



# UN Cares in Action

## The Case of Sierra Leone 2011

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## Acronyms

ADB:	African Development Bank
AIDS:	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
DPKO:	Department of Peace-keeping Operations
ECLAC:	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
FAO:	Food and Agriculture Organization
HIV:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICAO:	International Civil Aviation Organization
IEC:	Information, Education and Communication
IFAD:	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO:	International Labour Organization
IMF:	International Monetary Fund
INSTRAW:	United Nations International Research & Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
IOM:	International Organization for Migration
OCHA:	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
NGO:	Non-governmental Organization
PAHO:	Pan-American Health Organization
PEP:	Post-Exposure Prophylaxis
UNAIDS:	United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCC:	United Nations Compensation Committee
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNDSS:	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNFPA:	United Nations Population Fund
UNGASS:	United Nations General Assembly Special Session on AIDS
UNHCR:	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNIDO:	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNESCAP:	United Nations Social and Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIFEM:	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIC:	United Nations Information Centre
UNIDO:	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNJMS:	United Nations Joint Medical Services
UNODC:	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNON:	United Nations Office at Nairobi
UNOPS:	United Nations Office for Project Services
UN Plus:	United Nations System HIV Positive Staff Group
VCT:	Voluntary Counseling and Testing
WB:	World Bank
WFP:	World Food Programme
WHO:	World Health Organization

## Introduction

This document is part of a compendium of case studies documenting the experience of 16 countries in implementing UN Cares, the UN system-wide HIV workplace programme. The case studies highlight the successes and challenges of the UN Cares teams and their partners, and covers countries that have succeeded with varying degrees in implementing the UN Cares' Ten Minimum Standards.

The compendium of case studies is a third in a series about implementation of HIV learning in the UN workplace. The first was published in 2006 and documented the experience of 10 countries in different regions, and the second was published in 2007 and documented the experience of an additional 16 countries.

When HIV prevalence is 1 per cent or more in a country's general adult population, it is considered to be experiencing a generalized HIV epidemic by international health standards. Based on the 2007 Chief Executive Board Personnel statistics, the average prevalence of HIV among the global UN workforce in 2007 was estimated to be 1.4 per cent<sup>1</sup>. Applying this prevalence to the estimated number of fixed and short-term UN employees (n≈97,500), it is estimated that in total, about 1,400 UN employees could be infected with HIV. HIV prevalence among dependents is estimated to be about 1 per cent (2,450 of 243,570), assuming that UN staff have on average about 2.5 dependents and that 70 per cent of dependents will be at the same risk of infection as the staff member.

UN Cares was officially launched in 2008 as the UN system-wide workplace programme on HIV. Agency-specific programmes merged into the UN Cares harmonized workplace programme. Only two years into its implementation, UN Cares received the UN 21 Award in 2010, delivered by the UN Secretary General himself in a ceremony held in the UN Headquarters. The UN 21 Award was established in 1996 to recognize innovation, efficiency and excellence in delivering the UN's programmes and services.

The UN Cares is based on Ten Minimum Standards, which UN Teams in all countries are required to meet.

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### MINIMUM STANDARD

### NOTES

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<b>1</b> Information about UN Policies and Benefits	All personnel and their dependents in all locations have access to information about UN system policy, programmes, personnel rights, entitlements and benefits, and their own responsibilities regarding HIV and AIDS in the UN workplace and their associations are consulted about these measures.
<b>2</b> Information about Preventing Transmission of HIV and about Accessing Treatment and Care Service	All personnel and their dependents in all locations have sufficient and appropriate knowledge to make informed decisions to protect themselves from HIV and, those infected or affected by HIV, know where in their duty stations <sup>3</sup> to access good quality care, medical treatment, <sup>4</sup> and support services.
<b>3</b> Learning and training activities on stigma and discrimination	Measures are in place to combat stigma and discrimination, and to increase gender awareness, including learning activities for personnel and their families in all locations.
<b>4</b> Access to male and female condoms	All personnel and their families have access to male and female condoms. When high-quality condoms are not reliably and consistently available from the private sector, access should be simple and discreet at the UN workplace, either free or at low cost.
<b>5</b> Voluntary counseling and testing	All personnel and their families should have access to Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT).
<b>6</b> Insurance covering HIV-related expenses	All staff and recognized dependents, regardless of contract status or agency, have access to insurance coverage, allowing them to access the necessary services required for HIV prevention, treatment and care.
<b>7</b> Confidential handling of personal information	All UN system personnel with access to personal information about personnel maintain confidentiality in the management of personal information (such as HIV status or any other medical condition), including processing of a) all health insurance claims, b) agreements on accommodation in working arrangements, and any other circumstances in which personnel choose to disclose their status.
<b>8</b> First aid using standard precautions	All personnel have access to first aid assistance using standard precautions in UN system workplaces.
<b>9</b> Rapid access to PEP starter kits	All personnel and their family members have access within 72 hours to HIV emergency Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) starter kits and related medical care, counseling, and follow-up treatment in case of potential exposure to HIV because of sexual assault, or occupational accident.
<b>10</b> Managerial commitment	All managers assume leadership on the implementation of UN Cares, in consultation with staff representatives or Associations.

