

MANAGING AND MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF HIV/AIDS ON EDUCATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Mobile Task Team Approach

Durban, September 2002

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MANAGING AND MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF HIV/AIDS ON EDUCATION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: *The Mobile Task Team Approach*

1 USAID and MTT: A Commitment to Partnership

USAID/AFR-SD¹ and the MTT are committed to a partnership approach to managing and mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS – and to facilitating partnerships at every level of the education sector itself. Demonstrating this commitment, the MTT was co-developed by USAID/AFR-SD and HEARD², at the University of Natal, to assist MoEs in Sub-Saharan Africa to understand, manage and mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on their sectors and systems. MTT activity in each country requesting assistance constitutes a partnership with the Ministry or Department of Education concerned, and with all its associated sectoral stakeholders, including NGOs and CBOs.

2 MTT Structure, Field of Operation and Objective

The MTT is effectively an Africa-to-Africa support program: The current team comprises 15 southern Africa-based professionals specialising in the impact of HIV/AIDS on education, with specific expertise in education policy, management and information systems, HIV/AIDS and health, economics, modelling and statistics, monitoring and evaluation and program design. The MTT is fully funded by USAID Washington under a Cooperative Agreement and a selected team can be deployed at short notice on request from a USAID country Mission and MoE, to provide specialist services and support at no cost to the country concerned.

Members of the MTT are drawn from a number of countries and organisations and are linked by common purpose and approach, and together constitute a unique resource in terms of regional skills and experience. The MTT was established in 2000, in direct response to expressions of need from a number of MoEs across the region. By September 2002, the MTT was working in, or preparing to work in, 12 education systems in Sub-Saharan Africa and has facilitated a number of regional workshops.

The key objective of the MTT is to help empower MoEs and their development partners to develop a systemic, sustainable response to the impact of HIV/AIDS on education, through effective management and mitigation. The MTT's success is measured by the extent to which the MoE and education sector concerned is able to assume and utilise the knowledge, tools, models and training provided, and to implement a prioritised action plan.

¹ United States Agency for International Development, Bureau for Africa - Office of Sustainable Development

² Health Economics & HIV/AIDS Research Division

3 Responding to HIV/AIDS in Education: An Introduction

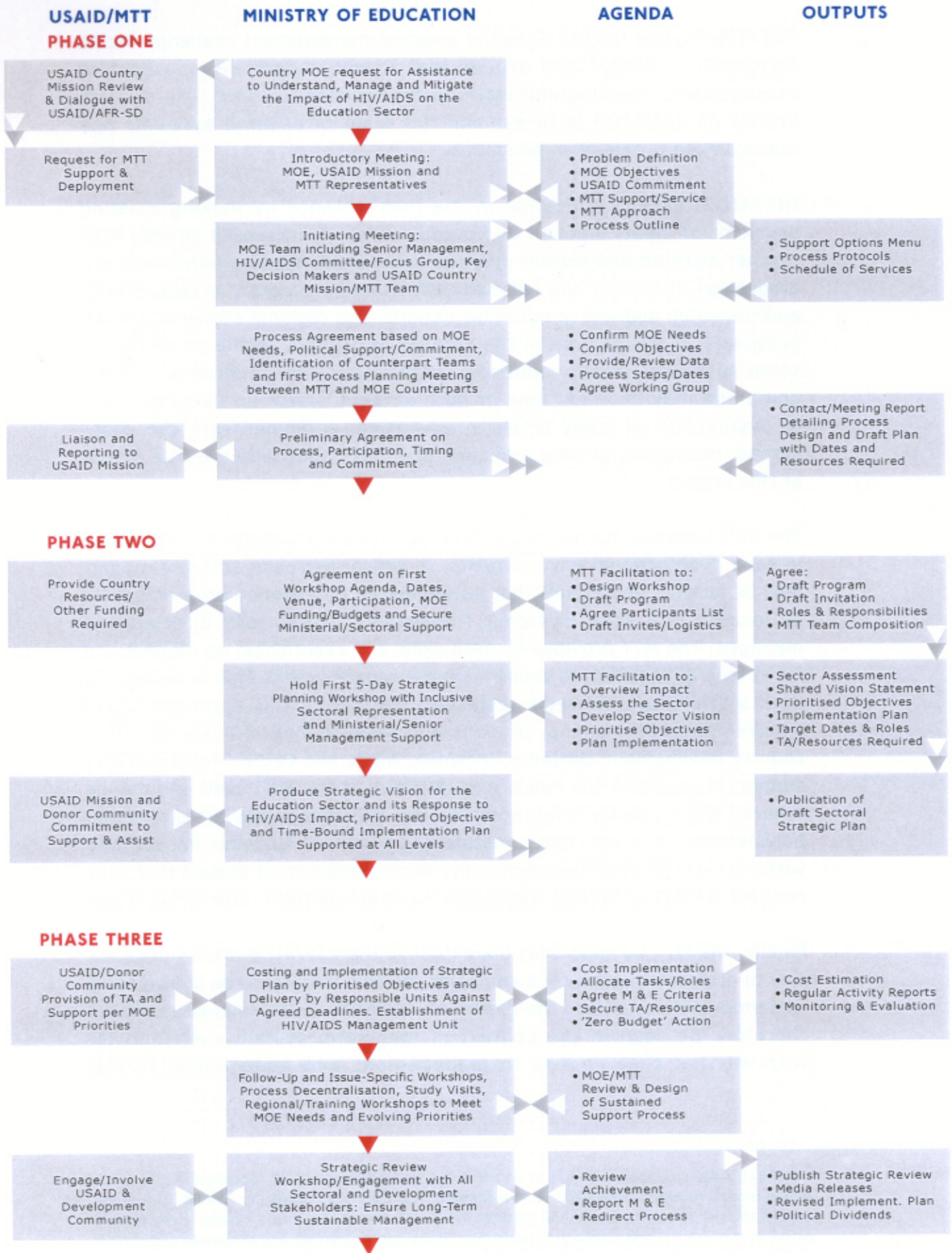
The MTT regards HIV/AIDS as the greatest management challenge facing education in Africa³ and argues that it will impact every aspect of management, teaching and learning for decades to come. The primary impact of HIV/AIDS is to explode the scale of *existing* systemic and management problems in education.

