ASAP support, which was immediately provided.*

Countries also quickly recognized the potential simplicity of the NSA modality – ‘GF-lite’. In Kenya and Malawi, where there would have been considerable reluctance, albeit for different reasons<sup>9</sup>, on the part of the NACs to invest the professional, political and institutional capital necessary in a Round 9 proposal, the opportunity to access substantial GF funds through a simpler mechanism was seen as a great opportunity (see above).

Through their institutional frameworks the NACs quickly mobilized support for the NSA invitation. This reinforced the perception of the NSA as powerfully government-led. This perhaps contributed to a certain tension in the NSP development process: NACs were prepared to allow or accept less discussion and participation, to insist on a greater focus on ‘evidence’, and to stress their own competence as financial and programmatic managers, since the strategies were to be ‘assessed for funding’. In some ways this was productive; in others not.

In addition, in all three countries the local UNAIDS Country Office was a very robust advocate for the NSA, willing to invest its political, professional and TA capital substantially in the modality.

Other partners were equally keen to see the NSA experiment: both as an overall approach towards ‘GF-lite’, and as an opportunity to access additional funding for ‘their’ country. Some, however, approached the exercise with very considerable caution, in two main areas: was it appropriate to combine the development of a new (or revised) Strategic Plan with, knowing the GF, what was likely to be a ‘heavy lift’ to get an appropriate NSA submitted; and second, were the institutional and programmatic (results) frameworks of the strategic plan likely to be robust enough to sustain the NSA?

**Implications for NSA roll-out:**

3. The key role of the NAC, as the ‘owner’ of the National Strategy, in the NSA process must be recognized. While the CCM is the official interlocutor with GF, it is the NAC which manages the NSP and thus the NSA. Where the relationships are good, there is usually no problem; if the relationship is poor, this could be a challenge.

<sup>9</sup> Malawi largely because it did not perceive a particular funding shortfall, having recently complete the successful RCC; and Kenya largely because of the dysfunctional nature of in-country GF mechanisms and the country’s history with GF.



## 2.3 Stakeholder involvement

In all three countries, stakeholders were quickly involved with the NSA process. The Malawi Country Study (CS) describes it as the ‘*want-to-be-involved and good intentions frenzy*’.

**MALAWI CS:** *The NSA aroused positive interest and optimism among stakeholders for a potential realistic scaling of the national response in a harmonized manner. This in itself has provided the driving force for “wanting to participate”. Notwithstanding time limitations, participation in the NSP/NSA has been expansive. Government ministries, United Nations, donors and civil society have participated at various stages of the process, largely through technical working groups.*

**KENYA CS:** *Over 100 meetings, convening more than 2000 stakeholders were held.....Civil society – and to a limited extent – the private sector comprised 58% of participating stakeholders. NACC and its decentralized structures comprised 19%, Government constituted 16% while development partners made up 7% of partakers to all consultation.*

**RWANDA CS:** *The NSA is a part of Rwanda HIV national strategic plan that was developed between December 2008 and April 2009 as well as the operational planning for the NSP in May to June 2009. The process, which was led by the Executive Secretariat of the National AIDS Commission, was designed to ensure broad participation in both the interpretation of the various studies and surveys that had been conducted in a period of more than a year, and the development of priorities and implementation strategies for the new Plan..... During consultations with civil society organizations, they appreciated the greater role they played in NSA processes much as they did in NSP processes. They appreciated that, the biggest stake of implementation of NSA, up to 50% is on the shoulders of CSOs. “CSOs were highly involved because prior to NSA, we were developing a round proposal for CSOs, so technical experts who were working on this proposal ended up providing technical assistance to NSA after the decision had been made to apply for NSA modality. The implementation stake of CSOs is 50% in NSA, CCM is proud of this”.*

An important element of the process in Rwanda, and one which countries (and partners) can learn from, was conducting a ‘Civil Society Situation Analysis’ as input to the NSP-NSA process.

**RWANDA CS:** *“The situation analysis of CSOs during the development process of NSP, was the flagship to the meaningful involvement of CSOs in HIV response, the analysis was preceded by many meetings and consultations, prior to this development, the role of CSOs was not adequately reflected in the rounds” Aimable Mwananawe, President, Rwanda, NGO Forum on HIV/AIDS and health promotion.*

As a result, Rwanda is able to estimate that 60% of implementation of the NSP will be by civil society.

The TRP Reviews also all noted significant involvement and participation of key stakeholders, both explicitly described in the NSPs themselves, and in the NSP-NSA process.

Yet there is ‘involvement’ and ‘involvement’.

**MALAWI CS:** *Of all the participating groups, civil society in general and PLHAs in particular was the least satisfied with their participation in the NSA. Civil society appreciated attempts to involve them in the process but did not feel their presence made any difference on process outputs, specifically and the national response generally.*

The Malawi CS also makes the interesting point that the coordination mechanisms described in the NSP (Extended NAF) rely on various groups (civil society, PLWA, private sector, etc) participating and being represented through representative organizations. However:

**MALAWI CS:** *It is assumed that these organizations have a base and constituency but the reality on the ground is that despite existence of such a constituency, the constituency is neither engaged nor consulted on the issues. Therefore, although the civil society (CS) may be represented nominally, it is the organizations themselves that participate in their own capacity rather than the capacity as representatives of CS.*

Rwanda seems to have been able to move past this point:

**RWANDA CS:** *“In the past, umbrellas used to work as individuals, but we are now coordinated at national and decentralized levels, NSP was catalytic to this process, there is a civil society steering committee at national level, and we intend to decentralize for the purposes of facilitating the implementation of NSP and other development programs”.*

Participation of other sectors, beyond the health and AIDS ‘sub-sector’ has been extensive.

**KENYA CS:** *All the above sectors [Ministries of Health, Ministry of Planning, National Development and Vision 2030, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Services] were already part of the Working Group, and NACC only needed to formally engage Permanent Secretaries and ministries for buy-in. NACC held formal discussions with the Permanent Secretaries in the Ministries of Public Health and Sanitation, Medical Services, and Ministry of State for Special Programmes. A director in the Ministry of Planning, National*

*Development and Vision 2030 was very active throughout the Strategic and Operational Planning phases, having been formally assigned by his Permanent Secretary.*

**MALAWI CS:** *The critical role of essential non-health sectors such as Education, Social Welfare (Social Protection), Youth Development participated at various relevant stages of the NSP/NSA pilot process and relevant sector issues have been duly acknowledged and planned for in the national strategy but large component of their funding will originate from, government budget, UN and donors. Overall, the critical observation is that it has not been easy to reconcile the interests of essential non-health sectors and core HIV and AIDS issues. For example, while there is social protection dimension to HIV and AIDS, there has been temptation to include a whole range of social protection issues to the extent that it would be like a social protection program within the Extended NAF. The balance has not been easy to achieve but eventually consensus was reached.*

Participation of development partners has also been keen. In all three countries, PEPFAR, the largest single contributor to the national response (apart from GF), was closely involved, took keen interest and was very supportive: this was particularly important with respect to the Gap Analysis.

**A Development Partner interview:** *The NSA will strengthen the pooled funding approach in HIV/AIDS in Malawi which is already established – so it's really a question of new donors joining the pool. The NSA is the right way to go as it is a more efficient and aligned way of delivering aid – but I'm not sure whether it will have a direct influence on other donors joining the pooled fund arrangement in Malawi.*

**RWANDA CS:** *The announcement of NSA catalyzed the holistic participation of all stakeholders including bilateral, multilaterals viewing NSA as a window of opportunity for greater and effective harmonization of programs and resources leading to shared accountability both for resources and results.*

It is worth raising here an issue already touched upon: the relative 'involvement' of the CCM, as the mandated vehicle for involvement of all stakeholders, and the role of the NAC, as the government-mandated vehicle for involvement of all stakeholders. Rwanda raises interesting issues:

**RWANDA CS:** *Legal framework is adequately supportive of NSP/NSA implementation, The CCM is headed by the permanent secretary in the ministry of health, there is also CCM secretariat with its head, there is also National AIDS Control commission (NACC/CNLS) under the office of the president, PMU is operationally under NACC. Will the new NSA modality*

*provide sound basis for effective grant management? Some thoughts raise that, if it is the funding of the national strategy and NACC is in place, what is the relevancy of a separate PMU? Given the overwhelming number of CSOs, how will they access money? Are there institutional arrangements already discussed to this effect? Is duo-track funding applicable or necessary in the implementation of Rwanda NSP? Given that the systems in Rwanda are working well, there is apparently no need for duo track funding. Previous round based funding and World Bank/MAP was well managed under single PR, unless there other structural/ process issues that may rise in future under the funding of the national strategy, currently there is no need for duo-track funding.*

In Malawi this was not raised as an issue. But as the TRP itself noted:

*“NAC is the overseer and coordinator of the national response, a PR for HIV and AIDS grants (Rounds 1, 5 and 7) as well as the secretariat for CCM which can present potential conflicts of interest. The NAF does not address this issue.”*

As important implication and outcome of the contradiction between the NAC as owner of the NSP and the CCM as apparent owner of the NSA concerns the more formal role of civil society as possible PR within the NSA. Neither Rwanda nor Malawi selected a CS PR – for reasons which their CCMs found good. In Kenya, while the Kenya Red Cross has been selected as CS PR, the relative roles and responsibilities of the two PRs within the NSA are not stated.

**Implications for NSA roll-out:**

4. It is important to distinguish between stakeholder participation in the NSP and in the NSA. While more and more stakeholders seem to be engaging with NSP processes and products it is unclear how effective CCMs have been in engaging stakeholders in the NSA. More nuanced understanding of the roles of NACs and CCMs in the various aspects of these processes is required.

## **2.4 Desk Review – TRP comments**

One of the most important ‘learning areas’ for the NSA modality is the ‘assessment’ of National Strategic Plans as suitable bases for large-scale funding. This is based upon the approach being developed by IHP+ of *Joint Assessment of National Strategies* (JANS). The JANS envisages a thorough and managed process through which sustained and comprehensive joint ownership of national strategies and associated plans is developed by both country and external partners; resulting in a variety of possible outcomes and decision issues for all. To fit the constrained

time-frame and idiosyncrasies of the FLW, however, a highly modified process was used by the GF for the assessment comprising two stages: a desk review by the GF Technical Review Panel (TRP) and a country visit (2.6 below) by selected TRP members.

The Desk Reviews (DR) seem to have been primarily an initial assessment that sufficient work had been done on new NSPs to justify including them in the FLW. Essentially they only noted that the NSPs already respond favourably to the ‘attributes’ structure they were using for the review. There seems at this stage to have been little critical ‘quality assurance’ of what was actually in the NSPs.

This aspect of the process is worth examining in a little more detail, as it became a source of considerable confusion and angst for some countries.

- For **Rwanda**: the desk review identified 20 ‘Strengths’, NO ‘areas for improvement’; and sought 5 ‘clarifications’.
- For **Malawi**: the desk review identified 22 ‘Strengths’, ‘areas for improvement’ in only 2 of the sets of attributes; but identified a number of clarifications to be ‘checked’ during the country visit.
- For **Kenya**: the desk review identified 20 ‘Strengths’, ‘areas for improvement’ in only one set of attributes, though it noted in 2 others that the documentation was a ‘work in progress’ and so some attributes could not be assessed yet; and noted some ‘clarifications’ again relating to incomplete work.

Countries naturally accepted these comments as suggesting highly satisfactory NSPs. As will be noted below, however, after the country visits the numbers of ‘areas for improvement’ jumped for Malawi to 17, for Rwanda to 11, and for Kenya to 19.

The stated aim of the desk reviews had been: “to assess whether submitted national strategy documentation is robust enough to form basis of an NSA”<sup>10</sup>. Without wishing to get engaged in semantics (what is ‘enough’?), considering the huge increase in areas for improvement that the final reviews contained, the initial documentation submitted to the Desk Reviews was patently NOT robust enough to form the basis of an NSA. It appears to have been sufficiently robust to form the basis *for further work towards an NSA*. But just what was the role of the Desk Review? To assess how far the NSPs were acceptable? Or to provide guidance for further work towards an NSA?

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<sup>10</sup> From Geneva Workshop slides

**RWANDA CS:** *There was a more or less general consensus from all stakeholders consulted that, though it is good to exchange experience and ideas, the desk review were not helpful at all, they just sought clarifications. They failed to get any idea for improvement, some stakeholders also go on to assert that probably those who did desk review did not have enough time because however much a document may be perfect, one cannot at least fail to single out something for improvement other than just seeking minor clarifications.*

The important distinction between assessment and improvement towards the NSA appears not to have been recognized in the countries. The Desk Review has emerged as a second important decision point in the NSA process. Four of the seven countries invited for the FLW NSA were in fact screened out at this stage.

**Consultant interviewee:** *It does not seem to have logical selection criteria for qualifying plans. Take for example the experience in first flow, some of the proposals that qualified were incomplete and yet those that were complete did not qualify.*

**UN interviewee:** *The government and civil society partners were disappointed and feelings of unfair judgment prevailed. The Djibouti Minister of Health gathered a donor meeting, including UN and other bilateral partners to voice his disappointment as well as voiced his concern through official letter to the UNAIDS EXD, WHO DG and GFATM EXD. Discussions with partners of countries selected reinforced the attitude of national partners. E.g. while Djibouti had submitted a costed operational plan and well focused strategy, partners from another country had indicated that their strategy was not articulated in a costed operational plan. nevertheless, it was accepted. These comments and exchanges did reinforce lack of confidence on GFATM and how decisions are made.*

As we shall see later, this aspect of the FLW NSA is one where much more work is required.

**Implications for NSA roll-out:**

5. GF will need to coordinate the desk reviews and the country visits so that there is consistency and development within their message.
6. GF and partners will need to clarify how far the 'assessment' (whether desk review, country visit or consolidation) is a one-off *quality assurance* process, which indicates precisely the level of 'soundness' achieved; or to what extent it can be *developmental*, where it is a supportive process to countries aimed at helping them improve their NSPs against a specific set of attributes.

## 2.5 NSA FLW workshop in Geneva, 18-19 May 2009

While this workshop does appear to have clarified the process and steps to be taken for the NSA, it does not seem to have addressed what were already being noted as key issues: primarily, what the difference was between an NSA and a Round-based Application; in what form the NSA should present its Request for funding; and what an Operational Plan was. A set of key ‘feedback questions’ is noted in the slides; but not any responses or discussion. This is a pity, since at country level key issues which continued to arise following the workshop, which one might expect to have been discussed, apparently still were not clarified. Malawi could not attend the Geneva Workshop.

Most important among these issues was the explication of the GF’s concept of a “two-stage process”: the review of the NSP (stage 1, in two steps: Desk Review and Country Visit), which if found satisfactory would lead to an invitation to submit an application focused on the financial request for consideration by the GF Technical Review Panel (stage 2).

