

## Lessons Learned from the 2007 evaluation

### Continuous learning

Beyond its simple popularity the CoP is valued as a tool of evolving but enduring need. Many of the evaluation respondents gave concrete examples of receiving information or support via the CoP that helped them in their own working context.

### Motivation at work

The CoP has a motivational effect for members. It is viewed positively as it provides a learning space where information about workable interventions can be shared. Members expressed that they valued it being a practical, rather than an academic platform.

### Distilled information

The access that the CoP provides to summaries of international debates, conferences and literature is highly appreciated given the pressures on members' time.

### Participation

There is a core-group of very active members who provide the bulk of exchanges. The moderators of the CoP introduce thematic discussions to which some members respond more actively as the theme is in their frame of working context, whereas other members passively follow the exchange of information.

### Waves of activity

The CoP has made the experience that if many core-members all change at the same time then activity diminishes. There is, therefore the need for regular face-to-face workshops where people can get to know one another and be introduced individually to the CoP.



## Quotes of members <sup>1</sup>

...." I came to realise that the challenges that I am facing in mainstreaming are not only being experienced in my cooperation office alone, but also in other. Through the CoP I have come to learn how to keep the momentum going in the whole HIV mainstreaming process – to set objectives for a particular period and then review the extent of their achievement and then move on to others".

... "I received constructive and practical feedback from CoP members to a proposal I circulated. The proposal of our partners included the question of how to best link HIV and AIDS mainstreaming with the prevention of domestic violence".

... " when it came to the process of developing a joint work place policy document for both SDC and the Swiss embassy together, I learned a tremendous amount from hearing how other countries had tackled this".

"....we had a helpful exchange on the usefulness of theatre groups in HIV prevention and the way our partner, implementing agencies employed them to this end and the results they had".

## To join the Community of Practice

If you wish to join the Community of Practice, please send an email to SDC at: [sdc-Aids@deza.admin.ch](mailto:sdc-Aids@deza.admin.ch).

## SDC and HIV and AIDS

To learn more about SDC's work in the area of HIV and AIDS and international experiences of mainstreaming HIV and AIDS you might like to refer to the following:

- The section "Control of major communicable diseases" on the SDC health website:  
[http://www.sdc-health.ch/priorities\\_in\\_health/communicable\\_diseases](http://www.sdc-health.ch/priorities_in_health/communicable_diseases)
- Mainstreaming HIV and AIDS in practice: A toolkit from SDC Toolkit  
[http://preview.deza.ch/ressources/resource\\_en\\_24553.pdf](http://preview.deza.ch/ressources/resource_en_24553.pdf)
- UNAIDS E-Library on Mainstreaming AIDS in Development  
[www.unaids.org/mainstreaming/elibrary](http://www.unaids.org/mainstreaming/elibrary)

<sup>1</sup> For the full Evaluation Report see [http://www.sdc-health.ch/priorities\\_in\\_health/communicable\\_diseases/hiv\\_aids/2007\\_evaluation\\_of\\_the\\_sdc\\_sosa\\_hiv\\_aids\\_community\\_of\\_practice](http://www.sdc-health.ch/priorities_in_health/communicable_diseases/hiv_aids/2007_evaluation_of_the_sdc_sosa_hiv_aids_community_of_practice)

## The SDC HIV and AIDS Community of Practice

The AIDS epidemic remains a global crisis with impacts that will be felt for decades to come. Over 30 million people are estimated to have died of AIDS in the 25 years of its existence. The extent of the repercussions may vary around the world – but no country has been left unaffected. In sub-Saharan Africa HIV and AIDS are reversing human development at an unprecedented rate.

Those of us working in development assistance and humanitarian aid are all called upon to partake in the global response – at a personal and organizational level. Yet it can be hard to keep ourselves up to date given the fast-changing nature of the epidemic.

If you are an HIV and AIDS focal person or have been made responsible for HIV mainstreaming in your team, department or organization, you probably have all sorts of questions and are likely to be interested to learn from the experience of others.

**Joining the SDC HIV and AIDS Community of Practice will link you with colleagues facing the same challenges and can provide you with the answers you are looking for!**

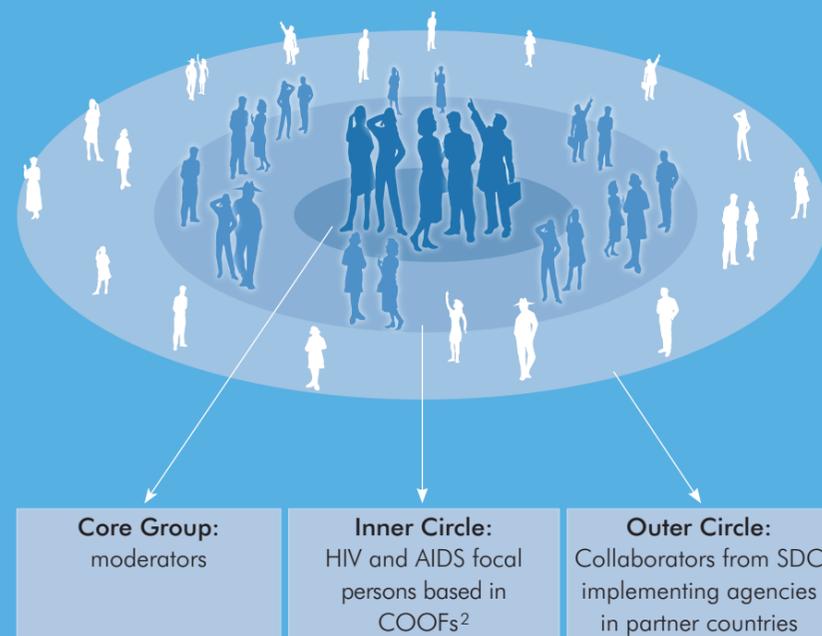


## So what is a “Community of Practice”?

A Community of Practice (usually shortened to the abbreviation CoP) is a group of committed people who come together to share and learn from one another – either face-to-face or virtually via the internet. Those involved are held together by a genuine interest in the subject matter and in each other’s practice. Participation is voluntary and the interaction informal. Exchanging via a CoP makes an exciting, refreshing change to traditional working groups!