HIV/AIDS impacts education in the first instance by making existing problems of input, function and output worse: It increases already high teacher attrition and learner dropout rates while reducing enrolment and graduation. It directly and indirectly affects every aspect of access, quality and transition and will compromise national and regional economic growth prospects. It will also swell the number of orphans to the point that in some southern African countries, up to one in five children of school-going age may have lost one or both parents. However, existing levels of dysfunction at many levels in education, combined with the widespread inadequacy of data collection and EMIS, may hide the true extent of this impact.

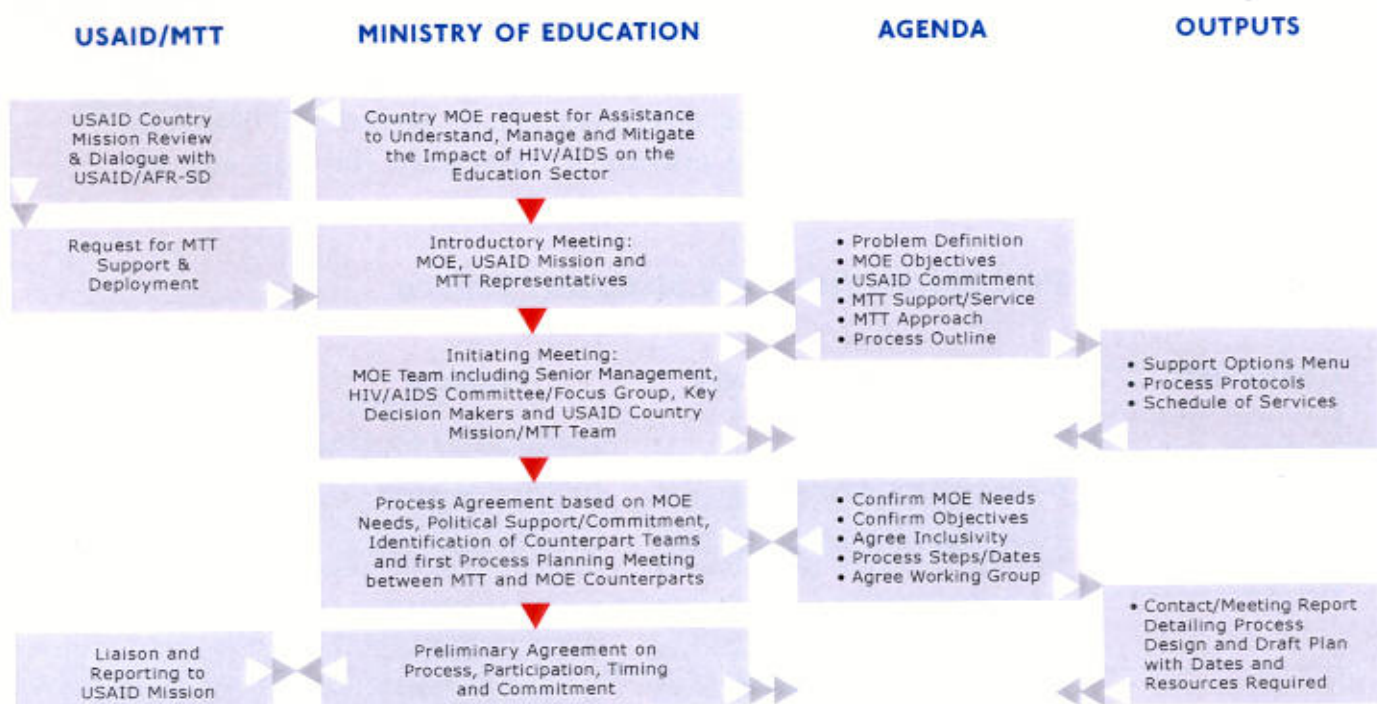
The MTT believes that behaviour change cannot be achieved or sustained in such dysfunctional environments, in which discipline and role models may be lacking, and argues that awareness and prevention programs must be located in a wider systemic framework, strategically directed and managed. The MTT provides focused skills and experience, on request and for as long as required, to supplement the capacity of the MoE in developing such a prioritised strategic response. The key to this approach is the transfer, through training, of skills and tools to MoE officials and their country development partners, including NGOs and CBOs. This process of support is based on the needs and priorities of the MoE itself and can be tailored to fit country requirements: The MTT recognises the distinction between countries with early, mature and advanced epidemic impact; and within countries, the geographic and social variation of impact that may require a decentralised approach to management and mitigation.