*As with rounds-based proposals, NSAs will be screened by the Secretariat for CCM minimum eligibility requirements. Eligible NSAs will be reviewed by the TRP to assess the soundness feasibility of the request for Global Fund financing in the context of the whole National Strategy Documentation<sup>11</sup>.*

The implication of this latter screening, while explicit in the documentation, was completely missed by almost everyone in the countries, and among their partners; who assumed that the ‘assessment of soundness’ was primarily confined to the NSP assessment. Indeed, the criteria by which the TRP assessed ‘soundness and feasibility’ were never disclosed.

This is perhaps one of the most important lessons from the FLW: the importance of ensuring that all partners are absolutely clear about new approaches and modalities and how they differ from previous practices. Participation of a variety of people in this process is important: countries, but represented both by their CCM and their NAC; technical support providers (UN Joint Teams members, TSF, ASAP, etc); and quite possibly other partners – PEPFAR, DFID, the Alliance, etc.

It is notable that, with the exception of the guidance issued by the GF to the CCM (with unclear distribution thereafter), none of the technical support providers offered any written guidance or support to the countries.

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<sup>11</sup> From: *Practical information for potential applicants to the “First Learning Wave”*, 16 February 2009

**Implications for NSA roll-out:**

8. Such workshops are essential to ensure that the process is fully understood and the various decision points and criteria for decision-making clear to all.
9. A wider range of partners need to be involved: not only country people, but also technical support providers such as the TSFs.
10. Technical support providers should consider developing their own guidance for managing the NSA process.

## **2.6 TRP Country Visit**

The Country Visits were conducted as planned; and handled rather differently in each country. In all cases the TRP were reported to be satisfied with the visit, the preparations made, and the range of stakeholders available for interview.

The less successful aspects of the visits, however, are captured in the revealing response to the visit in the Malawi CS, which is worth quoting at length.

**MALAWI CS:** *On 3 July, the TRP presented its findings. Initial stakeholders' reactions after presentation of TRP findings were characterized by "confusion and frustration". Partners wondered "Can all this be accomplished in the time left before submission??" "Do we re-write the strategy and submit together with the application?" Some stakeholders felt that the strategy had been written without adequate guidance while others observed that there was sufficient detail initially but the consultants who wrote the strategy suggested it should be a thinner document, thus a lot of the details were left out. Generally, the comments were initially found to be vague and in some ways not as helpful in defining what needed to be done to strengthen the NSA submission. The apparent vagueness in the TRP comments was compounded by TRP inability to clarify their comments because they didn't want to be seen to provide technical assistance. After the TRP presentation, a stakeholder is reported to have been told by one of the TRP team members to "Read between the lines" when he asked for clarification on some of the comments.*

*Besides, discordance among TRP members on desk review comments was reported. For example, some TRP members disagreed over the robustness of national strategy as portrayed in desk review comments.*



*From the reactions after in-country TRP presented its findings, majority were surprised with their findings, thus prompting the question “Why was Malawi surprised with the comments of the in-country TRP visit?” National AIDS Commission observed that national response partners were preparing for TRP in-country visit feedback based on the desk review comments. Since TRP in-country visit comments pointed out more shortfalls and gaps than desk review comments, stakeholders might not have expected such turn of events, hence they might have been surprised.*

Malawi did, however, respond robustly, and put a great deal of effort into answering the TRP comments.

In Kenya the Country Visit was critical, as so much of the NSP had been still incomplete at the time of the Desk Review. And as has already been noted, the TRP team took the country seriously to task on a number of issues. And while many of the comments were found useful, some significant dissatisfaction was noted:

**KENYA CS:** *Most of the comments were appropriate and well targeted, but could have benefited from a better understanding of the country by the TRP. Kenya is a politically, socially and systemically complex environment..... an over emphasis on MARPs, especially MSMs when their numbers had scarcely been validated, led to default modeled targets that the country may not be able to meet. More could have been achieved by offering options to the evidence vs. equity trade-offs debate; insights on gender or behavioral outcome results, among others.*

*Overall, TRP comments when focused correctly were highly constructive. Even then, however, they did not offer much guidance. They helped strengthen KNASP III, but did not help with ideas to strengthen the NSA submission as previously expected. It seemed at points, that even the TRP was not clear about the Global Fund’s future *modus operandi* in light of the NSA. ....However, KNASP III’s epidemiological response benefited more from the ASAP review, and in-country consultation team while its management, coordination, and financial aspects were principally improved by the TRP comments.*

*.....In some instances, stakeholders used the TRP visit to advocate their positions even where targets were unclear. .... Logistics for the local team facilitating the TRP visit were poorly handled since it was not clear whether this was NACC or the CCM’s responsibility, hence financial obligations were loaded onto NACC rather than Global Fund.*

These comments reveal an important issue: how ‘developmental’, as opposed to funding-related quality assurance, are assessments supposed to be? This is an issue being robustly discussed in IHP+ with regard to the JANS; GF and partners need to equally robustly discuss this issue in the context of the NSA modality.

In this context, the TRP Review (both Desk Review and Country Visit) was seen as a primarily GF process: although various in-country people were included in the country visit team, it was very clear that this was a GF-led and -driven process for specific GF purposes. A lot of people were involved in the country visits, and there was a real attempt to speak to a wide range of players and stakeholders; but it was a dialogue between GF and stakeholders, not an ‘internal’ dialogue in any way.

Both Kenya and Rwanda undertook a fairly significant peer review process. Kenya formally submitted the KNASP to ASAP (UNAIDS/World Bank) for peer review; and then constructed a framework of comments from the TRP, ASAP and other reviewers to guide its further strengthening of the KNASP. Rwanda requested informal peer review from a variety of sources – primarily the regional offices of UN agencies. Only in Kenya, however, was the TRP Review seen as part of a wider process of review and strategy strengthening.

Thus while in some instances the TRP comments were seen as helpful stimulus to improve the NSPs, in general the responses within countries were often more limited: in many cases specific limited editing/addition to respond as minimally as possible to the TRP - not about improving the strategy, but rather mobilizing resources.

**UN TB-NSA interviewee:** *TRP assessment was not enough supportive to help or add much on the work. TRP remarks not often accurate or useful, often insisting on details, not useful to improve planning.*

Much of this was a function of time-pressure: where the TRP raised significant issues it was going to be impossible to revise the NSP within the time-period before the NSA submission; where a specific answer, addition, or limited clarification could be made, it was. This was particularly the case where the comments specifically targeted something which was expected to play a key role in obtaining funding: procurement, civil society engagement, costs, the gap analysis. Thus the response to the TRP assessment was seen by many not so much about improving the strategy, but rather mobilizing resources. This is perhaps to be expected, given the conditions of the FLW; especially the decisions made by the GF (see above) about the limitations on the process and expectations of the ‘assessment’:

These weaknesses were compounded by fact that the 'NSA process' was seen by almost everyone (except GF Geneva) as a 'single stream', starting with the NSP development, then moving to NSP assessment, then on to Gap Analysis and finally NS Application. The assessment of the NSPs was thus seen as the primary NSA (rather than NSP) assessment - for GF purposes; and it was seen essentially as an assessment aimed at fulfilling GF concerns about eligibility for performance-based funding rather than country concerns about the robustness or soundness of their national strategy. IHP+ are struggling with this dichotomy: is the assessment (JANS) essentially donor-owned, as a justification for providing funding? Or essentially country-owned, as a QA of their strategy? Or how to achieve both - and this is really challenging them. The TRP assessment completely failed to address this issue - or perhaps just ignored it. This is most notably evidenced in the finding from Malawi: when pressed for clarification on their comments, the TRP said that they couldn't clarify as their business was assessment, not technical assistance.

Interesting insights can be gained from the Rwanda experience:

**RWANDA CS:** *There is a general consensus from the stakeholder consultations including partners that was conducted during this documentation exercise, that in country Visit was more useful to GF than Rwanda, because they learnt a lot from Rwanda and the country visit did not raise any tangible observation or recommendation that would help improve NSA. Although the Geneva Workshop explained clearly that, the TRP members are not coming to give technical support to the national teams, but to understand key aspects of the NSP and identify critical issues that have to be addressed in the NSA. their comments never raised anything for improvement in NSA but just sought clarifications.*

Furthermore, the TRP seems to have only used the highest level of IHP+/JANS attributes, and those too without any objective criteria. Considering how much effort IHP+ has put into trying to be explicit about attributes at much lower levels, to ensure some kind of objectivity (or perhaps to reduce subjectivity) this suggests that the TRP assessment had very limited validity beyond the confines of the TRP's own arcane judgement framework. Indeed there are reports from the countries of some disagreement within the TRP team about some of the judgements made.

**MALAWI CS:** ***What does a robust national strategy really mean?** A term that has been understood differently was robustness of the national strategy. “What do we really mean when we say a national strategy is robust and what standards define robustness? Is it on the basis of IHP+ Working Group Attributes for a Sound National Strategy or something else?” There were differences in opinion on robustness of the national*

*strategy even within the in-country TRP. Definitions or guidelines on national strategy robustness may not be exhaustive; however they are useful for guiding the NSP/NSA process, particularly because differences in understanding may “grading” of the national strategy.*

The GF had made it clear, from the start, that this was a learning wave, was time-bound, and that the assessment was to be *exceptional*. Be that as it may, considering the detail becoming available for both the process and content of *joint assessment* through the IHP+ and partners (of which GF is one), the FLW ‘TRP Review’ falls short of what is required. While the five areas of ‘attributes’ set out by the IHP+ were assessed by the TRP for each NSP, this appears to have been done purely on the basis of ‘soundness’, with no criteria for ‘soundness’ given. Nor does there appear to have been any discussion, with countries, of what the attributes describe, reveal or conceal, not what ‘soundness’ entailed.

In addition, although the GF attempted to set fairly robust criteria for inclusion in the TRP Team for the country visit, questions are raised, at least with respect to Malawi and Rwanda, about this team; though this is not to suggest that there was any confusion between the respective roles of TRP team members and national facilitators.

**MALAWI CS:** *Practical information on the in-country visit recommended that people involved in managing the national response should not be chosen as national facilitators. Instead, it was recommended that national health experts, locally based advisers, regional or sub-regional staff of partner agencies, and civil society technical experts could be included in this group. Basing on this recommendation, the choice of 2 CCM members to be national facilitators in Malawi was not consistent with GF recommendations. Although not directly involved in managing the national response, CCM is both a governance and coordination structure of GF aspects of the national response. Therefore, such inclusion might have undermined objectivity of the CCM members in discharging their duties as national facilitators. Evidence shows that that at least 2 of the TRP members were surprised to have CCM members serving as national facilitators.*

**RWANDA CS:** *The cost effectiveness of the in country visit was also doubted by many stakeholders, there were many in number. The composition was vehemently criticized, less than a half of the entire visiting team was the actual members of TRP. “During In country visit, members did not understand the context, composition was confusing, many of them were Secretariat staff, only one or two were actual members of TRP” one development partner asserted.*

These comments raise issues about the ‘ownership’ of the TRP assessment that are crucial.

Finally, the country visits were very short and highly limited. Experience from other development funding mechanisms (eg Bi-lateral donor design missions, Development Bank appraisal missions, etc) suggest that there is much to learn about both the mechanics of country assessment visits, their scope and scale, and the risks involved and the mitigation strategies necessary.

Given this *exceptional* assessment, it is hard not to consider it an insufficient basis for decision-making about \$1 billion.

**Implications for NSA roll-out:**

11. It is clear that National Strategies are far more difficult to make accurate and useful assessments of than was thought; the whole process of assessment used in the FLW needs to be re-thought.
12. Greater country ‘ownership’ of the assessment is critical if it is to have a significant impact on *‘improved quality, consistency and credibility of national strategic frameworks’* as expected by GF.

## **2.7 Preparing for the NSA**

Preparing for the NSA was the most innovative part of the whole process; it was the biggest change in current NSP processes and practice, and the most demanding on countries and involved three key steps: costing the NSP sufficiently robustly to meet the standards indicated in the TRP Assessment, conducting the ‘gap analysis’ to determine what was going to be asked for in the NSA, and preparing the National Operational Plan, which would show how it fitted within existing operations of stakeholders. None of these had been done before to this level of thoroughness in any of the three countries. It gave a whole new validity to the NSP; not simply an ‘advocacy document’ around which publicity and AIDS awareness can be generated, nor something to please UNAIDS and show the country’s commitment, but rather the serious basis for resource mobilization.

With hindsight, this stage of the process can be seen to be a discrete step; the countries, however, tended to see it as a seamless part of the NSP-NSA process. Interestingly none of the

GF guidance for the NSA identifies it as a key stage. The TRP Reviews highlighted where there were weaknesses or gaps in these areas, but rather as elements in the NSP, rather than as preparation for the NSA.

The significance of this stage arises from the very real innovation that the NSA represents. Many countries ‘cost’ their strategic plans; and countries often calculate what their overall resource envelope is and what partners contribute. But this is usually done in very general and aggregate terms, primarily as a background context, or overall environment, against which donor (or GF round-based) funding of ‘projects’ can be viewed. The NSA provided an opportunity for, and demanded, much more rigour, and much more detail in these key areas: costing, gap analysis and operational planning.

**Costing the NSP:** countries struggled. All made at least two, if not three attempts to find a way of costing the results framework they had developed: countries used the RNM (Resource Needs Model), Goals, Activity-Based Costing and Spectrum to help with targets.

**MALAWI Consultant Trip Report:** *UNAIDS/Malawi and ASAP recommended the Resource Needs Model (RNM) to NAC as a ‘robust budgeting tool’. However, the RNM is not a budgeting tool, but rather a planning tool, allowing planners to assess and compare costs of alternative prevention and care strategies. For the purpose of preparing the Extended NAF, a much more efficient and appropriate method to arrive at a budget estimate, would have been to estimate projections on the basis of the current budget, past expenditures and available recent programme budget as per GF workplans. This said, undertaking the RNM and the help of [the] costing consultant, introduced a useful planning tool to NAC planners (and UNAIDS), and the process was educational and appreciated.*

There may well be limitations to how far one can, in fact, cost a large strategic results framework. Competencies with costing tools and models are not wide-spread in NACs, Ministries, the UN and other technical support providers. Countries had varied experiences with the technical support provided to them. Malawi went through two different costing exercises; Kenya perhaps three; Rwanda was fortunate to have highly specialized expertise available through the Clinton Foundation. The countries found that, by and large, the Resource Needs Model (RNM) was unsatisfactory.

