5 How to Institutionalize your Response

Most universities in Southern Africa should assume that they will be severely affected by HIV and AIDS, considering the extent of the epidemic in the region. This section applies to these universities. Should your institution have low levels of HIV infection among students and staff, not all of the suggestions in this section will apply to you.

Success in overcoming HIV/AIDS within universities demands exceptional personal, moral, political and social commitment on the part of senior university management.

Your university will need to make tangible arrangements for the management and control of HIV/AIDS in order to achieve any substantial leverage over the epidemic.

You may want to ask yourself the following question. Is my university in a position to say:

“**We have strong leadership, efficient management structures, policy and programmes in place to provide prevention, support and treatment for our students and staff based on an agreed minimum standard in the sector**”

The following sections can be used to reflect on what you may need to focus on to develop processes towards achieving an effective and efficient institutional response to HIV/AIDS. In each section there a number of questions that can assist you in assessing the progress your university has made in addressing HIV, and what still needs to be done.

5.1 Management

HIV and AIDS in universities need to be addressed as a management issue. The university is in the business of educating people, not in the business of HIV and AIDS, particularly in highly specialised areas such as treatment, care and support. The university must manage the epidemic as an integral part of university business, and management must lead this response. If this is not done HIV can threaten the core functions of the university.

Leadership and Regional Partnerships

1. **Is there identifiable leadership on the issue of HIV/AIDS at your university?**

Leadership is necessary for HIV/AIDS to be made a priority at universities as strong decision making provides a clear vision for the rest of the university in terms of the creation of programme structures and multi-sectoral networks.

Strong leadership will be necessary to lead the process of:

- **Assessment:** Evaluating the current and future impact of HIV/AIDS on the institution and subsequent institutional response.
- **Planning:** The design of programmes that are in line with the individual needs of your university.
- **Design:** Deciding on the form of your HIV/AIDS policy, strategy and programmes.
- **Implementation:** Allocation of responsibilities among leadership, establishment of processes prior to the implementation of your response and mobilisation of resources.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Actively mobilising on measurements of the success or efficiency of your response.

2. **Does your university work in partnership with other institutions towards the creation of a regional response to HIV/AIDS?**

If not, it may be beneficial to initiate such a process to:

- Ensure integrated responses to the epidemic across the region.
- Facilitate the free flow of information, knowledge and practices between institutions.
- Provided coherent or complimentary action and initiatives on different campuses.

A number of regional committees are already in place to provide support to universities in the SADC region. Chapter 8 provides a comprehensive list of these committees.

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Institutional Culture and Student Participation

3. **What is the level of student participation at your university?**

Students need to be mobilised to become part of the strategy with HIV/AIDS. A small but growing number of students are beginning to disclose their status and the deployment of such individuals at the forefront of the HIV/AIDS strategy at your university may be a viable way to forge new ground in student leadership and participation.

5.2 Policy and Programme Development

Policy Development

4. **Does your university have a formal written policy on HIV/AIDS?**

The benefit of having a policy or framework is that it represents an institutional commitment to the HIV/AIDS plan of action. Any policy on HIV/AIDS must demonstrate a visible commitment to resources and programmes or else the process will be incomplete.

5. **Do your targets reflect those for national and international HIV/AIDS action?**

It is important to place the context of your university within the broader context of the country and region. University policy must be guided and informed by national policy.

Your university should also be guided by international development targets.

6. **Does your policy have the right focus?**

Policies usually go through a range of adaptations over time. No doubt this will be the case for an HIV/AIDS policy as changes will need to be made as the disease unfolds. A variety of policy areas need to be clearly outlined in such a policy. The Association of African Universities (AAU) has put together a comprehensive resource entitled “A Toolkit for Higher Education Institutions in Africa, Mitigating the Impact of HIV/AIDS”. According to this toolkit the minimum standard for HIV/AIDS policy development at universities would be to include some detail on the following:

- The rights and responsibilities of staff and students affected and infected by HIV/AIDS.
- Integration of HIV/AIDS into teaching, research and service activities of all university faculties, centres and units.
- Provision of preventative care and support services on campus.
- Implementation of policy: structures, procedures, monitoring and review.

7. **Who can help your university set up an HIV and AIDS policy and programme?**

Fortunately, numerous organisations have the expertise needed to set up HIV and AIDS policies and programmes. It is not necessary for universities to go at it alone. In addition, a few universities have developed highly comprehensive and successful policies and should therefore be approached for guidance and assistance on how to embark on such a process.