Finally, the MTT believes that the extent of the HIV/AIDS crisis opens the way to confront long-overdue education reforms that would be unattainable in normal circumstances; the design of HIV/AIDS countermeasures should therefore be seen in the context of long-term system sustainability with all that that implies in management and pedagogical terms.

³ While HIV/AIDS is acknowledged to be the first truly global pandemic, Southern Africa is the region most affected by HIV/AIDS: It is estimated that 25 million people, or almost 70% of the world's total of 36 million adults and children living with the disease, were located there in 2001 (AIDS in the Twenty-First Century: Disease and Globalisation, Barnett and Whiteside 2002). It is in this social context that the delivery of education and attainment of EFA goals must be considered.



5 Phase One: Empowering the Education Sector

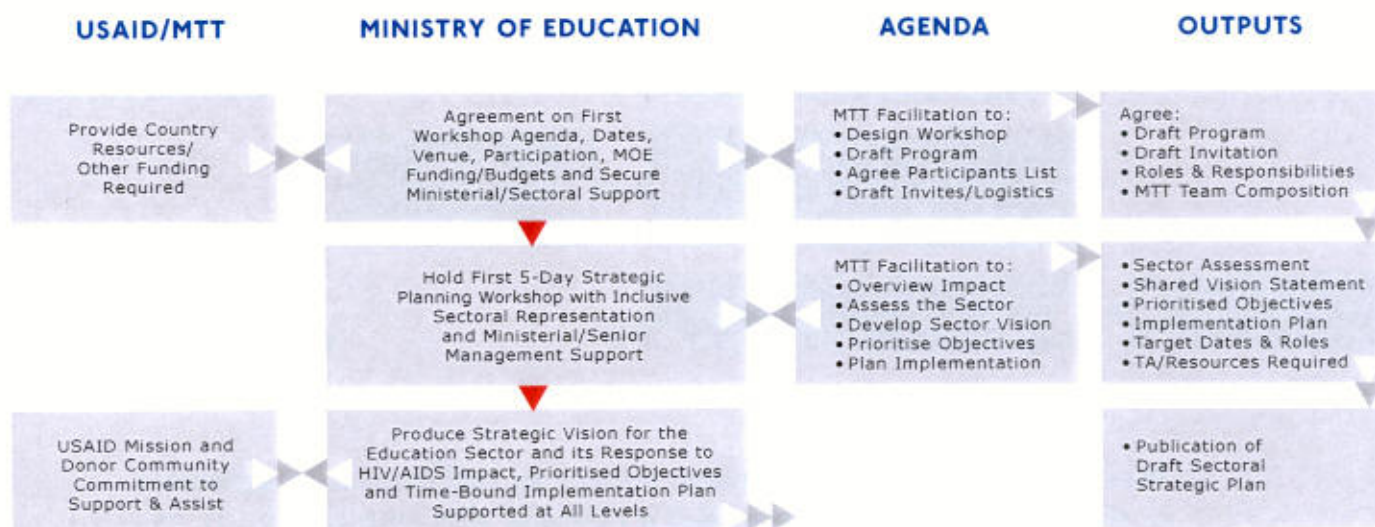


Phase One of the process is initiated through an MoE request for assistance to the USAID country Mission and a dialogue with USAID/AFR-SD, the USAID MTT Manager and the MTT itself. An introductory meeting, preceded by an exchange of information, will be scheduled in-country to include all the parties involved and focus on the MoE’s expressed needs and priorities. The meeting will involve key decision makers and will consider the MTT approach, USAID commitment to support and a checklist of process requirements. Presentations on the impact of HIV/AIDS on education and the management challenge will be made, to establish common understanding, together with comparative country examples of impact and response. An agenda will be developed in consultation with the MoE and USAID country Mission to ensure that all issues are addressed, including the phased process of engagement with the MTT.

This meeting should address the issue of political commitment and support for the process and ensure buy-in from the MoE and its senior officials. In the event the MoE elects to proceed, a Working Group comprising nominated MoE officials and MTT members will be established to take the process forward; the MTT members nominated will be dedicated to the country concerned for the duration of the support process.

This Working Group will be charged with meeting to design the succeeding phases of the process and will confirm in their reporting the MoE's needs and objectives and the sectoral inclusivity of the process. The key output of this Working Group will be a detailed report setting out process planning, with draft dates, allocation of responsibilities, and an indication of resources required. This report should provide a framework for MoE and its commitment to the ongoing process.