**MALAWI CS:** *However, as work progressed, the model was found to be inappropriate both in methodology and output: the methodology was difficult to apply in Malawi context and the model itself was too data intensive and the derived outputs were not directly relevant to*

*Extended NAF. Besides, since most people did not understand the model, it was extremely difficult to put up a robust defense of the NAF costing if required.*

**KENYA CS:** *The country's unit costs varied between and among public, civil society, private and development partners, necessitating remodeling and harmonization of all unit cost parameters. The costing consultants provided by a partner initially were better skilled in accounting than in modeling HIV and AIDS resource needs. UNAIDS therefore facilitated NACC's request for technical support from the World Bank/UNAIDS ASAP team. NASA categorizations did not adequately represent policy, behavior, sectoral HIV mainstreaming, human rights, gender, systems strengthening, and community interventions. Target setting was difficult since the country was simultaneously updating its Universal Access targets; Robust absolute figures and baseline data around MARPS, gender, human rights, youth, infant, AIDS competent communities and the elderly population were lacking; while constraints in the strategic information and M&E systems hindered the country's ability to solve data availability problems as quickly as the process demanded. Population data was manually recalculated using MS Excel sheets while the intervention of Spectrum model developers was requested by the country's M&E Committee. Obtaining good dedicated technical assistance for HIV costing from within the country proved difficult since the few local costing experts were all involved in separate aspects of the process.*

Particularly contentious issues arise from how much of what costs are included:

**RWANDA CS:** *[T]here were extensive and contentious discussions; regarding the inclusion of PEPFAR funding that goes to health systems strengthening. "53million USD out 122M , was not costed and also not valued, this is the money that goes in the health systems strengthening like Laboratories, M&E of diseases, Community health workers, trainings (school of public Health, residency programs...."*

**Gap analysis:** calculating the gap between the costed NSP and available or anticipated funds. In many ways, this was one of the most important outcomes of the NSA process. For the first time, countries attempted to collect financial data from all stakeholders, and link it directly to the costed NSP results framework. This process challenged countries, however.

**MALAWI CS:** *As part of the costing of Extended NAF, attempts were made to collect current and projected financial commitments from donors and implementers. Donors and implementers were also asked to indicate which areas of the national response they would commit their funding to. There has been reluctance among some quarters<sup>12</sup> to*

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<sup>12</sup> Primarily the International NGO and FBOs

*share their funding data. In a number of cases, implementers have reported allocating some funding to the national response; however, when quizzed to specify areas they are spending their funding on, some haven't been able to explain because for some implementers, their objectives are packaged differently from the extended national strategy or their objectives were based on the original NAF and are therefore directly incomparable.*

An idea of just how complicated this can be comes from the Rwanda experience:

**RWANDA CS:** *Once the costing was done, there was a need to be assessing it against the available resources. Rwanda had a big advantage on this front thanks to the Joint Annual Work Plan (JAWP). The JAWP is also an excel-based tool that captures all available resources going into the Health Sector in Rwanda – it breaks the information down by activity, by cost category, by district and facility, by Health Sector Strategic Objective, by MTEF program, etc. It is also set up in a format that allows Pivot tables to be used, which greatly facilitates the analysis of the data. All partners had been asked to indicate, when filling out the JAWP and where relevant, to which output (and hence to which outcome and impact) of the NSP their planned activities were contributing to. After validation with some of the major partners including USG/PEPFAR, the UN, bilateral and NGOs, this data was used to infer the financial gap. Careful attention was paid to avoid counting resources in the JAWP that were not necessarily directly contributing to activities in the NSP. For example, while PEPFAR's budget in Rwanda is about \$125 million per year, the NSP only considered \$67 million as actually contributing to the NSP (the balance going towards overhead, TA and other (very valid) health system interventions not costed out in the NSP). The initial detailed costing exercise was carried out over a period of one month by a team of 2, with inputs from many stakeholders. It was then refined over several months. The gap analysis was done over a period of 10 days (once the available resources information was made available). In terms of the JAWP, this was an exercise taking place regardless of the NSP or NSA. But because the timing coincided well, it became possible to integrate HIV-specific information into the JAWP, which looks at the entire health sector. The JAWP in itself is an exercise that takes about 2-3 months to complete.*

**Operationalizing the strategy:** There is considerable confusion about how national strategic plans get operationalized. ASAP in its guidance<sup>13</sup> describes 'action plans' that:

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<sup>13</sup> *Preparing National HIV/AIDS Strategies and Action Plans - Lessons of Experience*, AIDS Strategy and Action Plan, UNAIDS, October 19, 2007



- Ensure that “strategic priorities” become *operational realities*.
- *Improve the efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of program implementation* by focusing on the real challenges of implementing agents.
- Clearly *identify, coordinate and facilitate the actions of implementing agents* from the community to the national level, across sectors, in the public and private sectors and in civil society, and hold all stakeholders accountable for the things they commit to doing.
- Make it possible to monitor progress and performance, and identify and resolve bottlenecks for faster progress towards the country’s Universal Access targets.
- Ensure that changes in vulnerable groups and epidemic “hot spots” and *lessons about what works and doesn’t work are recognized* and become the basis for program redesign, because the epidemic is dynamic and the response must match.
- *Encourage donors to move from “project” to “program” financing*. The fact that some donors provide funding in the form of program support for AIDS and other purposes has encouraged many AIDS stakeholders to suggest that this should become the norm. Donors who provide program funding do so normally on the basis of detailed action plans encompassing all key stakeholders within a common fiduciary framework.

The ASAP guidance does not distinguish between ‘Operational Plan’, ‘Workplan’, or ‘Action Plan’, but describes the development of such plans as a specific step (Step 9) in its suggested roadmap. But these generic descriptions are applied by different countries in many different ways. Most seldom go beyond specific Annual Work Plans for NACCs, or Ministry of Health Action Plans for specific issues (e.g. Roll-out of ART, National PMTCT Scale-up, etc). Very few, if any, meet the ASAP definition to: “Clearly *identify, coordinate and facilitate the actions of implementing agents* from the community to the national level, across sectors, in the public and private sectors and in civil society, and hold all stakeholders accountable for the things they commit to doing.” Of the three countries in this study, the Malawi Integrated Annual Work Plan (IAWP) prepared by NAC for its Pool Fund is the most comprehensive; but this only covers the Pool Fund – estimated to be no more than 60% of available resources in the national response. Kenya has a NACC Annual Work Plan as an internal budgeting document.

The GF in its Strategy Document describing the NSA refers to ‘a workplan’ as a key requirement; but this is not spelled out at all. The NSA Form requests:

***Please submit the most recent operational plan. The format for submission should be the same as currently being used by the country. If the annual budget breakdown is contained in a separate document from the operational plan please submit the relevant documentation together with the operational plan.***

But no description of what the ‘operational plan’ or the ‘annual budget’ should cover is included. The Guidelines omit guidance on this.

The concept of a comprehensive plan that “identifies, coordinates and facilitates the actions of implementing agents from the community to the national level, across sectors, in the public and private sectors and in civil society, and hold all stakeholders accountable for the things they commit to doing” was thus quite new for the countries, and posed real challenges in three areas:

- Considering the scope and scale of the three NSPs (the size of budgets, the variety of players, and the complexity of implementation programmes) finding a practical and useful format which could encompass, as ASAP calls for: *the implementation period, the specific interventions/actions that will be undertaken to achieve the result, the specific implementing partners, the specific mechanisms to deal with coordination, the human and financial resource requirements, and how implementation will be monitored (including the indicators to track performance)*. The tendency was to produce unwieldy collections of spreadsheets with literally hundreds of rows. Particularly challenging (cf Malawi and Kenya) was the importance of ensuring ‘strategic coherence’ – that for each result, the set of related activities, the indicators, the costs and the funding were identified with a common codifier that related them all together.
- The NSPs were developed to include or accommodate a series of on-going programmes; for example, in the case of PEPFAR programmes in all three countries, very substantial programmes. In spite of partners having participated in the development of the NSP, in spite of assurances in Partnership Compacts and programme documents about ‘alignment with the NSP’, countries faced very real difficulties in getting information from implementing partners about what they were doing, what it cost, and how it was monitored. This was particularly the case in Malawi, for example, with regard to NGO partners.
- Maintaining the integrity of their results framework at the operational level. The tendency was to cast the operational plan entirely as inputs (activities); which would make monitoring progress against results very difficult.

The three countries have thus approached the *operational plan* in very different ways. In addition, it is very unclear what role these operational plans play in the NSA modality: they are, deliberately, NOT typical GF-style Work Plans, since they are not designed to specify any one actor's role, but rather to capture the totality of what is going on in the national response.

**Implications for NSA roll-out:**

13. Preparation for the NSA is a critical stage in the process which needs to be identified and supported.
14. Costing an NSP is a complex issue with significant ramifications: models and tools are not well developed; but countries will require very considerable technical support in these areas.
15. The opportunity provided by the gap analysis and national operational plan (NOP) to bring all partners' contributions within the national results framework is a powerful one and needs to be supported and encouraged by all partners.
- 16 Models for NOPs are not well defined; GF and partners need to give careful consideration to what are appropriate models and how countries can be supported to develop them

## 2.8 Finalizing the NSA

Perhaps the biggest challenge for countries has been 'what is an NSA'? This came to the forefront in all three countries when, following the TRP review and finalization of their NSP, calculation of the 'gap analysis', and preparation of their National Operational Plan, it was time to fill in the NSA form.

**MALAWI CS:** *[T]he NSA pilot has been associated with certain degree of vagueness and lack of guidance. NAC and partners have been "in the dark" over what the NSA really is and what the GF expects countries to do. Efforts were made to clarify the NSA and expected standards with various players including NAC and UNAIDS Country Office (UCO) but all haven't been able to clarify what the NSA really is and what the expected standards are. As a FLW, there is perhaps so much to be learnt and clarified even for the architects of the process and this may partially explain the inherent vagueness. As one interviewee summarized it all "At some stages, it seemed like we were groping in the darkness, not sure where the way would lead us to". Some TRP comments were not*

*clear, guidelines were in some ways not detailed enough to provide the needed guidance.*

Much of this confusion derived from the misunderstanding alluded to earlier – about the clear “two-stage process” of the NSA as designed by the GF.

What is the country applying for in this NSA: funding for the full ‘gap’; funding for specific parts of it? Countries struggled with this. The primary problem is sections 4.3 and 4.4. What do these sections ask for: a specific ‘project grant’ proposal to fill a specific gap within its national strategy (as in Kenya’s NSA)? Unallocated ‘programme funding’ to cover all or a wide range of gaps in the strategy (as in Malawi’s and Rwanda’s NSAs)? How much specificity is required? As can be seen in Kenya’s application, selecting specific funding gaps, unless handled very carefully, can come perilously close to looking like the preparation of yet another Round-based Proposal, with its own integrity of project-specific structure, objectives, activities, with only minimal reference to the NSP; yet not specified in enough detail for the GF. The Malawi and Rwanda approach simply repeats the NSP outcomes – a redundancy. The guidelines did not provide further details.

The form is indeed far more user-friendly and shorter than standard GF proposal forms. It appears to recognize that it is dealing with a national strategy, and therefore internal coherence, a results framework and programmatic justification are inherent in the strategy itself. By the same token, however, much of it is redundant: sections 2.4, (and in some interpretations) 4.3, 4.4, 6.1.1, 6.1.6. These should all be described already within the NSP.

**Consultant interviewee:** *I think sections 4.3/4.4 slightly betray some uncertainty at the level of the GFS. For me, 4.4. is on the way to asking for a detailed activity plan but doesn't quite do so... basically I think GF would like to get as much detail as it would in a round proposal, but knows it's a little bit unreasonable to ask in the context of a NSA. Which is why I think they left the question a bit ambiguous. We were left wondering what level of detail would be satisfactory because NSPs by their nature are not as detailed as a project proposal, and therefore they'll never really satisfy the level of detail that the GF normally requires in a Round based proposal. On the other hand if we had to go and work out detailed theoretical action plans just to apply for an NSA, that would kind of defeat the whole object of a NSA which was to fund a strategy not a project. Next time round they need to make it very clear how much detail they want.*

The Form requests ‘the most recent operational plan. The format for the plan should be the same as currently being used by the country.’ As already discussed, few countries have ‘operational plans’ apart from the institutions that have their own Work Plans. Yet the NSA

clearly does not require an Institutional Work Plan; not does it seem to require a detailed Grant Work Plan. The Form also asks for ‘the most recent results framework for the national strategy’; as can be seen from the three NSAs, this can vary enormously, and is seldom at the level of specificity required by GF for its grants (usually Attachment A – though this was not required for these NSAs, apparently in the belief that their ‘results frameworks’ would be sufficient). Similarly with respect to Attachment B, Pharmaceutical Products: should the NSA contain the full list of pharmaceutical products required under the NSP, since the funding will be fungible, and can be used for various products at different times? Or should it be, as in a project, a specific list of products requested under this particular application? This lack of clarity, throughout the NSA, especially when dealing with the GF, with its notoriously detailed requirements, caused very considerable levels of confusion and insecurity in the countries.

A major part of the problem, which needs to be resolved between the GF and its partners (primarily UNAIDS), is the wide variation in planning models being used: this emerges with respect to the costing, the gap analysis, the results framework and the operational plan. UNAIDS (and indeed the entire UN system) is committed to RBM (results based planning and management), and has been strongly encouraging countries to use RBM for their NSPs. Two of the counties of the FLW did attempt to use RBM (Kenya and Rwanda). Much of GF grant disbursement, however, appears to be based upon a more input-driven planning and management model. The countries also used different models to determine targets, or specific results to be achieved. Rwanda used Spectrum; Malawi used the ABC model derived from its Universal Access target-setting exercise, having rejected the Resource Needs model as a way of setting targets, preferring to specify objectives, strategies and action areas. Kenya’s NSP captures the confusion:

**KENYA NSP:** *Preparation of the costing of KNASP III was undertaken in three stages. Stage 1 involved preparation of demographic and epidemiological data using the Spectrum model and a preliminary cost estimate using the Resource Needs Model. Stage 2 focused on detailed costing based on the national plans of operations (NPOs) for each pillar, unit costs and finalisation of the KNASP III cost estimate using the Activity-based Costing (ABC) model, Commodity Plan and the Unit Cost (UC) model. Stage 3 focused on a financial gap analysis based on the ABC cost estimate, the national AIDS spending review, projected financial resources for HIV and AIDS and partner contributions to the different KNASP III targets.*

These various models have implications for how countries set targets, estimate resource needs, and calculate gaps – all of which are fundamental to good planning and resource mobilization; and to their NSA.

There was little clear guidance, from the GF, from UNAIDS, from ASAP, as to which model to use, for what purpose, when. Countries ended up using a mish-mash of several models. This makes consistency across the three NSAs very difficult, even consistency within them.

Closely related to this problem is that of technical assistance (TA). As with some much of GF proposal development and grant implementation it is heavily dominated by short term technical assistance: the NSAs were all written by consultants.

**KENYA CS:** *The NSA pilot has risked making the country TA dependent.*

**MALAWI CS:** *Three teams of consultants were used during the NSP/NSA pilot process.*

**CONSULTANT INTERVIEW:** *In .... UNDP led through their permanent technical advisor in the NAC as did Measure Evaluation; UNAIDS and GTZ provided consultants, as did Clinton. Seemed to work pretty well. I have to say that CCM secretariat and NAC staff were really not very engaged in the work of preparing the NSA.*

The knowledge and understanding of these consultants concerning the complex set of issues around the NSP/NSA processes varied enormously.

