Progress Report: March 31, 2009

This quarterly ASAP Progress Report is an update on ASAP services, the ASAP capacity building initiative, and recent relevant meetings and briefings.

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS

The UNAIDS ASAP Advisory Group met twice this quarter, by teleconference on January 22 and in Washington, D.C. on March 5. Agenda items included: updates on ASAP operations and spending; experience of the ASAP capacity building program, demand for future training and next steps; opportunities to strengthen collaboration with cosponsors; and options for the next ASAP assessment. During the March 5 meeting it was agreed to expand membership in the Advisory Group to all interested cosponsors.

On March 3rd–4th Rosalia Rodriguez-Garcia of ASAP participated in a meeting in San Jose, Costa Rica of the Central America Regional Coordination Mechanism for HIV/AIDS, at which NAC directors from the six participating countries requested additional ASAP support to prepare a regional strategy.

In the context of the Global Fund’s first “Learning Wave” of National Strategy Applications ASAP received requests for technical support from Algeria, Djibouti, Malawi and Kenya, and is working with the MENA RST and UCCs from Kenya and Malawi to respond to these requests.

What is ASAP?

ASAP services, hosted by the World Bank on behalf of UNAIDS, respond to country requests for support for operational and strategic planning for HIV/AIDS.

Since July 2006, ASAP has been active in 58 countries and has supported two regional initiatives and three civil society networks. ASAP services include the following:

- External reviews of draft national strategies
- Technical and financial support to countries and regions to strengthen their strategic response to HIV/AIDS
- Tools to assist countries in their strategy and action planning work
- Capacity building for policymakers, practitioners and UNAIDS colleagues in strategic and action planning to strengthen the response to HIV/AIDS

Demand for ASAP Services

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Service Type</th>
<th>Countries</th>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Review</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focused Technical Assistance</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Technical Assistance</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Strategy Application Support</td>
<td>5</td>
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[Map showing demand for ASAP services around the world]
2008 HIGHLIGHTS

Requests for peer reviews and technical support over the course of 2008 came from 31 countries, including 11 from Africa, two from Asia, three from the Caribbean, two from Europe, 11 from Latin America, and two from MENA.

Tool development: ASAP produced a Guidance Note for Lead Consultants based on inputs from participants at a ‘lead consultants brainstorming meeting’. A draft guidance note and self-assessment tool on operational planning were prepared and reviewed by partners.

Capacity building work included regional workshops for country partners and UNAIDS cosponsors in ECA and MENA, as well as costing and M&E training for TSF Anglophone consultants, and a brainstorming meeting of ASAP lead consultants.

REGIONAL UPDATE ON ASAP SERVICE PROVISION

1) Africa

By the end of 2008 ASAP had provided a range of support to 20 sub-Saharan African countries, two NGOs and one regional initiative.

Since the start of 2009, the following requests have been received:

- **Malawi** – in preparation for the GF NSA process, request for support to incorporate findings of the recent mid-term review into an updated national strategic plan, and costing of that plan. Consultants are currently in country working with the NAC, UNAIDS and other partners.
- **Kenya** – also in preparation for the GF NSA process, Kenya has been in discussion regarding possible support. ASAP has offered a peer review of the draft documents costing the work to be expected to be submitted during the second phase of the NSA process.
- **Ethiopia** – has recently completed the first draft of its new SPM and requested ASAP support for a critical review and guidance regarding international good practice in mid-April.
- **Gambia** – work is ongoing to produce a new NSP, based upon the review of the former strategy and a MARP study undertaken in 2008. ASAP is providing a lead consultant, gender consultant (identified through UNDP), M&E specialist and costing consultant (in collaboration with the TSF/WCA with a focus on building capacity of regional consultants).
- **Cote d’Ivoire** – in collaboration with the Government and UCC, ASAP is supporting a lead consultant and team of local consultants in a mid-term review, for completion in April.
- **Swaziland** – ASAP helped finalize the new National Strategic Plan

2) Asia

During 2008 ASAP worked with colleagues in Nepal, Mongolia and Myanmar in the areas of costing, operational planning and peer review.

Since January 2009 ASAP has received a preliminary request from **Bangladesh**, which will be discussed by teleconference with the UCC and government partners in the coming weeks.

3) Caribbean

In 2008 ASAP supported work in two countries. For 2009, in close collaboration with the UCC/Eastern Caribbean and RST, demand has grown to include the following ongoing and anticipated work:

- **Guyana** – through the RST the UCC has requested support for a mid-term review of the ongoing strategy, in collaboration with PAHO, USAID, CDC and the World Bank expected to take off in May.
• Trinidad and Tobago – through the RST and World Bank, the Government has requested ASAP to assist in development of a new strategy, beginning in early summer 2009
• St Lucia – through the World Bank task team leader and UCC, ASAP is discussing with the Government the details of developing a new strategy and operational plan
• St Vincent and the Grenadines – in collaboration with the UCC, ASAP is supporting a lead consultant and costing specialist to develop a new strategy and operational plan
• St Kitts and Nevis – ASAP support for development of a costed operational plan, undertaken in close collaboration with the UCC, to be completed by early April

4) Europe
Work in the Europe and Central Asia Region during 2008 included support to three countries. In 2009 ASAP has received a request for support to the regional plan for the Eurasia Economic Commission. This has begun with a peer review (completed March 24), is expected to be followed by technical support to strengthen the strategic focus of the document.