6 Phase Two: Shared Vision and Strategic Planning

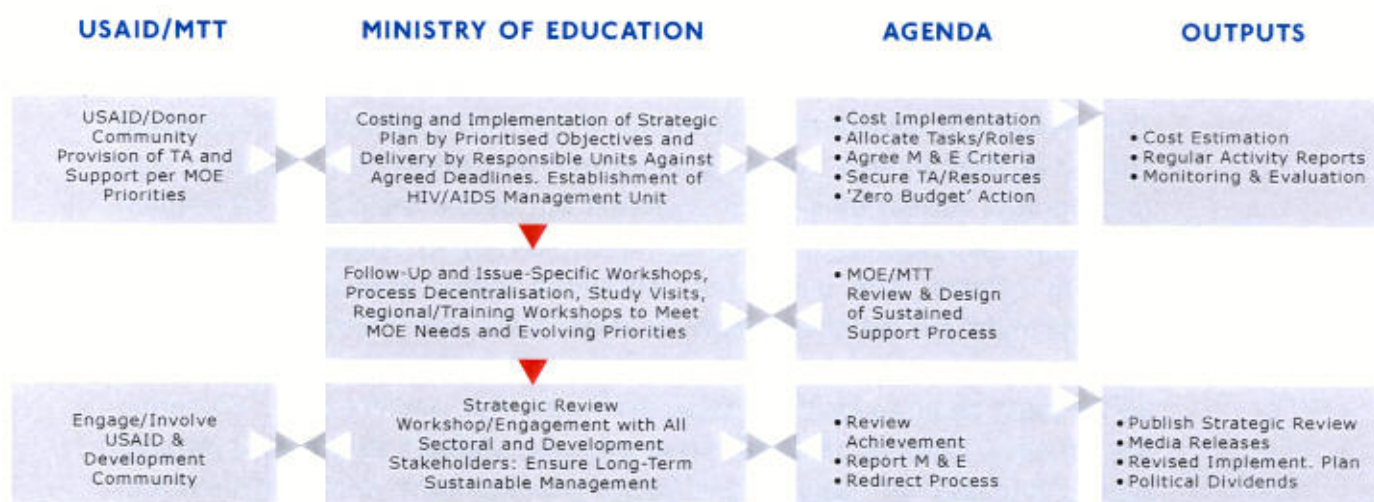


This phase is structured around the first sectoral strategic workshop, facilitated by the MTT in-country, and based on an agenda agreed by the MoE and involving sector-wide participation. This will require joint workshop design, a draft 5-day program, agreement on inclusive participation, budget provision for workshop costs⁴, and the logistics and management of the invitation process. This intensive workshop will cover the management impact of HIV/AIDS on the education sector in some detail, and examine the effect on labour, enrolment and gender, orphaning, decline in school fees, transition rates and output and the geographic variation of impact. It will then use a Sector Appraisal Framework to overview country education-sector impact and interrogate MoE response, facilitate the development of a Shared Vision for the sector and an Implementation Plan designed to realise this vision through the achievement of a number of prioritised objectives. This process phase has tremendous strategic and political importance in its generation of a draft Sectoral Strategic Plan for the Management and Mitigation of HIV/AIDS in Education. Apart from committing the MoE and its development partners to a time-bound plan of action,

⁴ While there is no MTT cost to the process for time, travel, accommodation etc, the MoE or its development partners are expected to provide a counterpart contribution to cover in-country workshop costs and logistics, including the time, travel and accommodation etc of their own personnel and other invited sectoral participants.

the process will produce a schedule of TA⁵ requirements linked to MoE agendas and priorities. As importantly, it will provide the development community with a structured plan on which to focus their funding commitments, and – in Phase Three – a set of criteria against which monitoring and evaluation will be conducted. The value of publishing a sectoral Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS should not be under-estimated: It will affirm the commitment of the country and confirm that the education sector knows what it must do and how it must do it. This alone makes the process strategically vital and will ensure widespread support.

7 Phase Three: Implementation and Monitoring



Implementation is contingent on the cost and viability of each element of the strategic plan: Certain goals will be much easier and less costly to achieve than others, in spite of having a lower priority. Some may in fact cost nothing in real terms and be attainable almost immediately; these 'zero budget' options should be actioned as fast as possible to build momentum and a public and political sense of achievement. Others will clearly take months or even years to achieve, at considerable cost; these should be seen in terms of phases and steps in order to reduce their mass to manageable proportions, and reduce the feeling of immobility inherent in large systems.