**CONSULTANT INTERVIEWEE:** *Anyway I had an issue with ASAP that the extensive tool they developed was too much and too cumbersome to be practical – I have looked at it and decided I'll do it my own way. That said, it would be a great tool to train more strategic planning consultants*

**MALAWI CS:** *Overall, the performance of the first set of consultants was poor, may be the poorest among all sets of consultants. The poor performance of this team prompts critical questions "Why did this team perform so poorly? Was it because they did not have the skills and how were they recruited? Is it a matter of attitude problem or the manner in which they were managed?" and most importantly "What can NAC and partners learn from this experience?"*

**Implications for NSA roll-out:**

17. Very clear guidance about the NSA process, what the application itself can or should cover, how it is linked to the NSP assessment process, how it will be assessed needs to be issued; not only by the GF, but also by global partners supporting countries, so that the appropriate support can be delivered at country level.

18. Technical assistance provided to countries to develop NSAs needs to be very well versed in the NSA modality and its guidance.

## 2.9 Overall assessment of the experience

### ***A positive experience with considerable expected benefits***

The NSA process (as defined in this paper) has undoubtedly generated considerable excitement and buy-in among all partners. Country responses have largely been covered in the earlier section; here a few additional perspectives are added. The NSA modality is clearly seen as the way forward for, many reasons.

**DP interviewee:** *It is the only way for the GF. As bi-laterals we know. It is not an easy route; but it is the only way. It remains performance-based, but now the GF is part of the bigger picture. That is the beauty of it. GF must use its influence to get better strategic planning; to drive countries to recognise the role of civil society and for this to be reflected in national strategies. But it must get involved earlier – so that it can really influence the national strategies. Not directly, as it has no presence at country level – but through country and regional partners who ARE already engaged in this.*

First, it is seen as a step towards Paris in action: strengthening the coherence, comprehensiveness, harmonization, alignment, ownership and mutual accountability of partners behind national strategies for HIV and AIDS.

**World Bank interviewee:** *I believe the NSA modality is the wave of the future since an important theme of the Paris harmonization process is to move towards “program” funding instead of “project” funding. It is also a way of trying to persuade donors to work within one country-led framework.*

**UN interviewee:** *Very positive. It strengthened substantially the participation level and rigors of the process; rigorous in terms of evidence rule and implementation consideration. Biggest benefit is improvement of alignment of resources behind the national plan. It further adds legitimacy to harmonization and the role of one coordinating authority.*

**DP interviewee:** *I believe that the National Strategy Application will help the Global Fund to align better with national strategies. The NSA brings urgency and coherence to the design of meaningful and evidence-based national strategies with sufficient ownership and under which all partners can harmonise support. By using IHP best practice a programmatic approach may be used.*

**PEPFAR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:** *By working through the Global Fund, the USG can catalyze contributions from other donors, expand the geographic reach of USG bilateral*

*programs, promote country ownership, and increase the sustainability of national health programs. Over the next five years, PEPFAR will continue to strengthen support for and coordination with the Global Fund as an essential contribution to the overall sustainability of a global response to the AIDS epidemic.*

Second, it was seen as a significant opportunity to reduce the very high transaction costs associated with GF round-based proposals.

**DP Interviewee:** *The NSA offers countries an opportunity to fund a national strategy with some breathing room for implementation, analysis of impact, course corrections etc. The annual round system though beneficial in addressing new and cutting edge programming, is a vicious cycle for the countries. Without skipping a beat, the annual application process, numerous grants to manage in country are themselves rather chaotic and not conducive to developing a country owned system of any kind.*

Third, it was seen as an opportunity to make a major contribution towards funding national strategies.

**CCM/PMU interviewee:** *The NSA represents **serious funding**; not just a project of \$40 million for some implementation. But a serious opportunity to get the real resources needed for achieving total results.*

Finally, by focusing on **national strategies** as the basis for funding decision-making it has very significantly increased the credibility of National Strategic Plans, and the need to construct them carefully. This has led to significantly increased attention to the construction of robust, costed, results frameworks, based on careful consideration of available data and evidence, and far more inclusive and participatory preparation processes.

### **Challenges - what is an NSA?**

Perhaps the biggest challenge for countries has been understanding what an NSA is, and the process needed to prepare and submit one. The FLW was accepted by GF and partners as a hurried, preliminary approach to the 'end-state' NSA modality. The FLW was thus very much seen as a first learning opportunity for the GF to experiment with a new funding modality. While this was made clear by the GF from the start, it must be recognized that for countries it was also seen as a real opportunity to access substantial funding – for them it was not so much a learning experience as a genuine new approach. And as such they took it very seriously.



Considerable misunderstanding occurred, however, between GF and countries and partners about just what the NSA was to be, and how it would be produced and managed.

GF perception was that the NSA simply provided an opportunity for a funding request (NSA grant) to be more specifically and explicitly linked to a validated National Strategy, within a comprehensive gap analysis showing how the NSA request fitted within the overall country resource envelope. The validation of the National Strategy was seen as an experimental process, derived from IHP+ approaches, but tailored to fit the specific requirements of the NSA. As already noted, the NSA itself (as a funding request) was seen as a specific funding request, similar to a round-based grant proposal, requiring performance-based funding, but with simplified procedures; and as a distinct second step, following the validation of the NSP. It was hoped that by validating the NSP the NSA would build on substantive improvements in National Operational Plans – better M&E, better expenditure tracking, etc.

What countries and many partners heard, however, when talking about the NSA was that it was an ‘innovative approach’, implying a substantial change in way GF operates. It was aiming at ‘harmonization’ - that is getting more like the way other donors work; more of a ‘programme approach’. It was to be a ‘simplified process’ – with nothing like the details usually required for GF proposals. And the ‘assessment and validation’ would be of the NSP and NSA together. This, as it turned out, mis-perception was enhanced by the apparently continuous, GF-managed, process of invitation, strategy finalization and assessment, and application – all understood as a single ‘NSA’ process.

**Consultant interviewee:** *Potentially it means less work before the money arrives: the way the first wave has been arranged, the board decision is more of an agreement “in principle” that the NSP is robust, with the details being worked out once the NSA is approved. (Incidentally I expect that once NSAs are approved the GF sec will be asking for even more details than would have gone into a Round proposal. However, at least those working out the details will be doing it on the basis of a promise of funding to come within about six months, rather than on the basis of a potential yes that might turn into money in 18 months time).*

### **Timing**

Other challenges related to the timing of various aspects of the process and, as already noted, the guidance provided.

**MALAWI CS:** *Majority of stakeholders, including consultants observed that there was limited time within which to complete the process, bearing in mind that stakeholders still had their own job responsibilities to accomplish. The extent to which time factor might have affected the process was not pursued; however, key processes that were reportedly affected include finalization of the NAF MTR, costing of the Extended NAF and stakeholder analysis of key issues that informed review of NAF. TWG members worked on most of these processes through specially convened sessions and workshops. “There wasn’t adequate time for analysis of both inputs and products and ensure synchrony between Extended NAF and relevant national guiding policies and strategies” has been a common statement among those interviewed. Even most of the NSP/NSA consultants observed that some critical steps had to be rushed through in order to meet critical deadlines and through and through, the time pressure was relentless.*

**Country DP interviewee:** *[The process] did not get fully thought out before being unleashed in the field. Now that there will be no more learning waves, not sure how many countries will dive in without better guidance. It’s a lengthy and time consuming process.*

**Country UN interviewee:** *[main lesson learned] Adequate time and better guidance are needed; otherwise the NSA process becomes the NSF process with national ownership thrown out the window.*

**Consultant interviewee:** *Make sure that the NSA application does not interfere with the regular national planning cycle – align with the cycle instead of sending out an invitation halfway the planning cycle.*

### 3. IMPROVED HIV PROGRAMMING – A greater focus on results and mutual accountability

Has the NSP-NSA process helped to improve planning and HIV programming? Four areas of interest are apparent: i) have these new/extended NSPs in and of themselves led to, or are likely to lead to, better programming? ii) has the NSA process helped improve planning and programming? iii) specifically, did the TRP review and assessment help improve the NSPs and improve programming? Or not? iv) can the NSA modality be used to improve strategic programming?

**Country DP interviewee:** *The NSA modality can strengthen NSPs as it did for the extended National AIDS Framework in ..... However, it then has to trust the NSP and not require an extensive separate bilateral proposal document. A good NSP with strong partnership in-country will lead to good HIV programming.*

**WB interviewee:** *My hope was that the NSA would help countries to undertake a more serious effort to examine their epidemics and design appropriate, prioritized strategies in response, as the basis for their NSA applications. These are potential benefits, dependent upon the GF insisting that strategies are indeed based on the evidence, prioritized, and able to be implemented with the existing human resource capacity in the country.*

**RWANDA CS:** *“I believe the NSA has pushed Rwanda to develop an even better NSP than it would have otherwise. And because of the nature of the application, this particularly influenced the costing and gap analysis part of the Plan. Because the NSA is intended to support a national gap it is particularly critical that this gap be well defined and articulated, and as accurate as possible.”*

The three National Strategic Plans involved in the FLW are a mixed bag: Kenya and Rwanda made significant efforts to develop new, ‘second-generation’ Strategic Plans; Malawi chose to review and extend its National Action Framework for three years as the basis for its NSA.

Considering the general development of the global AIDS response in the last few years, the new NSPs would have been expected to be better than their predecessors. A UNAIDS review of Eastern and Southern African NSPs in 2007<sup>14</sup> had found that most NSPs were still based on the

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<sup>14</sup> *Do national strategic plans provide a solid basis for the alignment of multilateral institutions’ and international partners’ support to the national response to HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa?* Van Renterghem, H. et al., Abstract submitted to the WAC in Mexico, 2007.

original 1998 UNAIDS Guidance. The emergence of the RSTs providing front-line support to countries, the GTT, the establishment of the TSFs, GIST and ASAP, the re-thinking emerging from Mexico, as well as the technical and programming advances being driven by the enormous resources of PEPFAR, have combined, over the last few years, to significantly advance strategic AIDS thinking. The Kenya and Rwanda NSPs have drawn significantly on these advances to become considerably improved strategy documents - in spite of the limitations revealed in the earlier section.

**RWANDA CS:** *During the Joint Review of the NSP 2005-2009, it was observed that, the previous NSP was largely defined according to activities and the provision of services, rather than focusing on the impact of those activities and services in terms of improved health outcomes in the Rwandan population. It was found that different components of HIV and AIDS programs were often implemented in a fragmented way by implementers specializing in each activity or service, making them harder to coordinate and compromising their effectiveness. In order to ensure a clearer focus on health outcomes, and shared accountability for these outcomes among the different actors, a results-based approach was adopted for the development of the new NSP. The approach ensured increased rigor in the prioritization and selection of strategies and interventions, linking the use of evidence, participation of all key stakeholders, and realistic appraisals of the resources required to achieve the desired results. The approach also helped to more clearly illustrate the interdependence of different strategies and interventions and therefore the necessity of implementing programs in a comprehensive manner. It is also anticipated that this approach will strengthen multi-sectoral action, as it helps identify where different sectors have an essential role to play in achieving results.*

The Malawi strategy, while not new, but rather an extension, also draws on some of these new ideas. Some of the specific innovations include: the emphasis on combination prevention and treatment service delivery in the Kenya strategy matched with the emphasis on community-level responses; the robust logic of the Rwanda RBM-based results framework and the emphasis on civil society roles in implementation; the broad multi-sectoral response in Malawi, incorporating the national social transfer programme as the impact mitigation strategy.

To what extent did the NSA process itself help push this improved programming along? There is little evidence that the specific modality mechanisms (eg the TRP Review) did – see earlier section. All three strategies were substantially and substantively already designed before being submitted to the GF. The TRP comments do seem to have helped the countries address the more egregious gaps or weaknesses in the strategy documents: but not to significantly revisit

major weaknesses (eg the lack of a proper results framework, opacity in governance, weaknesses in decentralised implementation capability, etc).

Might the fact that the country hoped to be, or was, invited to submit an NSA, which did occur somewhat earlier, contribute? For all three countries, the fact that they were involved in a national strategy application process, in which the *strategy itself* became the critical object of assessment with regard to funding, had a significant effect. They made very considerable efforts to ensure that their strategies were of quality, both with regard to content and process. There is little evidence, however, that the specific GF NSA modality mechanisms (eg the TRP Review) had much direct effect. All three strategies were substantially and substantively already designed before being submitted for the Desk Review. The ‘attributes’ the TRP was working to have in fact been largely available, in one form or another, for some time (eg the ASAP Self Assessment Tool, UNAIDS guidance, etc). The TRP comments do seem to have helped the countries address the more egregious gaps or weaknesses in the strategy documents – at least as seen from a GF perspective; but not to significantly revisit fundamental weaknesses (eg the lack of a proper results framework, opacity in governance, weaknesses in decentralised implementation capability, lack of multi-sectoral capability, etc).

In addition, the TRP assessment was perceived (and packaged?) as such an exclusively GF process and requirement that many stakeholders in the countries saw it primarily as hurdle to be surmounted in order to access funds rather than as disinterested assistance to improve.

Kenya, as part of its NSP process, sought formal external peer review from ASAP; Rwanda sought informal external comments from UNAIDS Co-sponsors. For all three countries the TRP Review was primarily a specific, funding-related requirement, not a peer review.

An important lesson, however, is that there clearly is considerable scope for greater ‘external’ peer review and/or assessment in national strategic planning for AIDS. The experience of these NSPs, (with perhaps the exception of Rwanda) suggest that internal, in-country peer review, assessment and validation are inadequate to ensure the kind of quality that will be required for NSA modalities – whether from GF or from other donors. UNAIDS (or more precisely UN Joint Teams) at country level, appear incapable, by and large, of providing the input and quality assurance necessary.

So while the specific NSA process may not have helped much in the FLW, this kind of external assessment and ‘quality assurance’ is essential for the NSA modality; and for helping achieve ‘better programming’.

It is also clear that the possibility of an NSA was major encouragement and or stimulus to the countries to develop new NSPs: in all three countries the lure of the NSA added very significant urgency and pressure to the NSP development. But this should be noted not only as an opportunity, but also as a significant threat. The timeframes this created (some six months from start to finish) put extraordinary pressure on the review and development of the NSPs, and had a seriously detrimental effect (certainly in Kenya and Malawi) on both the quality of analysis that went into the new NSP, and the process of consensus building, inclusion and ownership that should underlie them.

**MALAWI Consultant Trip Report:** *The tight deadline for the NAF extension planning prevented a thorough consideration of some of the MTR recommendations.*

It would appear also to have seriously undermined attempts to link the strategies to larger development frameworks. In addition, the very tight timeframe between receipt of actual comments and submission of the NSA pretty much precluded any significant re-adjustment of the strategies.

Deadlines are always a two-edged sword, forcing difficult trade-offs between quality, process and delivery. The experience from the FLW-NSA, however, suggests that with regard to such important processes as the development of effective national strategies, the NSA deadline was a significant hindrance.

An insidious, and obviously completely unintentional side-effect of the NSA process on the NSP process was the tendency, admittedly only in some quarters, to deliberately try to shape the NSP along the lines of recognised 'GF programming', primarily in terms of how strategic elements were packaged and categorized (eg the use of GF SDAs as categories from results areas, a heavy emphasis on 'health systems strengthening' – often to the detriment of larger mainstreaming issues, and forced allocation decisions – "the GF insists on at least 6% for M&E").