5) Latin America
In close collaboration with the Latin America RST, work in the region was advanced in eleven countries during 2008.

Since January 2009, Guatemala and Panamá have completed baseline data with references (*Base de Datos y Referencias para una Estrategia Basada en Evidencia*), making available for the first time in these countries all relevant HIV/AIDS data. Guatemala has also completed its results framework and costing. Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador and Peru have started the process of compiling inputs for the baseline document.

• Plans are underway to undertake the same approach in Paraguay.
• At a March 3rd and 4th meeting in San Jose, Costa Rica of the Central America Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) for HIV/AIDS, NAC directors from the six participating countries requested additional ASAP support to prepare a regional strategy.

4) MENA
Collaboration with the MENA RST led to ASAP support for action planning in Lebanon, continuation of decentralized planning in Morocco, and a review of 12 regional studies.

For 2009, requests related to the NSA process have been received through the RST for:
• Algeria – support strengthening M&E and costing.
• Djibouti – overall NSP revision/prioritization, and costed a operational plan

ASAP TOOLS
The following practical ‘tools’ have been developed to provide additional support to partners to help strengthen national strategies and action plans:

Self-Assessment Tool and Guidelines – At the request of the Global Task Team, ASAP developed a strategic Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) and explanatory Guidelines for countries to rate their strategies based on a list of internationally-recommended criteria. The SAT is an Excel spreadsheet and has the same general format, “look and feel” as other complementary tools developed by the Global Fund. The tool automatically generates a simple graph to reflect areas of strength and weakness in the strategy. Guidelines explain the thinking and global experience for each of the criteria, and provide references for more information. The tool is consistent with, and linked to, other relevant tools and guidelines, and the Guidelines help users navigate through the wealth of existing resources.
The SAT and Guidelines were discussed at the Vienna Global Fund validation meeting in October 2008 and are being updated to reflect agreed GF validation attributes. This tool is available in French and Spanish.

**Road Map**\(^1\) – The Road Map lists the main steps in developing a strategy: starting with a review of the epidemic situation and national response, the basis for identifying key results that the national strategy would aim to achieve. This ‘results cycle’ is summarized in several clear steps and has been used extensively in Latin America. ASAP is continuing to refine the Road Map to help countries plan the process of doing national strategic planning.

**Practice Notes** – Based on demand from countries, ASAP has produced the following:
- A practice note on action planning is in draft and was shared with colleagues for comment in January 2009.
- Findings from the Lead Consultants Meeting held in July 2008.
- An Activity-Based Costing Model and Guidelines, with special usefulness for the budgeting work associated with action planning.
- The process of creating a national HIV/AIDS strategy - this note was finalized in October 2007, incorporating comments received from members of the ASAP Technical Advisory Group and others.
- The costing of national strategies - the note elicited useful comments from TSFs and UNAIDS Secretariat (This, and the note above were written with assistance from the National AIDS Commission of Swaziland and the UNAIDS Technical Support Facility for Southern Africa.)
- Facilitating a results-focus in strategy formulation based on experience in reviewing 28 national strategies.

**ASAP website** ([www.worldbank.org/asap](http://www.worldbank.org/asap)) – The site includes a large number of national strategies, and new strategies continue to be added as they are finalized. The tools described above are all available on the website, and have received positive responses from country-based partners.

**ASAP CAPACITY BUILDING THROUGH TRAINING AND WORKSHOPS**

ASAP capacity strengthening targets high-level policy makers and technical staff. INSP of Mexico leads a consortium of 7 regional training partners, along with the World Bank Institute, UNAIDS Co-sponsors and the UNAIDS Secretariat and RSTs. This work is guided by the AIDS Training Advisory Committee for Strategy (PRSP and ASAP), Resource Tracking, Mainstreaming and Costing, chaired by UNDP. To date:

- Workshops for high-level policymakers have been carried out in the Caribbean, Africa, ECA and MENA in partnership between the World Bank Institute and the INSP of Mexico and its collaborating partners.
- A costing workshop for TSF consultants was held in Johannesburg in April 2008.
- M&E training for TSF and independent consultants was organized in Washington in May 2008.
- A brainstorming meeting of strategic planning consultants was held in July 2008 in Washington.
- Next steps in the capacity building program will be considered by the ASAP Training Advisory Committee in early 2009.