## SDC support for Communities of Practice – the shift from “own knowledge” to “shared knowledge”

CoPs can play a key role in **knowledge management** as their very purpose is the sharing of practice experience and expertise. By exchanging stories, problems and solutions, a CoP can bring the collective knowledge of all the community members to bear on individuals’ problems and questions. A CoP can also turn the know-how of individual collaborators into a common knowledge asset.<sup>1</sup>



## History

In 2001 an East and Southern Africa regional workshop focusing upon HIV and AIDS was held in Kenya. The CoP was launched at this event in Nairobi in response to participants’ concerns about the forthcoming HIV and AIDS mainstreaming and to facilitate mutual support.

Members are staff of SDC and SDC’s implementing agencies, stationed either in Switzerland or in cooperation offices (COOFs) or projects in the partner countries. Membership has grown spontaneously across the organisation and now includes HIV and AIDS country focal persons from other regions, including Asia and francophone countries in Africa, and from other organisations such as NGOs. In early 2008 the CoP had 48 members with 21 of them working in a SDC Cooperation Offices – 15 of them in East and Southern Africa. There were nine members from the SDC headquarters in Switzerland and 18 members working in NGOs, implementing agencies or partner organisations – either in Africa (12 members) or in Europe (6 members).



CoP members at the regional workshop in Dar es Salaam, 2008

## Main Instruments

So far the CoP has produced the following instruments and outputs:

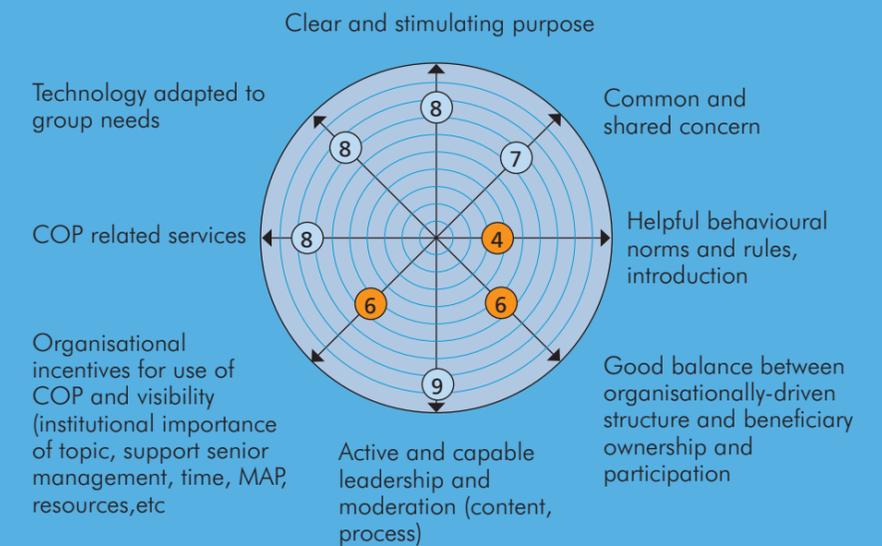
- ▶ Moderated e-discussions. Country focused inputs are moderated by peers whilst thematic inputs are usually led by moderators.
- ▶ Periodic regional workshops with field visits.
- ▶ Question and Answer platform; peer coaching.
- ▶ Information sharing.
- ▶ Circulation of documents.
- ▶ Internet platform where the e-discussions and documents can be accessed any time.
- ▶ Introductory Guidelines for new members.
- ▶ A flyer for awareness raising!

This list isn’t exhaustive. We frequently try out new instruments and are open for new ideas!

## Milestones

- ▶ **“Face to Face” workshops:** Since its inception the CoP’s members have been brought together in various settings to exchange directly. After Kenya in 2001, meetings were held in Mozambique in 2003, Zimbabwe in 2004, Tanzania in 2005, South Africa in 2006, Rwanda in 2007 and Tanzania in 2008. These meetings not only serve to introduce recently-joined members, but are used to introduce new instruments and plan for the CoP, to deepen understanding of specific country responses to HIV and AIDS and to debate relevant, technical issues.
- ▶ **“Presenting the CoP to the “outside world”:** the CoP has been presented several times at SDC’s **“Dare to Share Fair”** in Bern, Switzerland. Knowledge Management and Skills for Development were prominent themes of these events, which usually regroup a large number of SDC collaborators and partner organisations.
- ▶ In 2007 an **evaluation** was undertaken to gain a clearer picture of what is going well and to identify areas in need of improvement for the future. A variety of tools including quantitative questionnaires, in-depth telephone interviews and a SWOT analysis for the moderators were developed and used.

Spider diagram showing overall high levels of satisfaction with regards to most elements of the CoP:



<sup>1</sup> Knowledge Management for Development (KM4Dev) <http://www.km4dev.org/>

<sup>2</sup> COOFs = Cooperation Offices