- **Consultant interviewee:** *One of my fears in February, while we were developing the NSP, was that the arrival of NSAs was going to skew our work and turn the NSP into a funding proposal, or an outward looking document. And a strategy has to be for the country, not for the international community. In the end, I think this fear was unfounded, and in fact it merely served to speed up the process. Maybe a couple of components would have been done a bit differently and in less of a hurry, but overall I think it was good for the NSP that NSAs were launched this year.*

In spite of the marginal improvements in the NSPs, they remain very weak foundations for significant programme (as opposed to project) funding<sup>15</sup>; this is particularly so with regard to the demands of *performance-based funding*, which the GF espouses. This requires robust, logical results frameworks, feasible implementation mechanisms, effective M&E plans, credible fiduciary systems, and strong accountability structures. This is the area of **“improved quality, consistency and credibility of national strategic frameworks”** that the end-state NSA modality aims for. This FLW NSA experience has shown just how far from this we are at this stage; and the kinds of improvements that need to be made.

Analysis of the three NSPs reveals weaknesses in many areas. As already noted, to some extent these weaknesses either emerged from, or succumbed to, the timeframe imposed by the NSA modality; given a less ‘driven’ schedule, greater consultation, better use of technical assistance and advice, more rigorous analysis would have substantially improved all three strategic plans – particularly with regard to their underlying logical frameworks and how these are translated into operational programmes, prioritizing and resource allocation decisions, and the design of M&E and accountability frameworks. Unfortunately, however, the tools for such improvement are not easily or always readily available. While significant progress was made in these NSPs at more robust and effective planning, challenges remained in many areas which need to be supported for further NSA.

**RWANDA CS:** *The guidelines and tools for developing the new generation of NSPs need to be reviewed and clarifications made on what underlies evidence and results based planning. In-depth guidelines on the parameters of stakeholder involvement/inclusiveness, CSO participation need to be redefined in next generations of NSPs.*

The use of **RBM** challenges the UN system itself, let alone its capability to provide technical support in it; and other logic frameworks tend to be donor- or institution-specific. Countries struggle to find good planning tools (not only in HIV), and good TA to support them.

**KENYA CS:** *“Despite being in use for long, the RBM seemed like a new approach; groups were learning as we used it.”*

The importance of adequate training in RBM cannot be stressed enough:

**RWANDA CS:** *“Training of stakeholders on Results Based management played a key role , I was particularly impressed the way we traced the chain that linked activity to outcome, the role of*

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<sup>15</sup> Where ‘project’ funding suggests selection of specific, prioritized, stand-alone elements or components isolated within the strategy to be funded, while ‘programme’ funding accepts the coherence of the total strategy and its priorities, and suggests funding allocated across all components, or to fit specific gaps.

*very one is clear, this enhances synergy, avoiding duplication, improves prioritization, and assures integrated approach to issues”* another key informant mentioned.

**Evidence-informed HIV programming** is itself challenging: in spite of twenty years’ experience, gaps in data, political and socio-cultural sensitivities, and lack of fundamental understanding of what drives human behaviour, mean that optimal programming approaches are still unclear. Cost-effectiveness studies are in their infancy; resource allocation models are still uncertain.

**MALAWI CS:** *The priority areas in the Extended NAF 2010-2012 are the same as those in NAF 2005-2009. Although there isn’t any documented stakeholder discordance on the Extended NAF 2010-2012 priorities, it is not clear how these priorities were derived and the link between emerging national response issues and the priorities is not obvious.*

Very significant efforts were made in Rwanda to ensure a strong evidence-base for the NSP:

**RWANDA CS:** *Stakeholder consultations attested to the fact that Rwanda had adequate evidence based data that significantly enriched the new NSP, and there are no controversies or disputes that were generated in the due course of using the available evidence to inform NSP. The findings from both the desk review and the country visit for the first learning wave of NSAs also conform to this position.*

This was an intensive exercise with a well-managed process and very considerable input from a variety of technical support partners.

‘**Costing**’ and the ‘**gap analysis**’ is a severely challenging area, as has been discussed earlier.

**Governance structures** for HIV programming also remain opaque, politically sensitive, and poorly understood (see also section 4.3 below). The NSP should be the clear articulation of governance, institutional and accountability frameworks. Kenya conducted an Institutional Assessment as part of its Final Review, the results of which fed directly into the new NSP; this kind of exercise is strongly recommended.

The NSA modality has provided an opportunity, though largely missed in this FLW, to get some kind of *external* quality assurance of the NSP process and product, and to see what more needs to be done to reach the kind of quality performance-based funding demands.

But is the GF-driven NSA modality the appropriate mechanism for this? The GF is essentially a funding mechanism; while quality assurance could well be seen to be part of its repertoire, the development of tools, and support to countries in their use, does not seem to fit so well. If the current NSA modality is to be extended, its quality assurance aspect can be stressed (see



above); but this places very significant responsibility on other partners (and primarily UNAIDS and UN Joint Teams) to provide appropriate technical advice and support.

**MALAWI CS:** *The use of Resource Needs model, a model which was least understood by partners and did not serve the need raises questions as to how Malawi found itself in the situation. Malawi UNAIDS Country Office recommended the model to NAC and NAC accepted trusting UNAIDS's judgment and choice, only to realize later it wasn't appropriate. Stating the obvious, national response partners and consultants should engage earlier enough in the process in order to review and agree methods and models to be used, thus leaving ample time to make appropriate adjustments if needed.*

#### **4. OWNERSHIP, LEGITIMACY, GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

The NSA experience has raised important issues regarding ownership and governance of national strategies, and participation of stakeholders in their development and use for resource mobilization.

##### **4.1 Ownership and Legitimacy**

The issue of governance with regard to the GF is fraught with difficulties. GF governance mechanisms, primarily the CCM, are an innovative approach to *country* governance, as opposed to *government* governance; and remain essentially uncharted territory. NACs are charged to develop National Strategic Plans. This responsibility, and these plans, are legitimized by the NAC's institutional mandate – given by the State usually through Executive or Parliamentary processes. NACs and their NSPs thus have State legitimacy. To a greater or lesser extent, NAC are also usually legitimized, through such mechanisms as Partnership Forums, Advisory Boards, Councils, etc, to provide the kind of 'country', national response legitimacy that the GF aims for through the CCM.

CCMs are legitimized only by virtue of GF monies; stakeholders who do not participate in, benefit from or need GF money, need not accord them any relevance or legitimacy beyond their oversight of GF-funded activities. And indeed many state institutions make this clear.

To the extent that a fully inclusive national response can acquire the largest amount of legitimacy, it needs to be enshrined in the National Strategic Plan (NSP): all state actors must recognise this legitimacy; non-state actors have a choice, depending on their need for legitimacy. The key instrument for legitimizing elements, programmes, activities etc is the NSP. This has three implications linked to the NSA modality:

First, stakeholders who DO wish to engage with as much legitimacy as possible need to engage with the NSP and try to ensure that the NSP provides an acceptable context and platform for them. For civil society the trade off is between legitimacy (by being included in the NSP and its institutional framework) and independence (by maintaining their distance from the NSP). The risk is where GF funding distorts this trade-off by making funding available outside the boundaries of the NSP and its institutional frameworks – which in effect the CCM and dual track-financing does. The NSA modality provides a significant risk mitigation strategy for this.

Second, processes or mechanisms such as Joint Assessment of National Strategies, Partnership Compacts, Basket Funds etc, that require legitimacy, must seek it within the context of the NSP

and its institutional frameworks. The CCM does not provide sufficient legitimacy, except where these are related only to GF monies. The NSA modality must therefore find a way to engage more directly and formally with the NAC and its institutional architecture to ensure that the Assessment of the National Strategy is legitimized. If not, it risks remaining purely a GF-driven funding requirement managed by the CCM, with potential for significant loss of legitimacy.

Third, an effective NSP is thus a key tool for achieving several risk mitigation aims. It thus behoves all partners to work together to ensure that countries are supported to develop sound and robust NSPs, drawing on all the conceptual frameworks, models, tools and resources available. Unfortunately these are presently weakly understood in many quarters, difficult to access, and largely uncoordinated among partners and stakeholders. By taking the NSA modality beyond simply a funding mechanism and elevating it to planning and resource mobilization modality, the risk of countries continuing to work with inadequate NSPs is reduced.

## **4.2 Participation**

The issue of ‘legitimacy’ has important implications for participation – and particularly the participation of civil society, which is on sufferance in most NACs but is mandatory in CCMs. The NSA form asks questions about this; but is limited to the CCM’s endorsement of a NAC-managed process, as can be seen in much of the complaints of civil society, both with regard to the NSPs and the NSAs. There is little probing in the TRP reviews, for example, of the real role of civil society in the overall governance of the national response. In all three Reviews, the question of the relationship between the CCM and the NAC and its governance frameworks, and the participation of civil society in these frameworks, was not questioned at all.

This raises a critical question about just what the role of civil society is in the national response, as reflected in the National Strategic Plan (NSP) and the National Strategy Application (NSA)?

Civil society seems to have two critical roles: as implementer (of a wide range of elements within the national response, from formal health sector service delivery to community-based organizations) and including the piloting of innovative service delivery mechanism, or for marginalised groups, and a ‘voice and accountability’ role, as ‘watch-dog’ and advocate, trying to enforce transparency and accountability. The second role is barely mentioned in the three NSPs, and not at all in the NSAs.

This is the special purview of CCMs; yet the lack of ownership of the NSA seen in the FLW seriously challenged it. Discussion about civil society engagement with the NSP-NSA within the CCMs was almost exclusively about establishing dual-track financing, with a separate civil society PR for the NSA. The need to reflect wider roles and responsibilities, and fund them, under the NSP and NSA was ignored. Funding for civil society was stressed in both the Rwanda and Malawi NSA, but primarily *to build the capacity to be a PR*; not to have more capability for more effective voice and accountability.

There appears to be a perception with some global-level civil society organizations that the NSA is detrimental to strengthening of the engagement of civil society. They suggest that what is perceived to be the government-centred approach of national strategies does not allow the full engagement of civil society; that civil society needs to be able to function freely outside the government-centred strategic frameworks that National Strategic Frameworks imply – and that the GF has an obligation to provide funding that will allow them to operate thus. This perception is mirrored in the reluctance of many INGOs to participate in National Operational Plans, and to allow their funding allocations and strategies to be reported within these frameworks.

**MALAWI CS:** *As part of the costing of Extended NAF, attempts were made to collect current and projected financial commitments from donors and implementers. Donors and implementers were also asked to indicate which areas of the national response they would commit their funding to. There has been reluctance among some quarters<sup>16</sup> to share their funding data. In a number of cases, implementers have reported allocating some funding to the national response; however, when quizzed to specify areas they are spending their funding on, some haven't been able to explain because for some implementers, their objectives are packaged differently from the extended national strategy or their objectives were based on the original NAF and are therefore directly incomparable.*

Representatives of national and regional civil society organizations on the other hand are more divided: some tend to see the NSA as an opportunity, based upon and reflecting greater involvement in the NSP.

**KENYA CS:** *"The community's voice in MIPA (Meaningful Involvement of People with AIDS) was heard through the bottom up approach to information sharing; I held feedback meetings with over 100 PLHIV community organizations; KNASP III has really looked into MIPA and specific needs of PLHIV. "*

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<sup>16</sup> Primarily the International NGO and FBOs

**CSO interviewee:** *We were planning a R9 Proposal for CS; but when the NSA came we realized we would gain far more through the NSA, so we abandoned it. The NSA would enable us to fund our own capacity building, coordination frameworks and processes – the things we had contributed to the NSP, on a much wider scale than in a simple round-based project.*

**KENYA CS:** *Both KNASP Review and the NSA process has raised the profile of Civil Society as an essential partner; the need to further strengthen civil society capacity and add value to the HIV response. This was especially noted during decision-making for interventions for which to seek NSA funding where the critical role of Civil Society in service delivery, hence its capacity needs, came to fore.*

**CSO interviewee:** *From SAT experiences, it seems as the NSP-process is more inclusive for in-country civil society organisations but more difficult for International NGOs. Clearly international and regional organisations can play a crucial role but our opinion is that this should be by invitation from in-country CSOs/partners.*

**CSO interviewee:** *The Malawi-process had been inclusive and discussions had been open and frank, considering the limited time for the process. We did not feel that support to the NSP would be more limiting for civil society compared to the “traditional Round 8 process”, as long as there is genuine involvement of civil society at the table during the application process and strategy development. This genuine participation of civil society is essential if you go the NSA route. International NGOs are not always considered to represent the interests of civil society in Malawi and also in some of the other countries in the sub-region. The INGOs constitute a more heterogenic group than the national NGOs which does not facilitate their involvement in these processes*

But respondents saw two sides to this:

**CSO interviewee:** *Although Civil society partners in Malawi said the NSA process was on the whole consultative there is room for improvement. However coming down to the detail, some important issues got blurry. Specifically in the development of the strategy it is not clear which actor will be accountable and responsible for certain objectives of the strategy and this needs to be tightened up. Also, actual activities necessary to meet objectives did not necessarily match up. Assumptions were made in the capacity of government to play their part in collaborating in implementation for example where intersections between government and civil society arise in implementation, there was*

*no safeguard to ensure that this would work out especially where government structures may not be operating and where these structures are needed for a successful implementation of activities with civil society.*

Others feel that the main issue is the more fundamental question of how far civil society's role and engagement is recognized as valid by government and other stakeholders.

**CSO interviewee:** *If civil society is recognized and engaged with strategic planning, implementation and accountability processes in the country, it can get strong recognition in the NSP, and is likely to benefit significantly from the NSA; but if there is resistance to greater engagement of civil society, there will be problems at all levels, including both the NSP and NSA.*

Respondents also felt that different parts of civil society have differing capacities to engage: implementing partners usually find it easier to engage; CSO working on accountability, human rights, etc often find it much more difficult.

In addition, the capacity of civil society to engage is often limited: both by its own fragmented and limited organizational capacities, and because of being 'swamped' and overshadowed by the much larger government institutions and capabilities<sup>17</sup>. However, much of civil society recognizes that governments are now starting to give space to civil society and this is an opportunity that civil society must engage with pro-actively. Governments are suspicious of things that happen outside the frameworks and boundaries they set: civil society must engage within those frameworks, and work to expand them.