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The compendium of case studies, of which this document forms part, outlines how each UN Cares team attempted to meet the above Ten Minimum Standards. The case studies begin by explaining the national HIV context, and providing information on UN presence in the country. All case studies outline the challenges and successes they experienced in implementing UN Cares by addressing issues of funding, senior leadership, key implementers of UN Cares at country-level, efforts to include employee families and dependents, and how the issue of stigma and discrimination is addressed. Many case studies include information on reaching staff based outside the capital city, and references to UN Plus, the UN System HIV-Positive Employees Group.

The 16 case studies cover countries from all regions of the world with diverse HIV epidemics and different levels of UN presence. Despite the great variety in country settings, a key list of lessons learned can be discerned from the experience of the 16 countries. These are presented at the end of the document.

**The regions and countries featured in this document are:**

- From Latin America & the Caribbean: Argentina, Brazil, Dominican Republic, & Trinidad & Tobago
- From West Africa: Burkina Faso, Ghana and Sierra Leone
- From Asia and the Pacific: Fiji, Myanmar and Papua New Guinea
- From the Middle East and North Africa: Iran and the Occupied Palestinian Territories
- From East and Southern Africa: Kenya, Mozambique and Zambia
- From Headquarters: New York City

*The sixteen case studies cover countries from all regions of the world with diverse HIV epidemics*

*prior to the UN Cares Launch, several agencies were implementing their parallel HIV workplace programmes, focusing primarily on prevention and stigma and discrimination messages.*

### **Background and context**

In 2008, the Sierra Leone Demographic and Health survey reported the HIV prevalence among the general population to be 1.5 per cent.<sup>2</sup> Populations most affected are sex workers (8.5 per cent), police (5.8 per cent), the military (3.2 per cent), and the mobile and border population (2.2 per cent).<sup>3</sup>

The UN Response in Sierra Leone is guided by the UN Country Team, which is led by the Executive Representative to the Secretary General/Resident Coordinator (ERSG/RC). The UN Country Team in Sierra Leone is comprised of 16 UN agencies, funds and programmes: UNDP, UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNIFEM, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, FAO, UNHCR, World Bank, ADB, IOM, UNIDO, ILO, IMF and UNIPSIL. There are currently 760 UN staff members in Sierra Leone. Sub-offices are located in Port Loko, Makeni, Magburuka, Bo, Kenema, Kailahun and Kono.

### **Leadership of and advocacy for UN Cares**

UN Cares in Sierra Leone was initiated under the leadership of the ERSG/RC, starting with the training of two Learning Facilitators in Abuja, Nigeria. The 2 Learning Facilitators were selected and introduced to the ERSG through the Joint UN Team on HIV/AIDS.

In February 2009, 14 Heads of Agency designated staff to serve as Learning Team members, forming a dynamic group that has made notable progress within a very short period of time.

The Launch of UN Cares was graced with the presence of prominent dignitaries such as the First Lady and the wife of the Vice President of the Republic of Sierra Leone. As was mentioned earlier, the Director of the National AIDS Secretariat, Chair of Country Coordinating Mechanisms, President of the HIV & AIDS Reporters Association, and the Sierra Leone Association of NGOs also partnered with the UN Cares Team during the Launch event.

### **Structure of UN Cares in Sierra Leone**

The UN Cares Learning Team is comprised of 16 staff members including Operations officers, Human Resource Officers, Administrative staff, Programme Analysts, and Team Nurses, who carry out the practical planning and implementation of UN Cares activities. They are supported by the Joint UN Team on HIV/AIDS, which provides direct guidance and oversight for the implementation of these activities. Six of the UN Cares Team members, including the Learning Facilitators, are Joint UN Team members, an added value to the Team.

