

Annual report 2012/2013

"Aidsfocus is considered to be a **successful community for knowledge and information sharing** by the majority of members interviewed, not only because it addresses a relevant and specific topic such as HIV/AIDS, but also because they see the benefits of their participation in this community, both within their organisations as well as in the field in developing countries." An external review of the network Medicus Mundi Switzerland and of the platform aidsfocus.chⁱ, which was conducted in spring 2013, recognised aidsfocus.ch's strength and its achievements in the field of knowledge and information sharing – the most important pillar of aidsfocus.ch's work.

The external review also recognised the fact that the platform aidsfocus.ch makes a substantial contribution to HIV remaining on the agenda of Swiss development politics. On the other hand it criticised the fact that aidsfocus.ch is not well-known enough outside of the community of practice on HIV in development cooperation.

Aidsfocus.ch will build on these conclusions and accentuate its profile, enter more proactively into dialogue on our core subject and on development policies with Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Federal Office of Public Health and other stakeholders, and engage in more active media relations. In the strategy discussion aidsfocus.ch decided to concentrate more strongly on core subject areas in future and to focus on a few key issues, in order to bundle its efforts and to raise its profile.

Review of the year



21st July 2012: Global Fund Resource Mobilisation, Workshop of the Global Fund Advocates Network (**GFAN**), Washington DC, USA.

22nd–27th July 2012: **International AIDS Conference**, Washington DC, USA.

16th October 2012: "Der Globale Fonds – Verstärkt investieren, um die HIV/Aids-Epidemie zu überwinden", meeting with parliamentarians and policy discussion with Aktionsbündnis gegen Aids, Berlin.

19th–23rd November 2012: International Learning Festival on **Community Life Competence** (formerly AIDS Competence), with a stand on Memory Work, Mahabalipuram, India.

12th December 2012: **aidsfocus.ch annual meeting**, with a focus on "The Global Fund and civil society", with Michael O'Connor, GFATM, Bern.

11th April 2013: **aidsfocus.ch conference**, "A future without AIDS – Approaching a vision", with Margorie Opuni, UNAIDS, Farai Mahaso, BHASO, Sanghamitra Iyengar, Samraksha, Jochen Ehmer, SolidarMed, Bern.

15th April 2013, **aidsfocus.ch Meeting Point** on working with HIV-affected women in Tanzania and India, with Tanja Eberle and Esther Ruhuta (InterTEAM) and Sanghamitra Iyengar (Samraksha).

6th May 2013: **Round Table with Mark Dybul, director of the Global Fund** to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, representatives from SDC, the EDA and aidsfocus.ch, in the parliament building, Bern.

13th May 2013, discussion with **Michel Sidibé, executive director of UNAIDS**, and representatives from SDC, the EDA, universities and civil society, Bern.

4th June 2013, **Meeting Point** on "MSM and HIV in Cuba and in Switzerland", Zürich, with mediCuba-Suisse, partners from Cuba and Checkpoint Zürich.

The mission of aidsfocus.ch, the Swiss platform HIV/AIDS and international cooperation, is to "make a contribution to improving the HIV and AIDS situation in countries lacking adequate resources" (strategy 2009–2012).

Goal 1: Increase the exchange of knowledge and experience and create synergies between stakeholders in the field of HIV/AIDS and international cooperation.

The conference in spring is the most important forum where knowledge and experiences are exchanged and where joint learning, networking and the creation of synergies take place. The speakers and participants in the **aidsfocus.ch conference** of 11th April 2013 in Bern, under the heading "**A future without AIDS – Approaching a vision**" sought effective strategies to end AIDS. Basing their elaborations on the "Investment Framework for an effective HIV response"ⁱⁱⁱ, Margorie Opuni, UNAIDS, Farai Mahaso, BHASO (Zimbabwe), and Sanghamitra Iyengar, Samraksha (India), shone a light on strategies devised by activists in the South. Jochen Ehmer, of SolidarMed and a member of aidsfocus.ch's steering committee, emphasised the fact that we have the technical possibilities to manage and to contain AIDS.

How can we invest our limited resources most effectively with the aim of realising a world without AIDS? Basically everyone agrees that smart investments in the struggle against AIDS needs well-targeted intervention, such as preventing mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) or treating all people living with HIV with antiretroviral drugs. They have to be accompanied and supported by so-called critical enablers, that is to say factors that enable successful HIV interventions, such as political commitment and advocacy, mobilisation of communities or a reduction in the associated stigma.