Examples of Universities with a comprehensive HIV/AIDS policy in place:

- University of Cape Town, South Africa
- University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa

The above policies are publicly available and can be viewed by visiting their websites.

Examples of groups that can assist are:

- National AIDS Control Programme
- Public and private sector medical staff
- Business associations
- Unions and workers’ associations
- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
- People living with HIV/AIDS
- Other universities or organisations that have established HIV and AIDS programmes
- International organisations (UNAIDS, other UN agencies)
Contact two or more of the organisations above to get the most appropriate assistance or range of skills to help you design your programme, train and support staff, provide medical commodities and evaluate programme effectiveness.  

5.3 Planning

Capacity Development

8. Does your university employ human resources dedicated exclusively to managing HIV/AIDS?

Many studies done in the area of university responses to HIV/AIDS show that variations exist between universities in the level of human resources devoted to the disease. Those institutions with dedicated human resource capacity for HIV/AIDS are found to be in a better position to manage and deliver a more efficient and effective HIV/AIDS programme. The number and level of staff that are dedicated to manage and implement an HIV programme should depend on how badly the university is affected by HIV.

9. Does your university have the internal capacity to respond effectively to HIV/AIDS?

Although the aim is to have a regional response to HIV/AIDS, the efficiency of these responses will depend largely on institutions having the capacity to respond effectively to the disease. It is possible that some universities may have an exceptional skill base, and that it is often only a question of application and utilisation of these in-house skills that requires attention. However, if this is not the case at your university then active measures need to be taken to develop the required capacity.

10. What systems do you have in place to protect the intellectual capacity at your university?

The retention of valuable human resources is of paramount importance to your institution. The university makes a significant investment in individual academics and this investment needs to be protected from the impact of HIV/AIDS. Losing such individuals to the disease can be very damaging to a university. It is therefore important to ensure that processes are in place to ensure that staff have access to HIV prevention, treatment and care and support programmes. The same should also apply to students, and universities must appreciate the role that students can play in providing intellectual leadership. Effective workplace and peer education programmes along with providing access to treatment, care and support, should form part of your university’s mission statement and rank among its core responsibilities.

Applying a multidisciplinary approach

11. Does your HIV/AIDS committee comprise a multitude of disciplines?

A university should apply multidisciplinary principles when developing the institution’s HIV/AIDS responses. HIV/AIDS should not be a concern for those in the medical field only as there is scope within HIV/AIDS for every academic discipline at your university. Likewise it is essential for HIV/AIDS coordinating committees to be comprised of staff with various skills drawn from many different fields.

Measuring Success

12. Why should I monitor my programme?

Just as students are monitored for their class performance and periodically evaluated in their knowledge and understanding of the subject material so does your HIV and AIDS programme need to be monitored. This should be built into the programme in the design stage and will allow for routine monitoring to track progress, help to identify the beneficiaries for each activity and identify the target number of people you want to reach.

Periodic evaluations (usually at mid-term and end of programme) allow the management to see how well the programme is being implemented. Monitoring your programme is important if you want it to be effective. Also, documenting your results will help to build up a library of successful HIV and AIDS implementation programmes and contribute to the overall knowledge base of successful interventions.

If the university is receiving external funding for its HIV programme the funders will probably require monitoring and evaluation information about the programme.

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Mainstream Curriculum Development

13. Has your university incorporated HIV into the curriculum of all courses?

All courses should provide some HIV/AIDS basic information as part of their first year of training. It is important that all first year students be engaged in education about HIV/AIDS. Such introductory modules should effectively engage these young learners about the disease, prevention strategies and risks of unsafe sex as well as promote care and support services that are accessible to them. However, it is important to realise that generic HIV modules may not be sufficient to facilitate meaningful engagement with the disease. These modules should also start to relate HIV to the content of the course, which could make them more relevant to students.

In addition to the first year compulsory course, your university should consider providing education on HIV/AIDS which is specific to each profession, and impart skills to students to sufficiently prepare them for the realities of their eventual workplace environments. For example, architecture students may need to consider ways to provide affordable housing for orphans, accountancy students may need to look at ways that HIV impacts on the finances of a business etc.

5.4 Programmes

14. What should an HIV and AIDS response focus on?

Comprehensive HIV and AIDS programmes should focus on the core areas of:

- Prevention
- Treatment, Care & Support
- Impact Mitigation

Each sub-component contains a number of possibilities that can be adapted according to your situation and resources. Also a number of inexpensive options are available for those who are concerned about balancing an adequate response with limited resources. Ideas on the kinds of programmes your university can embark on are discussed in chapter 6.