**CSO interviewee:** *This is a real opportunity for civil society to engage and contribute. If we stay outside the process, outside the space and structures that government sees as legitimate in the strategic planning processes, it will be very difficult for us. With or without external resources governments will develop and implement their plans; we should not wait to be invited to that table, but invite ourselves.*

The consensus is perhaps best summed up in the Rwanda country study:

**RWANDA CS:** *Inclusiveness should not be a mere representation of stakeholders in planning processes, but rather, a reflection of each partner's contribution in the national*

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<sup>17</sup> Cf *Policy Engagement for Poverty Reduction: how Civil Society can be More Effective*, Briefing paper 3, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), 2006

*strategy in terms of resources and activity level implementation leading to the much desired shared accountability both for results and resources. This is well reflected the log frame of Rwanda's NSP and can adequately inform other countries which will join NSA modality if future.*

### 4.3 Governance

In many countries governance of the national response remains opaque. This is a vital area to be addressed in 'Second Generation NSPs'; and with regard to NSA roll-out. The NSP architecture and the institutional frameworks it supports are complex and highly varied across countries; both state-managed and non-state managed (eg GF related architecture).

**MALAWI CS:** *During the NSP/NSA process, questions were raised over clarity of oversight functions in the national response. Oversight functions over the national response rest with the Department of HIV and AIDS and Nutrition (DNHA) while leadership and coordination of the response resides within NAC. There is no shared understanding of "What does it mean to have oversight of national response and what are these oversight functions?" Findings from this assessment have shown that, occasionally, some stakeholders have seen DNHA and NAC overstepping into each other's roles because of lack of clarity. It is reported that separate from the Extended NAF, the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC) is working towards clarifying oversight functions of DNHA but deliberate strategies to further strengthen leadership, ownership and governance are not explicit in the national strategy.*

**KENYA CS:** *There are difficulties fitting CCM into the national governance structure; it is not a legal entity in Kenya; while NACC, though legally mandated, has no direct authority over Global Fund recipients. As a result, NACC bares the blame for poor performance while it has little authority over Global Fund's Principal and Sub-recipients beyond its membership in the CCM. While NACC has ultimate authority and enforcement mechanisms in country it remains to be seen what weight the Global Fund Secretariat will assign the MoU and Code of Conduct that NACC will sign with all other development partners and implementers.*

**Consultant interviewee:** *By the time the NSA went for CCM approval, it was apparent to me that some CCM members still did not get the concept. I am not sure if this is because they weren't listening or weren't there when it was explained, or because it was not explained well, but perhaps GF could do more to produce some explanatory*

*communications materials to help CCMs get their heads round this. I think such materials should also explore the respective roles of CCMs and [disease] coordination bodies in developing NSPs, NSAs, etc.*

**RWANDA CS:** *CNLS/NACC is by law directly in charge of the national strategy; this creates another question of relevancy of a PMU as an ad hoc to official organigram of CNLS. The ToR of PMU as they are today, only make relevancy for round based financing. They need to be update they are new challenges to be dealt with.*

Governance concerns also relate to decentralized implementation:

**KENYA CS:** *During this study, fundamental lessons were learned on KNASP operationalization at decentralized levels. Staffing gaps, constant questioning of NACC's legal mandate and inadequate operational funding undermine accountability.*

These issues were indeed noted by the TRP Reviews in the FLW. The weaknesses of the TRP Review, however (see earlier), militated against serious attention to these fundamental governance issues by the countries. This is an area where NSA roll-out faces major risks unless the assessment process is strengthened sufficiently to identify and address such governance issues early enough for them to be dealt with.



## 5. SUSTAINABLE/PREDICATABLE FUNDING

One of the fundamentals of Paris, and one of the original cornerstones of Universal Access, is predictable funding. The NSA has thrown this problem into high relief. All the countries found the process revealing about how unpredictable their funding was; even such a major funding source as PEPFAR cannot guarantee funding beyond the year for which it has congressional approval; and few other donors can make the kind of substantial commitment that a national strategy requires. On the face of it, the five-year commitment for grants from GF makes it the most suitable funder for an entire national strategy.

*“Meeting the Abuja goals for health spending will remain out of reach for most low-income countries due to rapid population growth coupled with mediocre GDP growth. Even if low-income countries were able to increase the share of government spending dedicated to health to 15 percent, and donors were able to meet the 0.7 percent commitment, preliminary reports from the Taskforce for Innovative Financing for Health Systems working group, estimate that they would still not be able to ensure universal access to health services or reach the health related MDGs. Low-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia will continue to be reliant on external funding to support their HIV/AIDS efforts and overall health system functioning.”<sup>18</sup>*

Predictable funding requires accurate and credible costing combined with strategic and astute resource mobilization. Yet costing and resource mobilization for national strategies remains an incoherent business at present.

The experience of the countries in the costing of their strategies is revealing: both Kenya and Malawi struggled with different models – in spite of considerable previous experience. Despite conventional wisdom, costing and resource allocation modelling is still an imprecise area – and the models that exist tend to require considerable technical support, and are not easily applicable – especially within a constrained time-frame (see earlier for comments about the time-frame constraints of the NSA).

*The future of evidence-based planning will ultimately require that existing tools that are used to address issues of resource allocation are greatly improved and that new tools are developed. A critical first step in improving resource allocation tools involves improving knowledge about the costs and cost-effectiveness of interventions. Existing tools rely on an existing incomplete database of cost and cost-effectiveness studies. Little*

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<sup>18</sup> “The evolution and future of donor assistance for HIV/AIDS”, commissioned by aids2031 Financing Working Group, authored by Kammerle Schneider, Laurie Garrett, Council on Foreign Relations, Aids2031 Working Paper 19

*is known, for example, about the cost effectiveness of community outreach interventions or interventions designed to reach MSM.*<sup>19</sup>

Three issues have probably challenged the validity and credibility of the NSA modality most; and have perhaps the greatest implications for its further use.

- Matching accurate/precise costing of a national strategy with available funding to get an accurate ‘**gap analysis**’ is fundamental to the GF’s operations as a funding agency. As the GF moves away from round-based ‘project’ funding to NSA (or other) modalities this must be its area of greatest concern. Yet the tools for doing this are weak, difficult to use, and not well understood at country level – by any of the stakeholders. The current ‘costings’ in this FLW should thus be treated with extreme caution.

*“When most strategic plans are costly, there is little or no effort to assess what would happen if the levels of resources do not become available. A costly strategic plan should ideally consider alternative scenarios, aligning the priorities to assumptions about various levels of funding actually becoming available. A country, for example, might cost its strategic plan at \$2 billion over 5 years, but then quickly realize that the level of funding for the program is unlikely to exceed \$1 billion. Should the country cut all of its targets in half? Are there ways to reallocate funds to ensure that the targets can still be achieved despite the limited funds? Which budgetary items are the most critical and therefore should be fully funded, as opposed to those items which are important but not critical?”*

*“Epidemiologists in the field of HIV and AIDS have implored countries to “know where the next 100 HIV infections are likely to occur.” For those economists involved in HIV and AIDS, the question to be answered may be, “Where should the next \$100 be spent?”*<sup>20</sup>

- In addition, the **context** of the HIV/AIDS resource envelope at country level is seldom considered: whether this is in relation to overall government spending and investment plans, to health sector financial planning, to external development assistance; or to global patterns of donor assistance, the current global financial climate, and global economic development issues. Partly this is due to lack of capability within national AIDS strategic institutions (NACs tend to be staffed by medical personnel, not economists); partly it is the result of astute resource mobilization and advocacy on

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<sup>19</sup> See “The past, present and future of HIV/AIDS and resource allocation”, commissioned by aids2031 Financing Working Group, authored by Steven Forsythe, John Stover, Lori Bollinger, FUTURES INSTITUTE; aids2031 Working Paper 20

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

behalf of AIDS. It has led, however, to perceptions of imbalance in AIDS-related funding from many quarters, and to 'inflationary' expectations by many within the AIDS field. The NSA modality will have to take great care how it responds to these perceptions, and manages these expectations.

- The **sustainability** of AIDS funding, particularly with respect to expanding care and treatment programmes, health systems strengthening programmes, and impact mitigation social transfer programmes, is quite unclear. If the GF, through its NSA modality, is to become the predominant funder in these areas, the current NSA modality is inadequate. It seems to still rely on the old model of GF being 'additional' to other funding. But if it becomes overwhelmingly the predominant funder, current country strategy approaches may need to change: NACCs could be replaced by CCMs, individual strategic frameworks could be replaced with a standardized GF framework, and other funding partners could concentrate on other priorities.

The issue of predictable funding, and how countries develop and use resource allocation tools as part of their NSPs, is one that requires considerably further work.

## **6. LESSONS LEARNED AND WAYS FORWARD**

This Synthesis Paper has identified a number of lessons learned for UNAIDS and its partners.

### **6.1 Lessons learned**

1. The NSA modality is an important mechanism to strengthen strategic planning for HIV and AIDS in countries – aimed at funding better HIV and AIDS programming.
2. But The NSA modality has not been well understood: UNAIDS needs to conduct more robust dialogue with GF, and other partners, about what support is required to roll it out. Partners such as Co-sponsors, IHP+, PEPFAR, the Clinton Foundation, bi-laterals have an intense interest and stake in the modality and need to be involved.
3. Support for Strategic Planning at country level is very patchy and urgently needs to be beefed up. UNAIDS has a range of resources and technical support platforms it can call on: ASAP, the TSFs, the RSTs, UCOs themselves; in addition external technical support platforms should be involved: such as the Alliance, Regional Civil Society organizations, Clinton Foundation, bi-laterals.
4. A set of specific technical issues in countries embarking on NSP and/or NSA development will need to be supported with tools, guidance and varying forms of technical support: the 'attributes' of a good strategy, results frameworks (not simply M&E), ensuring inclusion and legitimacy, civil society roles, costing, gap analysis, Operational Planning.
5. Supporting countries to respond to performance-based funding (not just GF, but also PEPFAR and other GHIs) will require very considerable strengthening of strategic and operational planning processes and architecture.
6. Governance is a priority concern: the role of NACs, CCMs, MoH, Treasury, other Ministries, civil society.

### **6.2 Ways forward**

Suggested steps for UNAIDS, to go forward:

1. Establish a platform with GF and selected partners (eg Clinton Foundation, PEPFAR, ASAP) to share lessons learned/experiences and determine how to provide support for NSA roll-out. The RST-ESA should work with the RATESA to establish or use a similar platform to prioritize the response in the region.
2. UNAIDS (RSTs and HQ) to identify priority countries that would benefit from the NSA modality (based on timeframe, strategy, capacity, need, governance, etc).
3. Use the platform to develop a road-map, criteria for selection, guidelines for proposal development, clear definition of processes, etc , for roll-out.
4. UNAIDS/GF to conduct a dissemination and technical support planning workshop with relevant partners (ASAP, TSFs, PEPFAR, etc)
5. UNAIDS to conduct a learning and planning meeting with the UCCs from the countries identified (2 above); and with UCCs, develop a sustained process of engagement and targeted country support towards ensuring successful NSAs.
6. Specifically identify appropriate tools needed (for RBM, costing, civil society involvement, etc) and plans to build immediate capacity for their use within countries.
7. Use the platform to ensure sustained, coherent, effective coordination and support from all partners for the countries.

**P Godwin**

December 2009

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**ANNEX 1: People Interviewed****A. People interviewed directly for this Synthesis Report**

<b>Person</b>	<b>Form of interview</b>
<b>UNAIDS (Field)</b>	
Kekoura Kourouma (previously UCC Rwanda)	Emailed questions
Desmond Johns (previously UCC Malawi)	Personal discussion
Erasmus Morah (UCC Kenya)	Emailed questions
Sophia Mukasa Monico (UCC Swaziland)	Emailed questions
Dr Barihuta Tharcisse (UCC Djibouti)	Emailed questions
Dr. Ana Maria Navarro (UCC covering Cuba)	Emailed questions
M.Adel Zeddami (UCC Algeria)	Emailed questions
Tony Lisle (UCC Cambodia)	Emailed questions
Mark Stirling (UNAIDS RST-ESA)	Interviewed directly, Johannesburg
Atieno Odenyo (UNAIDS RST-ESA)	Interviewed directly, Johannesburg
Caroline Sande (UNAIDS RST-ESA)	Interviewed directly, Johannesburg
Henk van Renterghem (UNAIDS RST-ESA)	Interviewed directly, Johannesburg
Dieudonne Ruturwa (UNAIDS Rwanda)	Interviewed directly, Kigale
Bob Verbrugghen (RST Bangkok)	Emailed questions
Janet Leno (ASAP)	Emailed questions
Jonathan Brown (ASAP)	Emailed questions
Iris Semini (ASAP)	Emailed questions
Jeff Tshabalala (TSF-SA)	Emailed questions
Cathy Beacham (TSF-EA)	Interviewed directly, Nairobi
Anthony Kinghorn (TSF-SA)	Emailed questions; interviewed directly, Johannesburg

<b>Co-sponsors</b>	
Brian Pazakavamba (WHO Regional Office, Harare)	Emailed questions; interviewed directly (Johannesburg)
Phylida Travis (HQ)	Interviewed directly, Geneva
Ini Huijts (HQ)	Interviewed directly, Geneva
Mazuwa Banda (HQ)	Interviewed directly, Geneva
Dr Tessa Edejer (HQ)	Interviewed directly, Geneva
Pierre-Yves Norval (WHO)	Email interview
David Alnwick (UNICEF Regional)	Emailed questions
Tilly Sellers (UNDP Regional)	Emailed questions; interviewed directly (Johannesburg)
Pierre Dongier (UNDP Rwanda)	Interviewed directly, Kigali
Landry D Tsague (UNICEF Rwanda)	Interviewed directly, Kigali
Liv Eldren Djokoto (UNICEF)	Interviewed directly, Johannesburg
Francesca Erdelman (WFP)	Interviewed directly, Johannesburg
Arne Willems (UNESCO)	Interviewed directly, Johannesburg
Fadzai Mukonoweshuro (FAO)	Interviewed directly, Johannesburg
Sikhulile Ngqase (IOM)	Interviewed directly, Johannesburg
<b>UNAIDS Geneva</b>	
Jantine Jacobi	Interviewed directly, Geneva
Robert Greener	Interviewed directly, Geneva
Tim Martineau	Interviewed directly, Geneva
Pradeep Kakkattil	Interviewed directly, Geneva
George Tembo	Interviewed directly, Geneva
Shona Wynd	Interviewed directly, Geneva

Anja Nitzsche-Bell	Interviewed directly, Geneva
Aina Saetre	Interviewed directly, Geneva
Eddie Beck	Interviewed directly, Geneva
Carlos Avila	Interviewed directly, Geneva
<b>GFATM (Geneva)</b>	
David Salinas	Interviewed directly, Geneva
Stefano Lazari	Interviewed directly, Geneva
Johannes Hunger	Interviewed directly, Geneva
Alex Lang	Interviewed directly, Geneva
David Winter	Interviewed directly, Geneva
Tarek Elshimi	Interviewed directly, Geneva
Mick Matthews	Interviewed directly, Geneva
<b>Consultants</b>	
Simon Muchiru (Swaziland)	Emailed questions
Matthew Greenall (Rwanda)	Emailed questions
Alfred M. Dzilankhulani (Malawi)	Interviewed directly, Lilongwe & Nairobi
Chris Alando (Kenya)	Interviewed directly, Nairobi
Paul Jannsen (Malawi)	Emailed questions
Tom Mogeni (Kenya)	Interviewed directly, Nairobi
Michael Karangwa (Rwanda)	Interviewed directly, Nairobi & Kigali
<b>Donors</b>	
Mamadi Yilla (PEPFAR Malawi)	Emailed questions
Jason Lane (DFID Malawi)	Emailed questions
Simon Bland (DFID)	Emailed questions

Anna Guthrie (DFID – Regional)	Phone interview (Pretoria)
Peter Iveroth (SIDA – Regional)	Phone interview (Lusaka)
Karin Turner (USAID – Regional)	Phone interview (Johannesburg)
<b>Countries<sup>21</sup></b>	
Dr Mean Chhi Vun (Cambodia)	Emailed questions
Ida Hakizinka (Rwanda)	Interviewed directly, Kigali
Dr Anita Asiimwe	Interviewed directly, Kigali
<b>Civil society</b>	
Jeffer Mxotshwa (NAPSAR)	Phone interview (Victoria Falls)
Michaela Clayton (ARASA)	Phone interview (Namibia)
Titus Twesige (EANNASO)	Phone interview (Arusha)
Anita Sandstrom (SAT)	Phone interview & emailed answer
Janet Okero (AFRICASO)	Email interview
Beatrice Kagoyire (Rwanda)	Interviewed directly, Kigali & CSO Workshop, Geneva
Ignace Singirankabo (Rwanda)	Interviewed directly, Kigali & CSO Workshop, Geneva
Robert Ngaiyaye (Malawi)	Interviewed directly, Lilongwe & CSO Workshop, Geneva
Tobias Kichari (Kenya)	Interviewed directly, CSO Workshop, Geneva
Rajiv Kafle (Nepal)	Interviewed directly, CSO Workshop, Geneva
Tiwonge Loga (Malawi)	Interviewed directly, CSO Workshop, Geneva

<sup>21</sup> Note I worked directly and extensively on the NSP in Kenya and the NSP and NSA in Malawi and so had extensive discussions with all stakeholders there throughout the process; these are not listed here.

