

January 2009

To this end I labour, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

Colossians 1:29

WHAT IS GOOD PRACTICE?

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6. Tip of the Month – Monitoring and evaluation: potential assessment criteria

Welcome to the contentious debate of good practice. What do you recommend as good practice and why? In this AIDSLink, we begin a new series of tips on monitoring & evaluation (M&E) by considering potential assessment criteria. Make a contribution by sending in your tips and what you find to be the most important and useful assessment criteria.

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1. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS: THE PLACE FOR EXCELLENCE

Do you work best with things, ideas or people?

Anyone who wants to be effective in what they do, must display more than good intentions, whether as a teacher, volunteer home-carer, project manager, builder, business person or health care worker. Skill, ability and knowledge are part of the equation. The ability to work as a skilled craftsman was a spiritual gift when it came to building the Tabernacle (Ex 31:3). People glorify God by using and developing the abilities and resources he has given them as much as possible - "My/Our Utmost for His Highest" (see Col 1:29). As God's people, we are to do the best job possible in our circumstances.

Read Ex 31:2-6; 35:30-36:7. Bezalel and Oholiab were chosen by God and filled with the Spirit of God (Ex 31:3). Not only gifted in their area of speciality, they also had the aptitude to teach others (Ex 31:6; 35:34-35; 36:2). Note the involvement of the whole community including men and women in the task (Ex 36:6). Also the resources, especially willing people, were right there (Ex 35:5-6).

Clearly building God's Tabernacle was a unique event; however we can learn some important principles here. We see that working with one's hands is valuable and spiritual - it is ministry. It takes willingness, ability and commitment. There are strategies and objectives; God is present at every step, and he directs the process: "Just as I commanded you" (Ex 31:11 36:1).

After God gives instructions on the 'who' and 'what' of working on the Tabernacle, he makes mention of the 'when.' Ex 31:12-17; 35:1-3 talks about rest for God's people. We see an important principle here: a weekly rhythm of work and rest (Ex 20:9-10). We should protect people from exploitation and over-work, even if that work is important or urgent - this extends to "the foreigner within your gates."

For reflection and discussion:

1. Who decides what is 'good practice' in your setting? To what extent do you use a participatory approach, including the perspectives of people living with HIV&AIDS? How are you using 'good practice' indicators in planning, monitoring and evaluation?
2. To what extent does your ministry or project empower people to use the gifts and abilities God has given them, and to develop these? How could this be maximized?
3. Burnout and depression is common amongst those working with people living with HIV&AIDS. Do an audit of how you and your program team build in periods of rest and renewal into your work. What changes might increase your creativity and effectiveness?

2. WHAT IS 'GOOD' HIV&AIDS PRACTICE?

Debate continues over whether to use the term 'good' practice or 'best' practice. A particular practice may be successful within a specific context, for a specific purpose and group of people, and at a specific time, it may or may not be replicable in a different context or on a different scale. Practice may also change with time as more effective approaches and tools are developed - good practice say in 2003, may not be considered 'good' in 2009.

It is important to document and disseminate good practices because they:

- promote learning
- save other practitioners, organizations, or even other areas within an organization from having to 'reinvent the wheel'
- save duplication of resources and effort
- help avoid the pitfalls of work in a certain area

Following the International Conference on AIDS and Sexually transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA), Dakar, Senegal, 3-7 Dec 2008, representatives from SIM related HIV&AIDS projects in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa together with personnel based in Australia, Canada, Senegal and USA, met for a two day post-ICASA gathering to network and discern good practice principles relevant for their respective contexts. Those ranked as the most important were:

1. Practice community leadership
 - Ensure a good understanding of community
 - Network and build partnership
 - Strengthen and build on what already exists, for example, the role of family
 - Work with existing structures, from family to community leadership
 - Integrate culture and traditional knowledge
 - Communicate with community leaders so that they are informed about all HIV&AIDS programs in their area and how this will affect their people. Provide relevant and specific information
2. Know your local epidemic and the impact of your interventions
 - Know your epidemic today and where is it likely to be tomorrow. Note the significant regional and local variations
 - Customize responses to the local epidemic
 - Match interventions with research and actual data
 - Evaluate your programs in an effective way
 - Share evidence-based learning
3. Raise awareness and maintain behaviour change
 - Identify, implement and evaluate actual processes of behaviour change that are known to be effective



ICASA 2008, Dakar, Senegal



Post-ICASA Gathering - HOPE for AIDS Burkina Faso team



In addition, the following principles were also recognized as important:

- Increase the emphasis on, and resources, for prevention. Currently for every two people commencing antiretroviral treatment, five become infected
- Involve youth in decision-making and program implementation
- Involve men in identifying and addressing barriers immobilizing male leadership
- Integrate comprehensive health services
- Consider cost effectiveness by investing in HIV&AIDS as a means to strengthening other systems, especially health care
- Monitor antiretroviral therapy closely
- Address depression in clients and program workers
- Build human capital enabling people living with HIV&AIDS to develop their own expertise in HIV&AIDS
- Consider human-rights perspectives advocating for the rights of all to access education, care, and treatment
- Decentralize responses. Decentralized systems work. Sustainable change begins at the grass roots

- Build on political will by linking local responses to broader policy and advocacy initiatives

AIDS is a complex multi-factorial problem and the response to AIDS requires a multi-factorial, holistic, and contextualized response. Although we cannot predict the future, we can influence and shape it. Don't lose hope. Be an influencer!

