

NHDR Write-Up: VDA Practitioner Course on Human Development

The NHDR in Botswana in 2000 – A Strategic Document Paving the Way for HIV Prevention and Holistic Human Development

By Gert Danielsen

The UNDP's National Human Development Reports (NHDR) are strategic documents which assess progress and gaps in HD in a given country while reviewing standing policies and recommending alternative ones. Advocating for the HD approach through a focus on efficiency, equity and freedom, and aligning both analyses and strategy recommendations to these basic parameters, the HDRs point to challenges in HD and recommend strategies which will enhance HD. The HDRs are not descriptive documents, but rather analytical and strategic tools meant to help design public policy for HD, and in many countries the NHDR has indeed had an impact on public policy and strategic decision-making.

How is this possible? How can the NHDR affect strategic policies in any given country? And what measures should be taken to improve the situation? The NHDR in Botswana in 2000 focused on the tremendous challenges posed by the HIV-epidemic, while offering policy recommendations to counter the devastating impact of HIV and AIDS. The title of the report, *Towards an AIDS-Free Generation*, clearly demonstrated a normative and strategic approach through which the HD concept would be applied in shaping policies to make a real difference to the Botswana people.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic in Botswana was in 2000 (and still is) at the core of a vicious cycle of lacking HD. Negatively affecting productivity levels and economic growth, HIV spread further without people having freedom and choices through access to income and socio-economic equity. Women's lack of power and participation, limiting their freedom and choices, made them more vulnerable to the spread of HIV, while the epidemic would simultaneously have a devastating, restrictive effect on their lives as care-takers for orphans and dying family members and as bread-winning widows. Citizens weakened and demoralised by disease, unable to focus on more than their daily income and health, were unable to take part in political processes to affect decisions which could improve their lives. Policies uninformed by the people they were meant to support ended up being irresponsible, illegitimate and ineffective. HIV and AIDS had truly reduced efficiency, equity and freedom in Botswana.

Holistic, equitable, effective and sustainable HD strategies to address some of the challenges posed by HIV/AIDS in Botswana would need to include:

- Consultative, participatory elaboration of national policy frameworks for HIV prevention, care for people living with HIV/AIDS and support for widows, widowers and orphans
- HIV prevention through access to culturally appropriate and relevant information, access to and training in use of condoms, and voluntary, confidential counselling and testing
- Roll out of subsidised anti-retroviral treatment (merit goods) suitable to rural environments and local nutritional contexts
- Strengthened anti-discrimination laws and better legal protection for people living with HIV or AIDS
- Women empowerment schemes to include improved access to education, information, health services, self-esteem and home care support
- Capacity development, skills enhancement and turnover prevention in particularly affected sectors (education, health) at a higher rate than normally stipulated (for sustainability)
- Employment generation for vulnerable groups such as women and youth