The Learning Team has two facilitators from UNAIDS and UNIFEM. There is currently no full-time UN Cares Coordinator and the facilitators must work on UN Cares activities in addition to their other job responsibilities.

The Learning Team members meet on the second Wednesday of every month. Initially the meetings occurred at the UNAIDS Country Office, but recently Learning Team members have agreed to alternate between

their respective UN agencies. This agreement will address and consolidate ownership of UN Cares by all agencies.

The UN Learning Team is responsible for carrying out the practical planning and implementation of activities related to UN Cares. In doing so they are well supported by the Joint UN Team on AIDS, who provide leadership, guidance and oversight.

Spouses are often invited to take part in various learning events; they were specifically involved in the implementation of the Launch event. The Learning Team has also sought the assistance of interns from various UN agencies. The Facilitators report that the UN Medical Service is willing to participate and support LT events.

There is currently no presence of a local UN Plus chapter in Sierra Leone, perhaps due to the high level of stigma and discrimination around HIV/AIDS still present in the country.

### **Funding**

In keeping with the UN's response in Sierra Leone to deliver as 'One,' financial and technical support for UN Cares is resourced through the ERSG's Office, UN Country Team and UNAIDS. For the Launch of UN Cares, each agency contributed to co-fund the entire process for the Launch, and committed further funding to be made available upon the completion of the UN Cares Action Plan 2010-2011.

Allocated funds are channelled through the UNAIDS office and disbursed for the specific activities proposed by the Learning Team.

A needs assessment is currently being led by the Learning Team, paving the way for the development of a workplan that will be presented to the UNCT. This needs assessment will serve to identify specific UN Cares interventions and the budget for these activities will then be presented to the ERSG's office, UNCT and RST for funding.

### **Current state of implementation of the Minimum Standards**

With regard to the implementation of the 10 Minimum Standards, Sierra Leone's UN Cares programme is in the early stages of its development. However, prior to the UN Cares Launch, several agencies were implementing their parallel HIV workplace programmes, focusing primarily on prevention and stigma and discrimination messages. However, the agencies had been working in isolation, and it was not until the initiation of UN Cares that a fully coordinated effort took place.

### **Minimum Standard 1 (Information about UN Policies and Benefits):**

The scale and reach of the Launch of UN Cares Sierra Leone created the ideal opportunity to provide UN Agencies and their staff with information about UN Policies and Benefits relating to UN Cares. The UN Cares facilitators developed posters, fliers and T-shirts to distribute among staff to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS. These materials were developed in large numbers for the Launch event. Learning Team members took responsibility for placing

*Each agency has an assigned PEP kit custodian who has been trained in managing the PEP kits.*

the 10 Minimum Standards posters, magnets and fliers in their respective agencies.

A skit, focused on policies and benefits, was performed during the UN Cares Launch. In addition, throughout the Launch event, one of the Learning Facilitators was interviewed on Nationwide UN Radio, and he took the opportunity to raise awareness concerning UN policies and benefits.

Every UN office has been provided with a copy of “Living in a World with HIV & AIDS.” However, since the Learning Team was informed that a new edition is soon to be released, it has decided to wait until its publication before further distribution to staff within the respective offices. The Learning Team has agreed to include the UN Policy booklet as part of the introductory/welcoming package provided to all newly recruited UN staff members.

In addition, all the Learning Team members have decided to share one minimum standard per week via e-mail with the staff in their respective agencies to provide ongoing education on HIV/AIDS within the workspace.

*Learning Team members report that there is still a lot of denial, stigma and discrimination surrounding HIV/AIDS, and it is therefore sometimes difficult to implement activities, even within the UN system.*

**Minimum Standard 2 (Information about Preventing Transmission of HIV and about Accessing Treatment and Care Service):** Learning Team & Joint Team members have taken the responsibility of spreading information about preventing transmission of HIV and accessing treatment and care service, mainly through posters and fliers and some isolated awareness-raising sessions in their respective agencies. However, it has been agreed that the availability of this type of information needs to be scaled up within offices. Since the Launch of UN Cares, 320 fliers have been distributed.

**Minimum Standard 3 (Learning and Training Activities on Stigma and Discrimination):** The Learning Team recognizes the importance of its role in addressing issues relating to HIV stigma and discrimination within the UN workplace. This is particularly pertinent for Sierra Leone, where societal norms make it difficult for people to feel secure enough to declare their HIV status. With this in mind, during the Launch of UN Cares, the Learning Team focused its skit on the detrimental impact stigma and discrimination can have on a person’s life, leading to exclusion and isolation. The Learning Team intends to keep this critical issue at the fore of their future activities and Action Plan.

