



Good Practice  
Infobrief



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*Findings Infobriefs* reports on Good Practice in ongoing operational, economic and sector work carried out by the World Bank and its member governments in the Africa Region. It is published monthly by the Knowledge and Learning Center on behalf of the Region. The views expressed in Findings are those of the author/s and should not be attributed to the World Bank Group.

## **HIV/AIDS in Cote d'Ivoire: Local and Decentralized Initiatives in Abengourou**

*Abengourou, with a population of 444,000 inhabitants, is one of the ten regions in Côte d'Ivoire. In this region, the fight against HIV/AIDS is enforced by a Regional Coordination Committee. What is special compared to other regional initiatives in the fight against HIV/AIDS is the organizational and community approach as well as the system established for financing activities.*

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### **Participatory community approach and organization**

The Regional Coordination Committee, chaired by the Regional Coordinator (a doctor from the region) identified, and met individually with each opinion leader and requested from them, depending on the situation, an authorization to act, a benediction, a physical presence/participation in the activities, granting of a premise, advice, etc. Committees have been established in all administrative areas (departments, townships, districts), in religious communities, schools, public services, and local NGOs. These committees members are elected and voluntary. Each community has a pool of resource members trained to lead the sensitization in its social or professional environment. The sensitization material is designed based on committee input, translated into the local dialects and produced on site by artists and entrepreneurs of the region.

### **A simple and direct financing system**

Activities being financed should obey the following two principles (i) the work is voluntary and nobody should be paid for the fight against AIDS; (ii) the communities should trust the committee. The Belgian Government provides support — about 35 million FCFA/US\$70,000 per year — to the Regional Coordination Committee in acquiring sensitization materials and in financing the activities of the different committees. Each committee presents a program of activities to the Regional Coordinator. After the program is discussed, amended if required, and accepted, the Regional Coordinator may seek complementary financing from other donors. The funds are directly disbursed to the managers of the committee. A written report on activities with detailed accounting documents is submitted to the Regional Coordinator who in turn transmits it to the financial partner/donor. The financial partner has the responsibility for attesting whether the funds have been efficiently used.

## Impact in the field

- The fight against HIV/AIDS has become multisectoral, with the health sector taking the overall lead, taking care of the medical aspects, giving technical advice and contributing to organizing the community response.
- The fight against HIV/AIDS, deep-rooted as it has become in the public consciousness, is not intrinsically dependent on financial support for its motivation.
- Abengourou's experience has been discussed during a national multisectoral workshop on the fight against HIV/AIDS in rural areas. This workshop was financed by the World Bank and the results recommended that this experience be expanded to all regions of Cote d'Ivoire. A common vision of the health, education and agricultural sectors emerged in the context of tackling HIV/AIDS in the rural areas. The workshop also resulted in the creation of a committee of committed volunteers from various sectors to build and launch a national program to fight HIV/AIDS in the rural areas and served to motivate those who had HIV/AIDS to help fight it.

## Lessons learned

- Voluntary service related to the fight against HIV/AIDS is possible and essential for sensitization. It ensures the deeper involvement of people with each person setting an example by allocating a portion of his/her time to the fight.
- Sensitization is the business of all communities and information is disseminated to all social levels of the region through youth groups, religious groups, community leaders, etc.
- In order for communities to trust the health sector and the products they deliver, government officials must be willing to respect the social environment and traditional authority at the community level.
- A long-term Coordinator position is essential in the fight against HIV/AIDS, especially to ensure a sustainable process.

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