Aimable Mwananawe (Rwanda)	Interviewed directly, Kigali
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## B. People interviewed by the Country Consultants

### MALAWI

List of people interviewed by local consultant in Malawi

1. Dr. Mary Shawa, HIV/AIDS and Nutrition, OPC Principal Secretary, CCM member
2. Catherine Mkangama, HIV/AIDS and Nutrition, OPC Director of HIV/AIDS and Nutrition
3. Dr. Desmond Johns, UNAIDS UNAIDS Country Coordinator
4. Garry Walsh, UNAIDS Monitoring & Evaluation Officer
5. Mirriam Chipimo, UNICEF RH and HIV/AIDS Manager
6. Dr. Eddie Limbambala, World Health Organization HIV/AIDS Country Officer
7. H. Shumba, UNFPA HIV/AIDS Officer
8. Safari Mbewe, MANET+ Executive Director
9. Victor Kamanga, MANET+ Programs Manager
10. Rev. M. Sembereka, MANERELA+ National Coordinator
11. Edwina Hanjahanja, MIAA Monitoring & Evaluation Officer
12. Ethel Kapyepye, World Vision International Senior HIV/AIDS Manager
13. Dr. Tiwonge Loga, Southern Africa AIDS Trust National Facilitator- TRP
14. Dr. Mamadi Yilla, US Government Inter-Agency PEPFAR Coordinator
15. Jason Lane, DFID
16. Lilly Maliro Banda, USAID National Facilitator-TRP
17. Paul Janssen, Consultant NAF Review Consultant
18. Martin Mtika, USAID HIV and AIDS Prevention Specialist
19. Paul Jere, PJ Development Consultants National Consultant, Extended NAF
20. Chimwemwe Mablekisi, National AIDS Commission Planning Officer
21. Davie Kalomba, National AIDS Commission Head, Planning and M&E
22. Ben Botolo, Ministry of Finance Director of Finance and Administration, CCM member
23. Dr F. Chimbwandira, Ministry of Health, HIV/AIDS Unit Deputy Director
24. Peter Godwin, Consultant to NAC, NSA Consultant to NAC, NSA

### KENYA

List of people submitted by local consultant in Kenya:

Erasmus Morah      UNAIDS

Meshack Ndolo	Ministry of Planning, National Development and Vision 2030
Regina Ombam	National AIDS Control Council
Harriet Kongin	National AIDS Control Council
Nicholas Muraguri	(MoH) National AIDS & STI Control Programme Head
Girmay Haile	UNAIDS
Jackie Makokha	UNAIDS
Faith K-Hamisi	UNAIDS
Nelson Otwoma	Network of People Living with AIDS in Kenya
Jane-Marie Ongolo	UNODC
Ludfine Anyango	UNDP
Rex Mpanzanje	WHO
Ursula Bahati	UNIFEM
Roselyne Wendo	UNCEF
Greg Young	IOM
Veera Mendonca	UNICEF
Linda Beyer	UNICEF
Alfred Ndilankhulani	UNAIDS
Geoffrey Okumu	UNFPA
Kimanzi Muthengu	UNICEF
Margaret Indimuli	WFP
Mari Watanabe	UNICEF
Sari Seppannen- Verral	UNAIDS

Nancy Kidula	WHO
Masai Masai	FAO
Georgina Veldhorst	Facilitator
Henk Van Renteghen	UNAIDS Regional Office
Peter Godwin	International Consultant
Chris Alando	Local consultant

**Interviewees NACC & Nairobi**

Alloys Orago	NACC
Abdulrahman Kassim	NACC
Gorety Apondi	NACC
Edward Marienga	NACC
Betty Chirchir	Bon Sante
Cathy Mumma	Africa Vision
Nduku Kilonzo	Liverpool VCT
Rukia Yassin	Liverpool VCT
Ruth Masha	Action AID
Tom Mogeni	South Consultants
Anne Gathumbi	Open Society
Eunice Odongi	NACC

**Interviewees, Nyeri, Central province 29 September 2009**

Charles Nyaberi	USAID
John Ngugi	USAID Aphia II OVC Prog
Peter Mwangi	Provincial AIDS and STI Coordinator
Victorio Torres	Vihda Association
Peter Mundia	Constituency AIDS Coordinator, TETU Constituency
Hesbon Ocholla	USAID Central Province
Robert Olweny	Hope Worldwide Kenya
Joseph Otieno	Kenya Network of Women with AIDS
Shamton Waruru	Partners Link
Michael Muchomba	Network of African Youth For Development
Kibe Ranji	NACC
Francis Muiruri	Ministry of Planning and National Development

**Interviewees, Embu, Eastern Province 1, October 2009**

Michael Kyalo	NACC
Juma Mwatsefu	USAID
Rosemary Nthiga	Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization (Women's Movement)
Martin Wachira	Embu Youth AIDS Advocates (CACC)
Sospeter Gitonga	Back to Eden NGO
James Muriuki	Embu Youth Development Initiative (CACC)
Catherine Mutuku	NACC
Elias Njagi	CACC, Manyatta Constituency
Lucy Mutua	Kenya Red Cross Society



Aswa Ndili	Ministry of Planning/ National Council for Population and Development
Juniors Waithaka	PCOD
John Gathiaka	AMREF Maanisha Programme

**Interviewees, Garissa, North Eastern Province , October 4-5, 2009**

Mohammed Hilowe	CACC
Hassan Ahmed Noor	IFTIN Youth Group
Abubakar Issack	Warsan Youth D Group
Idris Sheikh	CACC Coordinator
Elizabeth Ayugi	Ebenezer TB/HIV and Malaria CBO
Esther Musyoka	OPAHA CBO
Hassan Diba	Mwangaza PLHIV Support Group
Qamar Ali Aden	Wahda Youth Group
Zeinab Mohammed	Pendo Community Initiative
Mohamed Khalif	Tunzinkhia
Mohammed Yusuf	Public Health Network
Habiba Nunow	CACC
Amina Jumale	CBO Representative
Abdukadir Salat	VCT Counselor
Robert Samita	VCT Counselor
Mohamed Hassan	Youth Representative

Paul Mwangi	Ministry of Planning, District Development Office
Julius Koome	NACC
Nasri Mohammed	NACC
Liban Katelo	NACC

**Interviewees, Coast Province 8-9 October 2009**

James Ngongo	Aga Khan Hospital
Saumu Ibrahim	CACC Coordinator, Kisauni
Herbert Murula	PASO
Rose Geno	CACC Coordinator, Changamwe
Faith Kamau	Hope Worldwide Kenya
Jumaa Mbaya	CACC Chairman
Said Omar	NFE
Ali Wasi	CACC Chairman, Kinango
Anne Njagi	Liverpool VCT
Ali Mwinyi	CIPK
Faraj Mwangombe	CACC Chairman, Kaloleni Constituency
Lorina Kagosha	USAID
Millicent Opar	Husiko la Pwani

### **Interviewees, Nyanza Province, 7 October 2009**

Eric Okioma	PLHIV- Victory Post-Test Club
David Waga	Min of Planning
Jane Okungu	AMREF
Eric Onyuro	MSM - Solcodi Group
Linda Obura	I Choose Life NGO
Sophie Chuchu	Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports
Steven Otieno	Cadif Kenya
PBO Okhungu	CACC Coordinator , Kisumu Town East
Wilkista Wasira	Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization
Moses Kidi	Impact ROO NGO
Juliet Nyanjom	WAFNET (PLHIV)
Esther Ombewa	Nyanza Reproductive Health Society

### **RWANDA**

List of stakeholders consulted by the local consultant in Rwanda:

#### **NACC/ CNLS and PMU senior officials;**

1. Dr.Anita ASIIMWE, Executive Secretary
2. Dr.Pierre Dongier, Technical advisor
3. Dr. NGAMije Daniel, PMU Coordinator
4. Acting director of planning and coordination
5. M& E advisor

#### **CCM:**

6. Ms Ida HAKIZINKA and the
7. CCM Chair and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of health, Dr. Agnes BINAGWA

**MoH:**

8. Dr. Nathalie KANKINDI, Coordinator HIV-Integration Program

**Ministry of Local government**

9. Members of district AIDS Control commission (CDLS) for Rubavu district in Western Province(9people)
10. Members of the platform of civil society organizations in Rubavu district, Western Province
11. Members of CDLS in HUYE district, Southern province( 9people)
12. Members of CSOs platform in HUYE district, Southern Province
13. CDLS members of MUSANZE district, in Southern Province.(9 people)

**Development Partners,**

14. Dr. Pascal Bijleveld, Country director, Clinton Foundation
15. Dr. Pratima Raghunathan, Country director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
16. Ms Davis Janna, Head of Health mission, USAID
17. Dr.Landry D. Tsague, Head, HIV/AIDS, UNICEF
18. Madam Vestine Uzamukunda, Head HIV/AIDS, UNFPA
19. Mr.Diedonee Ruturwa, Social mobilization and partnership advisor, UNAIDS
20. Ms Pegurri Elisabetta, M&E advisor, UNAIDS

**Civil society:**

21. Mr.Aimable Mwananawe, President, Rwanda NGO Forum on HIV/AIDS
22. Madam Kagoyire Beatrice, President, Rwanda network of people living with HIV/AIDS
23. Mr.Ignance Ngirankabo, Executive Secretary, National confederation of religious organizations working on HIV/AIDS
24. Mr. Bernard Bagwaneza, Executive Secretary, National umbrella of People with disabilities.
25. With the international consultant , we held a meeting with over 30 representatives of Rwanda CSOs working on HIV at national level on 22<sup>nd</sup> October,2009

## ANNEX 2: DOCUMENTATION OF THE GF NSA PILOT PROCESS - OUTLINE OF THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY DEVELOPED WITH COUNTRY CONSULTANTS

There seem to be four dimensions (process, content, for the NSP and the NSA): we have to find a way through all four, and the connections between them.

	Process	Content
<b>NSP</b>	<p><b>How robust has been the whole process of developing the NSP?</b></p> <p>(Q1) Development/Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strategic Framework</li> <li>▪ Resources</li> <li>▪ Governance</li> </ul> <p><b>How has this been affected by the NSA process?</b></p>	<p><b>How good an NSP is it?</b></p> <p>IHP attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Situation analysis</li> <li>▪ Process</li> <li>▪ Financing &amp; Auditing</li> <li>▪ Implementation &amp; Management</li> <li>▪ Results, Monitoring &amp; Review</li> </ul> <p><b>How has this been affected by the NSA process?</b></p>
<b>NSA</b>	<p><b>What has been the NSA process?</b></p> <p>(Q2)</p> <p>History</p> <p>Invitation</p> <p>Decision making</p> <p>Stakeholders</p> <p>TRP desk review</p> <p>TRP Mission</p> <p>Response</p>	<p><b>What is the NSA?</b></p> <p>A resource mobilization strategy?</p> <p>A project proposal?</p> <p>Paris:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Harmonization</li> <li>▪ Alignment</li> <li>▪ Ownership</li> <li>▪ Results</li> <li>▪ Accountability</li> </ul>

	Final Application	
	<b>How has it affected the NSP?</b>	<b>How is this reflected in the NSP?</b>

There are a set of key steps we need to go through:

## 1. Identify and document the NSA Process

1.1 Create a simple road-map/timeline from initial thinking about the NSP/NSA process through to final NSA submission.

1.2 Identify contextual factors (eg political, technical, HR – transfers, movements, in all players – NAC. Govt., UN, etc)

1.3 List (and collect) documentation relevant to each step in the road-map/timeline; and context.

1.4 Use **Questionnaire 2 (NSA Process)** to collect views/perspectives from key stakeholders about the process: concentrate on:

- WHY the country got involved? Where/Who were the drivers?
- What benefits did getting involved have? What problems did it cause?
- How was the process managed?
- What worked? What didn't work?
- Who benefited most? Least?

The questionnaire is really an analytical guide: you don't necessarily need to ask everyone all the questions; but YOU need to have verifiable answers to all the questions.

## 2. Assess the NSP/NSA process

Use **Questionnaire 1 (NSP Process)** to assess the NSP development and the contribution of the NSA process.

The questions cover a very thorough analysis of a NSP; select the key issues that are most relevant for your country at this stage.

### **3. Quantify the process – as far as possible; good ‘guestimates’ are OK**

Try to use developing the NSP as a baseline, and estimate additional NSA requirements.

3.1 How long did it take?

3.2 How many people were involved (from all organizations)?

3.3 How many meetings etc were involved?

3.4 How much did it cost?

3.5 How much TA was required?

3.6 How much documentation has been involved?

A table might be useful:

Process	For the NSP	For the NSA
Time from review to final document		

### **4. Major lessons learned**

Simple summary – bullet points: backed by evidence. The key issues to address are:

- How did the development of the NSP go? Key strengths and weaknesses?
- How far did the NSA process benefit or challenge the NSP process? Is it a better NSP? Or a more challenged one?
- What worked/didn't work in the NSA process?
- What has the country gained/learned from the NSP/NSA process?
- What can GF and UNAIDS learn?