Taken as a whole, the plan will have cost implications that may be shared between the MoE and its development partners: The early development of a costed implementation plan will be a major output in its own right and will provide a much-needed focal point for donor and development

⁵ Technical Assistance

agency support. The knowledge that the plan is time-bound, with allocated responsibilities and a criteria-based monitoring and evaluation component, will instil precisely the confidence the development agencies require to commit to support – and places the MoE in firm control of the prioritised agenda. This activity should coincide with the establishment of a substantive HIV/AIDS Management Unit within the MoE, to manage and coordinate all aspects of the sector response and implementation plan. This small but strategic Unit should be taken very seriously, and ideally should be headed by a senior official with direct access to the HOD or even Minister. This Unit, possibly reporting to the MoE's HIV/AIDS Committee⁶, should from this point on take responsibility for regular activity reporting and should coordinate an independent monitoring and evaluation function.

8 **Follow-Up: Sustaining Response**

The medium to long-term implications of HIV/AIDS demand the sustained response that only a systemic approach can bring: MTT support and intervention cannot be seen as an event but as the facilitation of training and skills development to sustain both HIV/AIDS response and wider system reform. The pandemic will touch every aspect of education management and administration, at every level, and consequently opens the way to unprecedented systemic reform. The process steps described above must begin to institutionalise within the MoE and the wider education sector more reliable data, effective decision support systems, improved quality and teacher training, and better management, administration and budgeting.

To achieve this, it is vital to seize the opportunity and follow-up the implementation of the strategic plan with an inclusive Sectoral Review that takes a medium to long-term look at the future of education. This should involve all education stakeholders and the development community, and provide an opportunity for the MoE to demonstrate their enhanced skills and capacity in presenting a strategic vision for the continued mitigation of HIV/AIDS – and future system reform. Outputs from this process should include an incisive analysis of the process to date, a revised and reprioritised implementation plan and sufficient evidence of success to provide significant political dividends for the sector. The MTT's role at this stage will be limited, given the extent of support, training and guidance already provided through the process: In effect this is the acid test of MTT support, and will confirm the extent to which the MoE has been able to assume and utilise the knowledge, tools, models and training provided.

⁶ MoEs in different countries may have quite different management structures and preferred terms for these; HIV/AIDS Committee is used here in a generic and representational sense.

