



Human Rights Council

**SOCIAL FORUM**

**2–4 October 2017**

**Room XVII, *Palais des Nations*, Geneva**

**“PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE  
HIV EPIDEMIC AND OTHER COMMUNICABLE DISEASES AND EPIDEMICS”**

**Wednesday, 4 October 2017**

**10:00hrs–10:40hrs    Translating principles into action: International Cooperation for  
global responses and national implementation**

Intervention by Dr Joe Thomas, Executive Director Partners in Population and Development

**Excellencies**

**Distinguished delegates,**

**Moderator and**

**Co panellists.**

**Good morning**

The fundamental principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG) is the need to promote peaceful and inclusive societies based on respect for human rights, the rule of law and transparent, effective and accountable institutions.

To achieve the goal of ending HIV epidemic by 2030, and to address the challenges of other Communicable Diseases and Epidemics, we need to constantly explore new ways and means to translating these principles into action.

In this context, among various other options, promoting International cooperation for global and national responses to address HIV vulnerability, and vulnerability to other epidemics and communicable diseases is an area that requires renewed attention.

Response to HIV pandemic has generated certain unique insights, tools, techniques and principles that could be applied to addressing challenges of other Communicable Diseases and Epidemics as well.

The need for involvement and ownership of people vulnerable to, and made vulnerable by the HIV epidemic at the decision-making is one of the significant insights gained from HIV response. This is essentially an effort to translate the principles of Human Rights into action.

Within the context of promoting International cooperation for global and national responses, I would further like to invite the attention of the audience to the need to promote Global South-South Cooperation as a tool for translating relevant principles into action.

My position will be substantiated by:

1. Data, evidence and lessons from our understanding of 'Vulnerability' and 'Vulnerable populations' in our response to HIV pandemic.
2. UN Secretary General's call for promoting South to South Cooperation
3. SDGs 3, 5, 16, 17 and the
4. Experience of Partners in Population and Development (PPD).

I would end my presentation with a call to UNAIDS and other UN agencies to develop a specific policy and program position to promote South to South Cooperation as a tool for global responses and national implementation of HIV response, epidemics and other communicable diseases.

We have accumulated a huge body of knowledge and expanded our understanding of ‘vulnerability’ and ‘vulnerable populations’ in our response to HIV, and other epidemics and communicable diseases.

Vulnerability, the susceptibility to harm, results from an interaction between the resources available to individuals and the life situations they face. Vulnerability often results from human rights violations further exasperated by a lack of legal and institutional framework to protect the rights of individuals.

In the context of lack of an institutional framework to protect the rights of individuals, Vulnerability is further amplified by personal incapacities, gender roles, disadvantaged social status, and social support systems, disempowering community settings, and the complex interactions of these factors over the life course.

The priority given to varying vulnerabilities or their neglect, reflects social values. Values affect how society views the vulnerable—as victims? or sinners?—and thus whether or not to provide public assistance and services.

Addressing Vulnerability requires different types of policy interventions—from social and economic development of neighbourhoods and communities, and educational and income policies, to individual medical interventions.

In the context of HIV pandemic, the policies addressing prevention, care and support must be informed by constantly evolving data and evidence about differential vulnerability experienced by people who are living with HIV infection, Injecting drug users, sex workers and men who are having sex with men, and how violations of their rights further exasperate their vulnerability.

The interplay of gender, human rights violations and vulnerability further presents an added layer of our understanding about HIV vulnerability.

The UN Secretary-General has called on the international community, including the United Nations development system, to orient South-South efforts towards achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the SDGs by intensifying multilateral support for South-South Cooperation initiatives to address common development challenges and fostering inclusive partnerships for South-South Cooperation

The Right to Health, ingrained in SDG 3, is an inclusive right encompassing both access to health services, goods and facilities and the determinants of health.

Its full realisation enables the realisation of other human rights, including the rights to food, housing, employment, education, human dignity, life, non-discrimination and equality.

However, health inequalities—derived from lack of implementation of rights based social policies—represent one of the most consequential global health challenges, yet lack comprehensive policy and program response, and are often a source of vulnerability to HIV epidemic, and other communicable diseases and epidemics.

SDG 5 highlights the need to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. It intricately addresses the gender based vulnerability of women and girls to HIV Epidemic.

Empowering women and girls to reach their full potential requires that they have equal opportunities to those of men and boys.

