

Foreword

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Development planning is a contested terrain, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Historically, the approach to African development has been externally oriented. For the past four decades, the subcontinent has been negotiating its development with external partners. More often than not, this has meant that the process, instruments and outcomes of development have been determined by external partners, rather than by African societies and their leaders.

At the same time, development planning has been approached as a largely technical, or even technocratic, exercise. Despite the more recent discourse on democratising and decentralising planning processes, development planning still tends to be located in the domain of planners, and more especially of economists. Elected representatives, local communities and organisations representing their interests are only marginally involved in these processes.

In addition, HIV/AIDS is posing a fundamental challenge to the conceptual foundations and the practice of development planning on the subcontinent. The human tragedy and devastation associated with the HIV/AIDS epidemic can no longer be ignored by anyone or any organisation with an interest in Africa's development. Even though many dimensions and impacts of HIV/AIDS are as yet unknown, the time to safeguard the rights of those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS and change the course of the epidemic is now.

Against this background, UNDP initiated the study on "Assessing the Link between National Development Planning and HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa". It starts

from the premise that effective HIV prevention requires a paradigm shift: one that looks beyond individual knowledge and behaviour as the most important factors influencing the spread of HIV to factors in the social, economic and political environment that render certain individuals and social groups more vulnerable to HIV infection than others. Although at the level of rhetoric there appears to be widespread acceptance that HIV/AIDS is a development issue, in practice the factors associated with HIV vulnerability are not sufficiently understood, let alone responded to. It is here where development planning can make the most effective contribution to curbing the spread of HIV. At the same time, development planning has to pre-empt and mitigate the current and anticipated impacts of HIV/AIDS, as these hold the danger of undermining the very goals, targets, tools and instruments of development. Moreover, if development planning continues to ignore the developmental dimensions of HIV/AIDS, it may unwittingly fail to curb – and worse still, even facilitate – the spread of HIV and it may aggravate the impacts of the epidemic.

This report makes a valuable contribution to the required paradigm shift in development planning, especially at a conceptual and practical level. It draws from a broad development literature and local studies at country level to substantiate its findings, analysis and recommendations. It exposes HIV/AIDS as a blind spot in development planning and makes recommendations to ensure that HIV/AIDS becomes a central concern in development efforts in sub-Saharan Africa. It is hoped that the report will find a wide audience and will contribute to better, more attuned and locally owned development planning on the subcontinent.