**Minimum Standard 4 (Access to male and female condoms):** All UN agencies provide their employees access to both male and female condoms, which are placed in office lavatories. In addition, the Learning Team ensures that all vehicles on field trip missions have a supply of both types of condoms. UNFPA has taken the lead in the supply of condoms.

The UN system in Sierra Leone has a total of 760 employees and UNFPA distributes 12 condoms per person monthly.

**Minimum Standard 5 (Voluntary counseling and testing):** Some UN staff members are aware of the availability of VCT sites, but the number of people accessing these sites is unknown. By the end of 2009, there were 416 VCT sites

across the country in both government and private health institutions. The UN medical clinic has testing kits and services available.

**Minimum Standards 6 (Insurance covering HIV-related expenses), 7 (Confidential handling of personal information), and 8 (First aid using standard precautions):** At present, there is only one UN Staff member openly living with HIV. He receives insurance coverage from the UN and is accessing care and treatment services.

All agencies have systems in place for the confidential handling of personal information of all staff. These systems are directly managed by the Human Resource personnel, the administrative staff, and the personal assistants of Heads of Agencies.

Regarding first aid, official vehicles are fitted with UN compliant first aid kits, but it is unknown how many of the drivers are trained in the correct use of these kits.

**Minimum Standard 9 (Rapid access to PEP starter kits):** All UN agencies have been supplied with PEP kits. The lead agency for the handling of PEP kits is WHO in collaboration with the UN Clinic. Each agency has an assigned PEP kit custodian who has been trained in managing the PEP kits. Since the Launch of UN Cares, no PEP kits have been used.

The Learning Team has made a commitment to ensure that all future activities should be fun and inclusive. Experience has shown that HIV information is more effectively communicated if families and children are mobilized in a fun and interactive forum, with music and other forms of entertainment.

The main activity targeting families to date was the Launch of UN Cares, which was a completely inclusive event for UN staff and their families. The event catered to all ages and needs. It included live musical entertainment for the entertainment of both young and old. UN Cares T-shirts were made available in all sizes, for adults and children.

Prior to the launch of UN Cares in October 2009, some agencies organized learning events for their staff and families, however the Launch constitutes the event with the widest reach for families thus far.

In recent months, the Learning Facilitators visited four field offices to orient and mobilize colleagues around UN Cares. There are also plans underway to assign field Learning Team members from the UN Field Offices in each of the regions outside the capital city to hold official Launch events.

CD-ROMs of the e-course have been distributed to every agency by the Learning Team members. Each Team member is responsible for ensuring that every staff member in their respective agencies completes the e-course by an agreed deadline.

### **Monitoring, evaluation and documentation**

The preparation and implementation of the Launch of UN Cares has been documented in a detailed account including posters, fliers and color

photographs. In addition, a DVD of the Launch has been distributed both locally and internationally. All of this information has been shared with the UN Country Team.

### **Lessons Learned**

The UN Cares Team identifies the high level of involvement and commitment of government functionaries as one of the programme's successful accomplishments. Namely, the First and Second Ladies attended the Launch Event held in October 2009.

One of the challenges reported by the Learning Team members is the fact that they have competing demands with other job responsibilities, and they may not always have the time to dedicate to UN Cares projects. Moreover, there is a lot of staff turnover, making it difficult for the Learning Team to effectively deliver services to personnel.

Learning Team members report that there is still a lot of denial, stigma and discrimination surrounding HIV/AIDS, and it is therefore sometimes difficult to implement activities, even within the UN system.

In addition, there are limited resources in many UN agencies, affecting the allocation of funds to UN Cares programmes.

The Learning Team members report that when implementing UN Cares activities, it was initially challenging to overcome agency-specific HIV workplace initiatives. Team members had to communicate closely with the Human Resource personnel from their respective agencies to integrate HIV/AIDS activities into one coordinated initiative.

Finally, HIV messages are more likely to be effectively transmitted if they are interspersed with forms of entertainment. This strategy was apparent in the Launch event, during which comedy routines and musical performances complemented the HIV educational sessions.

### **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> To estimate HIV prevalence among the global UN workforce, UNAIDS estimates of HIV prevalence by country for 2007 were applied to the number of staff of that nationality, regardless of duty station.

<sup>2</sup> Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2008, Statistics Sierra Leone Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Freetown, Sierra Leone, July 2009

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*