In the World Café that took place at the conference lively discussions were held on our focus. Should we, aidsfocus.ch's partner organisations, concentrate more on medical intervention whose effectiveness has been scientifically proven? Or should we bank on local communities

and grass-roots organisations' strength and ability to innovate, in order to attain results and noticeable change locally, but which are not provable with "hard data"?

Meeting Points are low-threshold centres for the sharing of knowledge and information on practical matters, mostly with guests from partner organisations from the South. On the **15th of April 2013** aidsfocus.ch invited guests from Interteam from Tanzania and Sanghamitra from India to come to Basel for a **Meeting Point on work with aids-affected women in Tanzania and India**. The discussion centred on three stories and focused on stigmatisation, discrimination, erroneous information and misbeliefs, and the role of NGOs.

Upon the initiative of and in collaboration with mediCuba-Suisse aidsfocus.ch organised a **Meeting Point entitled "MSM and HIV in Cuba and in Switzerland"** in Zürich on the 4th of June 2013. Men who have sex with men (MSM) are also exposed to a particularly high risk of becoming infected with HIV in poorer countries and emerging economies of Asia, Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Together with sex workers, drug users and youths, MSM are one of the particularly vulnerable segments of the population, who are discriminated against, marginalised and frequently "overlooked" by HIV programmes. Aidsfocus.ch wants to focus its work more on high-risk groups.

The website and aidsfocus.news remain important instruments for the exchange of information. The electronic newsletter appeared seven times in German, French and English between July 2012 and June 2013. Each edition included an up-to-date editorial, information from the Swiss community of practice, short news items from across the world and new resources and links. Nine aidsfocus.flashes alerted its readers to the latest events. Readers have repeatedly praised the information content and usefulness of aidsfocus.news.

The **website www.aidsfocus.ch** and the electronic newsletter are currently being revamped both as concerns their content as well as on the technical side, to make them more attractive, up-to-date and reader-friendly.

Goal 2: Strengthening capabilities and knowledge and promoting good practices in the field of HIV, AIDS and international cooperation.

Meetings to exchange information are simultaneously fora for further training. Aidsfocus.ch thus contributes to strengthening the knowledge base in relation to practical skills and experience, to new trends and to issues pertaining to development policies in the global health field. Aidsfocus.ch's partners strengthen their expertise and the impact of their work by engaging in the systematic exchange of skills and experiences, joint learning and the establishment of best practices. Getting to know the knowledge and experiences gathered by others and critically assessing the effectiveness and relevance of their own work encourages them to further develop their own approach and strategies.

Goal 3: Strengthen consciousness and commitment, in order to secure access for all to comprehensive prevention, treatment, care and support as a fundamental human right to health and life.

Aidsfocus.ch's strategy is to sensitise people, enter into a dialogue on development policies with SDC and engaging in advocacy work, with the aim of getting Switzerland to commit to stronger financial support for the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Switzerland should also bring its role to bear in order for the policies and practice of the Global Fund to take the needs and interests of civil society organisations and for people living with HIV into account. The Global Fund does not only need more money, but we also have to ensure that the money goes to those who need it most urgently, to those who are suffering from this illness and from poverty and to NGOs that work directly with these groups.

When the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GF) cancelled its 11th financing round in November 2011, SolidarMed and fepa turned to aidsfocus.ch to convey the concern expressed by their partners about looming cuts to HIV programmes.

In order to focus its efforts, aidsfocus.ch collaborates with the Aktionsbündnis

gegen Aids (Action against AIDS Germany) and is a member of the German steering group on the Global Fund and the worldwide Global Fund Advocates Network (GFAN). In the run-up to the July 2012 World AIDS Conference in Washington, aidsfocus.ch took part in an internal GFAN workshop on the GF. Aidsfocus.ch made use of the AIDS conference to enhance its knowledge of the Global Fund and to network and make new contacts.

Michael O'Connor of the Global Fund and representatives from SDC took part in aidsfocus.ch's **annual general meeting** in December 2012, which addressed **the role of civil society in the Global Fund**. The partners of aidsfocus.ch agreed to send a letter to SDC director Martin Dahinden, urging the body to increase Switzerland's contribution to the fund to CHF 50 million, an appropriate sum when measured against Switzerland's economic strength. Aidsfocus.ch was the only civil society representative at a **round table** held in the parliament building on the 6th of May 2013, on the occasion of a visit to Bern of the **executive director of the Global Fund, Mark Dybul**. After the meeting with Mark Dybul foreign affairs minister Didier Burkhalter announced that Switzerland is currently assessing whether to increase its contribution to the GFATM from CHF 8 to 10 million a year. Aidsfocus.ch sees such an increase as an important step in the right direction – and as a result of aidsfocus.ch's advocacy work.