The Post-ICASA Gathering document *Key Good Practice HIV&AIDS principles 2008* is available on request from: international.aids-consultant@sim.org or <https://simnet.sim.org/Ministries/HIV-AIDS/Workshops/>

3. JOINT LEARNING INITIATIVE ON CHILDREN AND HIV&AIDS

The Joint Learning Initiative on Children and HIV&AIDS (JLICA) conducts independent analyses and makes recommendations on best practices for helping children affected by HIV&AIDS, their families, and communities. Families and communities care best for children and must remain at the heart of the HIV&AIDS response. Children affected by HIV& AIDS are best cared for in functional families with basic income security, access to health care and education, and support from kin and community. See www.jlica.org

JLICA's learning groups focus on four core research areas:

Strengthening Families: www.jlica.org/learning-groups/strengthening-families.php

Examines the HIV pandemic's impact on family and social support systems, and investigates how families can best be supported to protect children and adolescents from HIV infection, poverty and social disruption.

Community Action: www.jlica.org/learning-groups/community-action.php

Looks at how community-based responses to children affected by HIV&AIDS can be made more effective and cost-efficient, while empowering local players.

Access to Service & Human Rights: www.jlica.org/learning-groups/access-to-services.php

Identifies ways to overcome barriers to providing essential, integrated health care and social services for children in low-income, high disease burden communities.

Social & Economic Policies: www.jlica.org/learning-groups/social-economic-policies.php

Documents the policy changes and new resources needed to help governments and international institutions effectively protect children—particularly adolescent girls—affected by HIV/AIDS.

4. RESOURCES ON ORGANIZATIONAL GOOD PRACTICE

a. *Human resource management ROOTS 12* is an 86 page user-friendly book that looks at policy and practice relating to people who work for an organization. It aims to help Christian development organisations improve how they recruit, develop and look after their staff. Downloadable from the Tearfund International Learning Zone (402KB):

<http://tilz.tearfund.org/Publications/ROOTS/Human+resource+management.htm>

b. *Building Skills in HIV&AIDS Documentation & Communication: A Reference Manual*, Jan 2008. This manual produced by the Southern Africa HIV&AIDS Information Dissemination Service (SAfAIDS) explains how to draw up a well-structured and well-thought out documentation and communication plan to enable you to put a variety of key organizational documents together. These include contractual documents, Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials, community media, case studies and advocacy materials. Available for (2.1MB) at:

www.saf aids.net/files/u1/DocComRefMan.pdf

5. MAKING IT KNOWN

a. Children's books: Author LeAnne Hardy leanehardy@gmail.com writes:

"If you know anyone who works with African children in difficult situations, be sure to let them know about my annotated bibliography of recommended children's books on Lindiwe's List:

www.goodreads.com/review/list/1138224?shelf=lindiwe-s-list There is a special category of children's books related to HIV&AIDS. I am anxious for input on more books that should be on that list."

b. Prayer: A monthly prayer guide is produced by HOPE for AIDS Kenya with the goal to see a serious prayer movement making a difference in this era of AIDS. To subscribe and for further information, contact Hope Carter, HOPE for AIDS Kenya Prayer Coordinator: kenya.hopeforaids@sim.org

6. TIP of the MONTH – MONITORING & EVALUATION: POTENTIAL ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

How do those planning, implementing, evaluating and funding know if a HIV&AIDS program or project is good practice?

The following assessment criteria are recommended in SIM's HOPE for AIDS global program. Criteria 1-5 draw on widely recognized principles for assessing good practice (eg UNAIDS Best Practice). Criterion 6 acknowledges that the ultimate human need is to know God. We believe that He has called us to compassionate, holistic service in this broken world by alleviating suffering, fostering development, and effecting change in society.

1. Effectiveness: This considers the success of a program, project or activity in producing its desired outcomes and reaching its overall goal. Well-recognized principles of good practice should be integrated into planning interventions
2. Moral, ethical and legal soundness: Respect, integrity, justice, and beneficence are essential values in all HIV&AIDS practice. From a Christian perspective, interventions are ethically acceptable when they are consistent with God's character and their potential benefits justify any risks involved
3. Relevance: This is about the appropriateness of a practice in the context of the society in which it is implemented. It takes into consideration cultural and religious traditions, and social, political and economic systems – in so far as they affect vulnerability, risk behaviours, and the successful implementation of a response
4. Maximizing resources: This includes issues of efficiency and cost-effectiveness such that energy, time, relationships and resources are maximized to produce the desired results
5. Sustainability: This refers to the ability of a program or a project to continue, and to continue being effective, over the medium to long term. Take care however not to confuse this with the ability to procure funding.
6. Kingdom Friendliness: This asks questions such as 'How does this initiative seek to eternally change lives?' and 'To what extent does it consider the sick, the disadvantaged and poor, and raise the dignity of women, children, and marginalised group as Jesus demonstrated?'

These criteria are outlined in greater detail in the SIM documents *HIV&AIDS Good Practice Framework* (54kb), updated Jan 2007, and *Ethics, Research and HIV&AIDS (Draft)*, 2008. These are available on request from international.aids-consultant@sim.org



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The opinions and views expressed in AIDSLink do not necessarily reflect the views of SIM. Technical information in AIDSLink is crosschecked as thoroughly as possible but we cannot accept responsibility should problems occur. Previous AIDSLinks can be viewed at www.hopeforaids.org/resource.asp

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