9 **Transferring Skills: Tools, Templates and Models**

The MTT has developed or adapted a range of support tools, templates and models to assist MoEs. They are used in training and capacity development and are made available at no cost to the MoE concerned. These are simple and practical management tools and include, for example:

- A comprehensive checklist of agenda options to guide the MoE through this process and ensure that no issues are overlooked;
- Sector Appraisal Framework: An analytical tool to elicit structured comment on impact from the sector and interrogate MoE response;
- Sector Vision Development: A technique/template to facilitate the development of a shared vision statement for the education sector;
- Prioritised Objective and Goal Setting: Techniques/templates to identify and prioritise objectives required to realise this shared vision;
- Implementation Planning: Templates and techniques to develop a prioritised and time-bound sectoral action plan, with allocation of responsibility and achievement indicators;
- 'Zero Budget' Options: Checklist/identification of action/options that can be implemented 'now' at little or no cost;
- Teacher Demand and Supply Modelling: Based on MoE data, a model designed to project demand and supply of teachers over time, providing an insight into existing teacher attrition rates and the outcomes of HIV/AIDS impact on these;
- DEMMIS: A District Education Monitoring and Management Information System designed to collect a limited number of key HIV/AIDS and management indicators *monthly* from schools;
- Partnership Database: A template and shell to establish a dynamic education sector database of development partners, by agreed criteria;
- Technical Assistance Analysis: A technique to analyse the TA required to implement the prioritised strategic action plan, empowering the MoE to determine the nature and extent of TA.

10 **Regional Workshops: Sharing Lessons and Experience**

The scale of demand for specialist workshops, on issues ranging from the development of proposals for international development agencies and interests, to district data collection and analysis, is already overwhelming. To meet this demand cost-efficiently and avoid over-extending the MTT, a series of regional workshops will be held regularly over the coming years. These may be combined with structured study visits and have the significant value of bringing different countries together to share experience and assist in leading discussion and training.

This workshop series will be driven by demand, and any MoE involved in the process may request a particular topic to be addressed; in this event, the MTT reserve the right to open the workshop to other regional MoEs and their development partners. This approach may be invaluable for (currently) low prevalence countries, for example, in allowing them to observe and learn from others further along the impact curve. Where the MTT does not have the specific expertise required for a workshop, it will recruit these skills and secure them for as long as is necessary to meet demand and internalise the capacity.

11 **Technical Papers: Building a Development Resource**

The MTT are committed to the publication of a series of technical and occasional papers designed to build a substantial development resource for the region. The intention is to capture the immense amount of information being gathered in the course of working throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, distil the cutting-edge research available and catalogue best-practice where evidenced.

These papers will be short and concise, and the target group will include MoEs and other social sector ministries, finance ministries, the wider education sector including NGOs, the development community, academics, students and other consulting professionals. The list of subjects and titles will include practical management 'tools', field guides and checklists as well as broader and more theoretical papers. As part of this series, a comprehensive MTT Manual or Field Guide to Managing and Mitigating the Impact of HIV/AIDS will be developed for wider use within the education sector. The series will also provide an opportunity to up-date many outdated but useful publications in current use. A list of 27 titles is presently under review, and the first of these papers will be released in the fourth-quarter of 2002.

12 **Getting Started: A User's Guide to Mobilising the MTT**

As described above, the process is initiated with a preliminary meeting between the MoE, USAID country Mission and MTT representatives. Assuming the MoE wishes to mobilise MTT support, a set of process steps will be agreed, together with target dates and composition of a Working Group. To recap, the process can be visualised in four phases:

- *Empowering the Education Sector*
- *Developing a Shared Vision and Implementation Plan*
- *Implementation and Monitoring*
- *Sustaining Response.*

Depending on country circumstances, it is likely that phases one through three could be substantially complete within nine-months from initiation, with on-going activity as implementation is actioned. This progress will be influenced by the approach of the MoE concerned and, critically, by access to key personnel and data. Optimally, the MTT should have access to the Directorates of Planning, EMIS, Human Resource Development, Teacher Training (College and Higher Education management) and Finance, and should be able to meet with the HOD and even the Minister if possible.

To discuss the MTT approach or support process, please contact the USAID MTT Manager:

- Brad Strickland bstrickland@ufr-sd.org

or the MTT co-directors:

- Peter Badcock-Walters peterbw@eastcoast.co.za
- Jonathan Godden jgodden@global.co.za

For all management and administrative queries please use the contact details shown on the inside front cover.