This means eliminating worldwide all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, including violence by intimate partners, sexual violence, and harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM), and trafficking.

This not only constitutes a grave violation of human rights, but also hinders our effort to promote and protect human rights in the context of the HIV epidemic, and other Communicable Diseases and Epidemics.

Goal 16 promotes peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provides access to justice for all and builds effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Today, more than half the world has internationally recognized human rights institutions. However, significant challenges remain, including lack of data on various forms of violence against children and other vulnerable groups, access to justice and information that presents and amplifies vulnerability to HIV Epidemic, and Other Communicable Diseases and Epidemics.

The scope of SDG 17 is about strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development. A successful sustainable development agenda requires innovative partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society.

These inclusive partnerships provide a hitherto unexplored opportunity to place the vulnerable population at the centre and to promote and protect human rights in the context of the HIV Epidemic and other communicable diseases and epidemics.

SDG 17 related targets such as finance, technology and capacity building have implications on our ability to translate the principles into action through International cooperation for global responses and national implementation.

SDG 17 related finance target calls upon developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of ODA to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA to least developed countries. ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of ODA to least developed countries.

This target further emphasises the responsibility of the developed countries to continue to finance HIV Epidemic and other communicable diseases and related epidemics as well.

SDG 17 target related to technology calls to enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation.

SDG 17 target also calls to enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism.

This target provides an opportunity to include access to medicines and commodities that are essential for prevention and care for HIV pandemic and other epidemics in the global partnership framework.

Capacity building for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of the HIV Epidemic, and Other Communicable Diseases and Epidemics falls under the scope of SDG 17 targets.

The capacity building target calls upon to enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the SDGs, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation.

Partners in Population and Development (PPD), an inter-governmental association of 26 developing countries, with a permanent observer status at the UN in New York and Geneva is an example of an institutional mechanism for promoting South-South Cooperation.

Over the past two decades, the organization's annual Inter-Ministerial Conference has provided a ministerial peer review mechanism for the member countries on all aspects of population and development issues.

With a robust governance system—a Board consisting of Ministers from Member Countries (MCs), a focal Partner Country Coordinator (PCC) and a network of 23 Partner Institutions (PIs), PPD promotes South to South Cooperation in the area of Sexual and Reproductive Health.

The global Secretariat is based in Bangladesh, with a regional office in Uganda, program office in China, liaison offices in New York, Geneva and Bangkok. PPD has expertise and a track record of facilitating South-South Cooperation (SSC) by way of ministerial level peer review, policy dialogue, capacity building, exchange of commodities and goods, and transfer of knowledge and technology.

PPD's Permanent Observer status provides an avenue to transform South to South Cooperation to South to South diplomacy.

PPD is the only intergovernmental organization mandated to promote SSC for SRHR for the south and based in the south. Undoubtedly, the platform has the rare opportunity to present the perspectives of the Global South on sexual and reproductive health issues in the Global Forums.

However, the scope of South to South Cooperation is not as widely institutionalized in the HIV/AIDS response. SSC has unquestionably facilitated the sharing of experiences between and within low- and middle-income countries. South-South Cooperation in building human resource capacity and technical support in HIV response has been inadequately emphasized globally despite the growing experience among resource-poor countries in scaling up HIV care and the funding to implement programs.

South to South Cooperation, through provision of strategic technical support has been recognized as a key determinant of a successful HIV response. Technical support for SSC is a strategic and cost effective way for countries with established experience to reverse and manage a multi-sectoral HIV response in resource-poor settings.

It is also key for sharing skills, cutting edge evidence and other resources for revolutionizing HIV prevention, transforming the new phase of treatment, care and support and realization of human rights and gender equity based HIV/AIDS response for all

**Dear Moderator, in conclusion,**

PPD has had the privilege to work with UNAIDS on several occasions. Along with UNAIDS, PPD hosted the 12<sup>th</sup> International Congress on AIDS in Asia Pacific.

Let me acknowledge the great efforts taken by UNAIDS, particularly in addressing the challenges of the Global South.

I would call to UNAIDS and other UN agencies to develop a specific policy and program position to promote South to South Cooperation as a tool for global responses and for national implementation of HIV response, epidemics and other communicable diseases.

UNAIDS, through its coordination function of H6, may leverage in developing a robust South to South response framework.

I conclude.

Thank you for your attention