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\(^1\) The GHAP Handbook: Planning for Results is available to practitioners (in English, French, and Spanish) to guide and support the application of the Road Map to strategic planning.
ASAP BUSINESS PLAN 2008-2009

The 2008-2209 Business Plan sets out the operational direction for the service based on the overall guidance from the ASAP advisory group meetings held in October 2007, including: give much greater attention to providing guidance and technical support on action planning; expand target groups in capacity building workshops; provide greater opportunities for cosponsor involvement; and take measures to assure high-quality support. In order to accomplish these objectives ASAP has sought additional financing from trust funds, the World Bank budget and the UBW. ASAP is grateful for the expressed support to its continued and expanded operations from the UNAIDS partnership, and is currently also seeking financial support from the US Government.

ASAP Governance

UNAIDS ASAP Advisory Group:
- Original partners in the UNAIDS Division of Labor (UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, ILO, WHO, Chair of the UNAIDS CCO, the UNAIDS Secretariat and WB)
- Established to provide overall guidance to ASAP operations
- During the group’s latest meeting on March 5, 2009 it was agreed to expand membership to include all interested cosponsors

ASAP Technical Advisory Group:
- Consists of representatives of national AIDS programs, civil society, the private sector, donors, UN agencies and international experts
- Met initially in February 2006 in Thailand to discuss the criteria for good national strategies, the common weaknesses and strengths of strategies; to identify the services that ASAP should offer in demand-driven operations; and to review the range of tools and resources that already exist
- The group met again in Cairo from October 29-30, 2007

ASAP Training Advisory Committee:
- Established in April 2007 to advise on the use of standards, methods and tools to develop country capacity
- Includes UNDP (chair), the World Bank and the UNAIDS Secretariat. Other cosponsors, institutions and individuals are invited to serve based on technical expertise required.
- Identifies complementary training activities which could be implemented jointly and advises on quality and outcomes assessments
- Will meet in spring 2009 to plan next steps in the capacity building program

SOME LESSONS LEARNED

ASAP’s review of 24 national strategic plans indicates that most plans could benefit from the following:

- Stronger analysis of the evidence base
- Better linkage between the evidence of the epidemic and the proposed strategy
- A focus on achieving results rather than on advocacy
- More attention to gender and to marginalized groups
- Improved operational and human resource planning
- Greater recognition of financial and human capacity, and planning in line with these realities.
COORDINATION AND ALIGNMENT

Since mid-2006 ASAP has met with a number of stakeholders to improve understanding of the services offered, to identify roles for partners and to increase coordination.

Mar 2007 Briefing was provided to the Asia-Pacific UNAIDS Regional Management Meeting, which provided an opportunity for further discussion of harmonization of costing approaches.

April 2007 ASAP met with UNAIDS Representative for Latin America for briefings about ASAP work in the region. ASAP also made two presentations at the IVth HIV/AIDS LAC Forum that was held in Argentina.

June 2007 ASAP made two presentations at the PEPFAR Implementers’ Meeting in Kigali, Rwanda.

Aug 2007 ASAP presented at the International Conference on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAP) in Colombo, Sri Lanka, as part of a symposium session on Universal Access and the GFATM (organized by UNAIDS RST for Asia and the Pacific and GFATM).

Oct 2007 Meetings in NY and Cairo with the UNAIDS ASAP Advisory Group and the ASAP Technical Advisory Group were held to discuss evaluation findings and chart the way forward.

Nov 2007 At the invitation of the UNAIDS RST for Southern and Eastern Africa, ASAP participated in a meeting in Durban to discuss region needs and, in particular, action planning. ASAP made presentations at the Regional Latin America HIV/AIDS Conference and at the Council of Ministers of Health Meeting, both held in Managua, Nicaragua.

Jan 2008 ASAP participated in the TSF Directors meeting in Malaysia, and organized a one-day working meeting with TSF and RST colleagues on approaches to costing and action planning.

Feb 2008 ASAP met with the UNAIDS Global Coordinators and all cosponsors.

June 2008 ASAP participated in a panel on Strategic Planning at the Implementers Meeting in Kampala, Uganda, presenting on the Honduras experience, lessons from peer reviews and an overview of strategic and action planning services available to countries.

July 2008 ASAP and the RST/Latin America met in Uruguay to share findings of the first phase of their joint support to the region and to strategize on next steps.

Sept 2008 ASAP provided data to the COATS (Coordination of AIDS Technical Support) database on provision of technical assistance to countries.

Oct 2008 UNAIDS/WB/GF Workshop on Validation of Strategies, in which ASAP participated.

Nov 2008 RST/East and Southern Africa Regional Management Meeting, including an ASAP presentation on findings from the Lead Consultants Meeting.

Mar 2009 ASAP participated in a meeting of the Central America Regional Coordination Mechanism for HIV/AIDS in San Jose, Costa Rica.

Mar 2009 ASAP joined by teleconference a meeting of the WHO-Regional Office Working Group on strategic and operational planning for the health sector response to HIV/AIDS.