Media work: The struggle to find space in the media for "unattractive subjects" such as HIV and AIDS in international development cooperation has intensified – and the "returns" have thus declined.

Aidsfocus.ch on the end of the AIDS conference in Washington: "Eine Wende ist möglich, wenn jetzt gehandelt wird" ("A turnaround is possible if action is taken now", Washington, 27th of July 2012, media release)

Ronald D. Gerste: "Abschluss der Aids-Konferenz" ("AIDS conference closes"). In *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 28th of July 2012.

Helena Zweifel: Memory Work: "Ich lebe positiv ("I am positive"). In *Der Austausch*, Interteam periodical, no. 3/2012, pages 8-9.

Discussion with Sonja Wenger (of the weekly *Die WochenZeitung*) and Michael O'Connor (Global Fund), Bern.

aidsfocus.ch: "Eine Zukunft ohne Aids – auf dem Weg zu einer Vision", Media release, 11th of April 2013.

"A future without AIDS – approaching a vision", the reader on the conference, *Medicus Mundi Switzerland Bulletin no. 129*, August 2013.

Annual accounts

The annual accounts are for the 2012 calendar year. Aidsfocus.ch spent more and generated less income than budgeted. The conference with five speakers from Africa and India exceeded the budget, whilst income was largely as budgeted, thanks to financial support from Aids-Hilfe Schweiz (Swiss AIDS Federation), terre des hommes Switzerland and World Vision Switzerland. Besides expenditure on the annual general meeting and translations etc., the relatively high project costs primarily include travel expenses for the World AIDS Conference in Washington, meetings on the Global Fund in Berlin and Geneva and participation in a learning festival in India. We can present a balanced budget thanks to a CHF 6,000 annual contribution from the Swiss Red Cross, a deficit guarantee from the network Medicus Mundi Switzerland and a financial contribution from SDC.

Outlook

"Just as the water is about to boil, it is foolish to turn off the heat" (Nelson Mandela)

The aidsfocus.ch platform is the only Swiss civil society platform on HIV and AIDS in the international context. Now that we have reached a turning point and there is real hope for a world without AIDS we have to continue to mobilise every possible resource.

The strategy 2014-2016 sets out five strategic directions on which aidsfocus.ch will concentrate in its sensitisation work and in the policy dialogue. They are a focus on key populations at higher risk, low- und middle income countries with high HIV burden, linking HIV programmes with other health areas, sustainable financing (with a focus on the Global Fund) and anchoring HIV in the debate on the Post 2015 development agenda.

Aidsfocus.ch will be celebrating its tenth anniversary at the end of 2013. This will present us with a moment for pause, and reflect on what we have achieved so far. It will also represent an opportunity to gather renewed energy in order to make a world without AIDS a reality.

Helena Zweifel

Coordinator aidsfocus.ch

Executive Director Medicus Mundi Switzerland

Aidsfocus.ch partner organisations: AIDS & Child, Caritas Switzerland, CO-OPERAID, Déclaration de Berne, FEPA, Fédération Genevoise de Coopération, Gemeinschaft St. Anna-Schwestern, IAMANEH Switzerland, Kindernothilfe Schweiz, Kwa Wazee, medico international Switzerland, mediCuba-Suisse, missio, mission21, SolidarMed, Swiss Aids Care International, Swiss Aids Federation, Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund, Swiss Catholic Women's League, Swiss MIVA, Swiss Red Cross, Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (SwissTPH), Tear Fund, Terre des hommes Foundation, terre des hommes schweiz, and World Vision Switzerland.

The members of the steering committee: Irene Busch (terre des hommes schweiz), Jochen Ehmer (SolidarMed), Maria Katulu (independent expert), Kate Molesworth (Swiss Tropical and Public Health-Institut/Swiss TPH), Vreni Wenger (member of the board of MMS), Harry Witzthum (Swiss AIDS Federation).

ⁱ External Review Medicus Mundi Switzerland, by Bertha Camacho, 2013

ⁱⁱ UNAIDS, New Investment Framework for an effective HIV response, 2011