

CONCEPT NOTE

TOWARDS INTENSIFIED AU-UN COOPERATION FOR THE ELIMINATION OF SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND PROTECTING THE HEALTH AND RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

Joint African Union/UNAIDS as H6 Chair high-level side event at the 73rd UN General Assembly, 24 September 2018, 1:15 pm to 2:45 pm, Conference Room 3, New York.

Can the global community break the chain between conflict, gender-based sexual violence, ill-health and HIV?

In 2018, more people are affected by humanitarian situations than ever before. Conflict remains a major driver of humanitarian catastrophe with few conflicts showing any real sign of de-escalation, rather there are indications of further increases in the number of people forcibly displaced by conflict and violence and humanitarian crises, which reached a record 65.6 million in 2016.

The breakdown in civil order during humanitarian emergencies, especially armed conflict, erodes protection mechanisms such as provided by families and social policies. The unprecedented frequency, intensity and scope of humanitarian emergencies has dramatically amplified the risk faced by women and girls, as well as men and boys, to grave violations of human rights, including sexual and gender-based violence. And as conflict continues, broken and fragmented health systems, heightened vulnerability to hunger and disease, including HIV, and the interwoven psychological, physical and social consequences of trauma drive instability in a vicious downward cycle.

A new era of collaboration to accelerate progress in this field

In the face of protracted crises of increasingly frequency and scope across Africa, the global community is stepping up collaborative action and setting the stage for intensified collective effort to meet the pressing and urgent needs of the current situation. There is evidence of success in preventing sexual violence in conflict settings and bringing perpetrators of violence to justice and safeguarding access for survivors to life-saving health and social services.

The crises are political, the tragedies humanitarian. The way forward lies in political dialogue and addressing the root causes of underdevelopment by fostering human security. Human security requires people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people. Global health diplomacy is fundamental to ensure that human security comes at the center of humanitarian interventions and sustainable development policies by promoting a resilience agenda that tackles root causes of human suffering.

In 2017, the African Union adopted a zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse by its staff and Peace Support Operations (PSOs) personnel. The landmark UN-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security (April 2017) aims to boost coordination between the two organizations and better respond to the evolving challenges of peace operations.

The UN is promoting a resilience agenda through building closer coordination between humanitarian and development interventions. The proposals of the UN Secretary-General for repositioning the United Nations development system, the prevention agenda, peace and security reform, and the new strategy to combat sexual exploitation and abuse, will reinforce the work of the humanitarian system and will increase the coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations. As the Deputy-Secretary-General has stated, crises will not be solved by humanitarian interventions, but through political and development solutions that tackle the root causes of the problem.

The Spotlight Initiative was launched in 2017, as a global partnership between the UN and the EU to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. With an initial investment of \$500 million, priority countries have been identified in Africa for targeted investments – many of which face humanitarian situations. Innovative partnerships and tailored solutions in those countries are critical to ensure that the most vulnerable groups in society - including those affected by conflict - are not left behind.

Of relevance is the H6 Partnership which provides the means to synergize mandates and mutually reinforce capacities of WHO, UNAIDS, UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA and the World Bank. Nowhere is the work of the H6 needed more than in humanitarian settings. Under UNAIDS current chairpersonship, a new Results Framework has been adopted steering the H6 partnership towards a more systematic, evidence-informed approach, tailored to ensure that the specific needs of people are fulfilled, and ill-health is prevented. It positions the Partnership to accelerate support to countries along six result areas, including a renewed focus on adolescent health, sexual and reproductive health and rights, the empowerment of women and girls and the determinants of health more broadly in humanitarian settings.

UNAIDS and the H6 and other partners aim to improve the continuity of health service delivery, including HIV services, for people affected by humanitarian and conflict situations. As the AU increasingly exercises leadership and enhances its role in deploying and managing peace operations to prevent and respond to conflict situations, closer coordination between the AU and UN agencies is critical. With a multi-agency country presence and intensified focus on a broad interpretation of health needs in humanitarian settings, the H6 provides a key platform to enhance collaboration and deliver on the outcomes of the right to a healthy life and healthy societies for all.

Opportunity: mobilizing partners at the 2018 UN General Assembly

A joint AU/UNAIDS as H6 Chair high-level side event is proposed for 24 September 2018 in New York. Such a side event during the UN General Assembly provides an unparalleled opportunity to convene the critical players to build on the range of regional and global frameworks by laying the foundation for a country-focused, action-oriented AU-UN Emergency Action Plan for immediate preparation and urgent roll-out.

The event aims to:

1. Galvanize a strong political commitment to global health diplomacy as fundamental to ensure that human security is at the centre of humanitarian interventions and sustainable

development policies by promoting a resilience agenda that tackles root causes of human suffering;

2. Reinforce enhanced strategic coordinated African Union and United Nations leadership on elevating prevention and health promotion in fragile and conflict settings, building on Africa's experience and resilience through people-centred and context-specific actions with global benefits;
3. Confirm the need for building technical capacity on protecting health and human security, including prevention of HIV and gender-based violence, in peace and security and humanitarian responses.

Event format

- Co-hosted by H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat, African Union Commission Chairperson and UNAIDS, Michel Sidibé, Under Secretary General, Executive Director and Chair of the H6;
- Chaired by H.E Paul Kagame, Chair of the African Union and President of the Republic of Rwanda (TBC);
- A high-level interactive panel will allow for country experience to be shared (by Heads of States and Civil Society Representatives);
- Please note that usual UN protocol will be applied for interventions from the floor.