

The AIDS in Africa Scenarios project aims to develop Africa-wide scenarios focusing on the impact of and response to the AIDS epidemic. With millions of Africans already killed by AIDS, and many millions more infected with HIV, the epidemic represents a huge challenge to the future of the continent.

The UNAIDS Secretariat, the UN Development Programme, the World Bank (two of the eight Cosponsor agencies of the UNAIDS Programme), the African Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa have jointly initiated this project. It draws on the extensive expertise in scenario building of the Global Business Environment team at Shell International, and has received funding support from a number of governments, foundations and businesses. The following text is theirs. Please see the UNAIDS scenarios website for further information.

### **So what are the scenarios and how will they help you in your work on HIV and AIDS?**

In order to better inform the decisions that must be taken today on AIDS, it is necessary to look fearlessly into the future, however difficult that may be.

A scenario is a story that describes a possible future. It identifies some significant events, the main actors and their motivations, and it conveys how the world functions. Building and using scenarios can help people explore what the future might look like and the likely challenges of living in it.

Decision makers can use scenarios to think about the uncertain aspects of the future that most worry them – or to discover the aspects about which they should be concerned – and to explore the ways these might unfold. Because there is no single answer to such enquiries, scenario builders create sets of scenarios. Scenarios are based on intuition, but crafted as analytical structures. Scenarios have been used by a wide variety of institutions to provide a bridge that links the uncertainties that we hold about the future to the decisions we must make today. (Scenarios: An Explorer's Guide, Global Business Environment, Shell International, Copyright 2003)

Building scenarios involves honouring difference rather than achieving a consensus which implies putting different frames of references to one side. The process will develop two or three scenarios that challenge us collectively, are plausible and are consequential for the development of policies and strategies for fighting the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The core of the project is a series of workshops that will build the scenarios. These workshops were conducted in Africa in the course of 2003 and early 2004. Fifty participants, selected for their individual insight and commitment to Africa's future, committed themselves to attending the full series of workshops and, as a group, are devising the scenarios. These participants include people who are already involved in responding to AIDS, but importantly also include many whose day-to-day work does not concern AIDS at all.

Of course, it is not possible to represent the full range of talent and commitment to Africa's future in a group of only 50 people. Therefore a key component of the project is the development of a wider group of stakeholders, who will be able to make input to the scenarios as they develop and who will be able to take forward the discussion of the scenarios within their various communities and circles of influence.

**The scenarios will be published at the end of 2004**; they can be used widely as a way of developing strategies for action for the future, and will be published here as well as on the UNAIDS scenarios website .