**Put all the above together in a single report.**

**5. Key stakeholders for interview**

5.1 Senior NAC staff involved in the NSP/NSA processes

5.2 Key informants in other sectors who have been involved – eg Ministry of Health, Ministry of Planning, Treasury/Ministry of Finance

5.3 Development Partners

5.4 Members of the CCM

5.5 UN system members: esp. UCC, WHO Rep, Resident Coordinator, UNICEF and UNFPA Reps, as well as UN technical staff

5.6. Civil society stakeholders – particularly from CCM or national umbrella bodies and PLHA groups

5.7 Existing GF PR manager(s)

5.8 Any involved private sector people



## **QUESTIONNAIRE 1 – NSP PROCESS**

UNAIDS’ preliminary analysis suggests that in the process of assessment (eg as part of an NSA), a NSP needs to be considered with regard to three critical elements:

- The planning, results and accountability frameworks it provides as the ‘One National Strategy’ – that is, the encompassing frameworks to guide strategic prioritization and resource allocation for the national response, and to a low a variety of partners to align and harmonize their efforts;
- A wide-ranging understanding of the real nature, scope and scale of resources (human, financial, and system) available in countries to ‘implement’ a NSP – and what implementation capacity this implies;
- The Governance framework within which the NSP is to be developed and implemented.

The GF NSA process has deliberately drawn upon, and supported, the process of developing the NSP in the pilot countries under consideration. Country experience of this process should therefore be assessed to see first, what the NSP process was, and secondly, how it was influenced (for better or for worse) by the NSA process.

Data must be therefore collected to answer the following set of questions.

### **1. What kind of planning, results and accountability frameworks does the NSP provide as the ‘National Strategic Plan’?**

#### **Planning**

1.1 What planning process and tools were used to develop the NSP?

1.1.1 How is the basic ‘results’ framework of the NSP described: as robust RBM? Using a log-frame? Using a Goals/Objectives model?

1.1.2 How was this selected and used, and what support was required?

1.1.3 Who was primarily responsible for selecting and using the selected model/process/tool?

1.1.4 What strengths and weaknesses have emerged from the choice of process/tool/model, and its use?

1.1.5 How long did the planning process take for the NSP (months)?

1.1.6 Can you estimate how many meetings were held? How many people were involved?

1.1.7 How much TA was required (total person-months)?

#### **Key Questions:**

1. How much were these issues influenced by the NSA process?

2. How far were these issues reflected in GF TRP/Country Visit comments?
3. Are these issues likely to be affected by the outcome of the NSA?

## **Evidence**

1.2 Was robust ‘evidence’ used to determine the ‘results’ framework for the NSP? 1.2.1 What studies/data/reports were used to identify the dimensions, vulnerabilities and drivers of the epidemic in the country? List them.

1.2.2 Was there controversy/dispute about using the ‘evidence’ to determine the ‘results framework’? What kind? How was it resolved?

### **Key Questions:**

1. How much were these issues influenced by the NSA process?
2. How far were these issues reflected in GF TRP/Country Visit comments?
3. Are these issues likely to be affected by the outcome of the NSA?

## **Accountability**

1.3 How is accountability reflected in the NSP?

1.3.1 Is there an M&E Framework?

1.3.2 Is it linked directly/derived from the ‘results’ framework?

1.3.3 Is M&E used for accountability? How?

1.3.4 What other accountability mechanisms/processes are there for the NSP?

### **Key Questions:**

1. How much were these issues influenced by the NSA process?
2. How far were these issues reflected in GF TRP/Country Visit comments?
3. Are these issues likely to be affected by the outcome of the NSA?

## **Inclusiveness**

1.4 How was inclusiveness ensured for the NSP?

1.4.1 What kinds of groups were included? How were they selected?

1.4.2 Was there meaningful participation from various groups, or was it token participation?

1.4.3 Is ownership/buy-in of the ‘results framework’ widely shared?

1.4.4 Do other important partners accept the NSP as the programming framework? Who? To what extent?

**Key Questions:**

1. How much were these issues influenced by the NSA process?

2. How far were these issues reflected in GF TRP/Country Visit comments?

3. Are these issues likely to be affected by the outcome of the NSA?

**Resource allocation**

1.5 Has resource allocation within the NSP been strategic and prioritized?

1.5.1 To what extent has the total resource envelope for the national response been assessed? What limitations on this have there been? What are the major gaps?

1.5.2 Has resource allocation followed/reflected the ‘results’?

1.5.3 Does the NSP costing reflect a true picture of resource availability?

1.5.4 Has resource allocation been conducted transparently?

1.5.5 To what extent do/did NSP planners have the authority to make resource allocations?

1.5.6 Are other important partners allocating resources within the NSP framework?

1.5.7 Are they sharing resource allocation data?

**Key Questions:**

1. How much were these issues influenced by the NSA process?

2. How far were these issues reflected in GF TRP/Country Visit comments?

3. Are these issues likely to be affected by the outcome of the NSA?

**2. What resources, in a wide-ranging sense (human, financial, and system) are available in the country to ‘implement’ the NSP?**

**Human resources**

2.1 Are adequate human resources available in the country to implement the NSP?

2.1.1 Are there significant human resource shortages in key government institutions/ministries or in civil society with respect to implementation of the NSP (see below)?

2.1.2 Are there realistic plans (likely to be fulfilled during the early years of the NSP) to significantly reduce the shortages?

2.1.3 Has the NSP specifically included plans to address human resource shortages?

2.1.4 Are there significant capacity gaps in human resources? Where? What?

2.1.5 Does civil society have robust organizations engaged with the national response? Are there specific capacity gaps in organizations?

2.1.6 Are levels of commitment to HIV/AIDS high or low in organizations and institutions? Give specific examples.

**Key Questions:**

1. How much were these issues influenced by the NSA process?
2. How far were these issues reflected in GF TRP/Country Visit comments?
3. Are these issues likely to be affected by the outcome of the NSA?

**Financial**

2.2. Is the NSP adequately costed, with realistic financial resources and gaps indicated?

2.2.1 What percentage of costing is expected to be covered by the National Budget? Does the NSP show this?

2.2.2 What are the major sources of ODA? What other sources of funding are there?

**Key Questions:**

1. How much were these issues influenced by the NSA process?
2. How far were these issues reflected in GF TRP/Country Visit comments?
3. Are these issues likely to be affected by the outcome of the NSA?

## **Systems**

2.3 Are the various systems in place to implement the NSP adequately?

2.3.1 Is the health system adequate to deliver health-related components of the NSP?

2.3.2 Are key non-health sector systems (Education, Social Welfare, etc) adequate to deliver sector-related components of the NSP?

2.3.3 Are local government systems adequate to deliver their components of the NSP?

2.3.4 Are civil society, faith-based, and community systems adequate to deliver their components of the NSP?

2.3.5 To what extent does the NSP address weaknesses in these systems; and incorporate system's strengthening elements?

### **Key Questions:**

1. How much were these issues influenced by the NSA process?
2. How far were these issues reflected in GF TRP/Country Visit comments?
3. Are these issues likely to be affected by the outcome of the NSA?

### **3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Governance framework within which the NSP is developed and implemented?**

#### **Legitimacy**

3.1 Does the NSP have significant legitimacy within national development planning and Government social policy and programmes?

3.1.1 Does the 'AIDS machinery' or institutional framework have adequate legitimacy for the national response?

3.1.2 Is there appropriate legislative and policy support in place for implementation of the NSP?

3.1.3 Does the NSP specifically address gaps in legislative and policy support?

### **Key Questions:**

1. How much were these issues influenced by the NSA process?
2. How far were these issues reflected in GF TRP/Country Visit comments?

3. Are these issues likely to be affected by the outcome of the NSA?

### **Leadership**

3.2 Does the national response have appropriate leadership?

3.2.1 Does the ‘AIDS machinery’ or institutional framework provide for adequate leadership for the national response?

3.2.2 Are there appropriate mechanisms and processes in place to provide a range of leadership – both within the public sector and beyond it?

3.2.3 Does the NSP specifically address gaps in legislative and policy support?

#### **Key Questions:**

1. How much were these issues influenced by the NSA process?
2. How far were these issues reflected in GF TRP/Country Visit comments?
3. Are these issues likely to be affected by the outcome of the NSA?

### **Ownership**

3.3 How much ownership of the NSP is there?

3.3.1 Where is the primary ownership of the NSP?

3.3.2 What other institutions/groups share ownership?

3.3.3 Where, among key stakeholders, is there lack of ownership?

#### **Key Questions:**

1. How much were these issues influenced by the NSA process?
2. How far were these issues reflected in GF TRP/Country Visit comments?
3. Are these issues likely to be affected by the outcome of the NSA?

### **Accountability**

3.4 How much accountability is there for the NSP?

3.4.1 Where is the primary accountability of the NSP?

3.4.2 How is this accountability manifest and managed?

3.3.2 What other institutions/groups share accountability?

3.3.3 Where, among key stakeholders, is there lack of accountability?

**Key Questions:**

1. How much were these issues influenced by the NSA process?
2. How far were these issues reflected in GF TRP/Country Visit comments?
3. Are these issues likely to be affected by the outcome of the NSA?

## **QUESTIONNAIRE 2 – NSA PROCESS**

### **History**

1. What is the country's history and past experience with GF (HIV)
  - 1.1 How many rounds? How many applications? How successful?
  - 1.2 What significant problems has the country faced with regard to GF?
  - 1.3 Are there outstanding issues with regard to GF in the country?

### **Decision making for the NSA**

2. How did the country get into the NSA?
  - 2.1 Why did the country apply to be part of the First Learning Wave? Where/what was the driving force behind this?
  - 2.2 How was it decided?
  - 2.3 What issues/positions on this were raised? Where? By whom? How were they resolved?
  - 2.4 What were the perception of advantages and potential risks of NSA vis-à-vis round-based application?
  - 2.5 What was the role of GF Secretariat itself?
  - 2.6 How clearly perceived was the NSA and what it implies?
  - 2.7 How clear and useful was guidance from GFATM itself, and/or from partners (eg UNAIDS)?

### **Stakeholder involvement**

3. How were various stakeholders involved?
  - 3.1 Wider Government frameworks (eg Treasury)?
  - 3.2 Ministry of Health?
  - 3.3 Civil society?
  - 3.4 Development Partners – including UN?

### **First desk review – TRP comments**



4.1 How were the comments perceived? Were they appropriate and constructive? Was the TRP able to identify and highlight key weaknesses?

4.2 Did they help in defining what needed to be done to start preparing for the TRP mission and the subsequent NSA submission?

#### **NSA FLW workshop in Geneva, 18-19 May 2009**

4.3 Who participated in the workshop on behalf of the country?

4.4 Was feedback provided to the CCM or other stakeholder fora on lessons learned, recommendations, etc.

4.5 Were there specific issues highlighted that countries needed to pay attention to in preparation of the upcoming TRP mission and proposal submission?

#### **TRP Country Visit**

5. How was the visit of the TRP Team managed?

5.1 How was the visit prepared?

5.2 How was the composition of the team of national facilitators decided on?

5.3 Do stakeholders feel that different interests, constituencies were well represented in the team of national facilitators?

5.4 Who was responsible for arrangements at country level?

5.5 Who decided on the agenda?

5.6 Who did the Team meet? Was the range of stakeholders the TRP met representative/appropriate?

5.7 What significant issues were discussed during the Team's visit?

5.8 How far were the 'attributes' from IHP+ clearly assessed?

5.9 How useful were the 'attributes' for the NSP assessment?

#### **Response to TRP comments following the desk review**

6. How did the country respond to the initial TRP response?

6.1 Were the comments perceived as appropriate, targeted and well-balanced?

6.2 Were they seen as constructive feedback that allowed focused action?

6.3 What steps were taken, by whom, in response?

6.4 To what extent were all stakeholders involved?

6.5 What assistance was required?

### **Response to the TRP mission comments/report**

7. How did the country respond to the TRP mission?

7.1 How were the comments perceived?

7.2 Where they perceived as appropriate and constructive?

7.3 Did they help in defining what needed to be done to strengthen the NSA submission?

7.4 Was the TRP able to identify and highlight key weaknesses?

7.5 What were the expectations towards the TRP mission? Were they been met?

7.6 How did country partners feel about the role of the TRP mission providing only findings and observations but abstaining of providing recommendation?

7.7 Were country partners satisfied with composition of the TRP mission and the expertise available within the team?

### **Process for finalizing NSA**

8. What was the process for finalizing the NSA?

8.1 Who took responsibility for this?

8.2 Who else was involved?

8.3 How clearly perceived was the NSA final submission (Form attachments, what was required)?

8.4 How clear and useful was guidance from GFATM itself, and/or from partners (eg UNAIDS)?

8.5 What additional resistance was required?

8.6 What was the result?

#### 8.7 What were stakeholder perceptions of the final application?

## **ANNEX 3: Additional Questionnaires**

### **1. First Learning Wave National Strategy Applications (NSA) Documentation Exercise**

#### **Questions for interviewees:**

1. What is your view of the NSA modality? What benefits do you think it will bring?
2. What have been the main problems or difficulties with the NSA modality and experience so far?
3. How can/should the NSA modality be used to strengthen National Strategic Plans (NSP) and good HIV programming?
4. What do you think about the current guidance and process for the NSA modality?
5. How far are current guidance and tools for developing National Strategic Plans adequate to support good NSAs? Which tools are working well? Which need more work?
6. What is the role of UNAIDS, UN Joint Teams and other technical partners in the NSA modality? Has this been working well?
7. Is the NSA modality providing adequate space for Civil Society voice and participation in NSP and NSA development and implementation?
8. What role should the CCM play during NSA proposal development, grant negotiation and its implementation?
9. What is the likelihood that other donors join the NSA modality as a main funding approach to support disease specific programs in the future?
10. How well does the NSA correspond to the guiding principles of the GF? Corresponds well
11. What in your view are the main lessons coming out of this First Learning Wave of the NSA modality?

### **2. NSA Documentation Exercise: Questions for other countries – rejected after Desk Review**

1. What benefits did the country expect from the NSA?
2. What preparations did the country make after receiving the invitation to participate? Who took the lead? CCM? NAC? MoH?
3. What was the status of the National Strategic Plan at that stage?
4. What were the main reasons given by the GF-TRP Desk Review for rejecting the application?
5. What was the reaction of the NAC and CCM when the submission was rejected?

6. What do people feel now about the NSA? Disillusioned? Interested in applying again?
7. What steps, if any, have been taken to address the issues raised by the GF-TRP Desk Review?
8. What has been the main outcome, and lessons learned, from the NSA process for your country?

### **3. NSA Documentation Exercise: Questions for other countries – declined invitation**

1. What benefits did the country expect from the NSA?
2. What preparations did [country] make after receiving the invitation to participate? Who took the lead? CCM? NAC? MoH?
3. What was the status of the National Strategic Plan at that stage?
4. Why did [country] decline the NSA invitation?
5. Was the decision of the NAC and CCM unanimous to decline the invitation?
6. What do people feel now about the NSA? Interested in applying again next time?
7. What has been the main outcome, and lessons learned, from the NSA process for your country?