



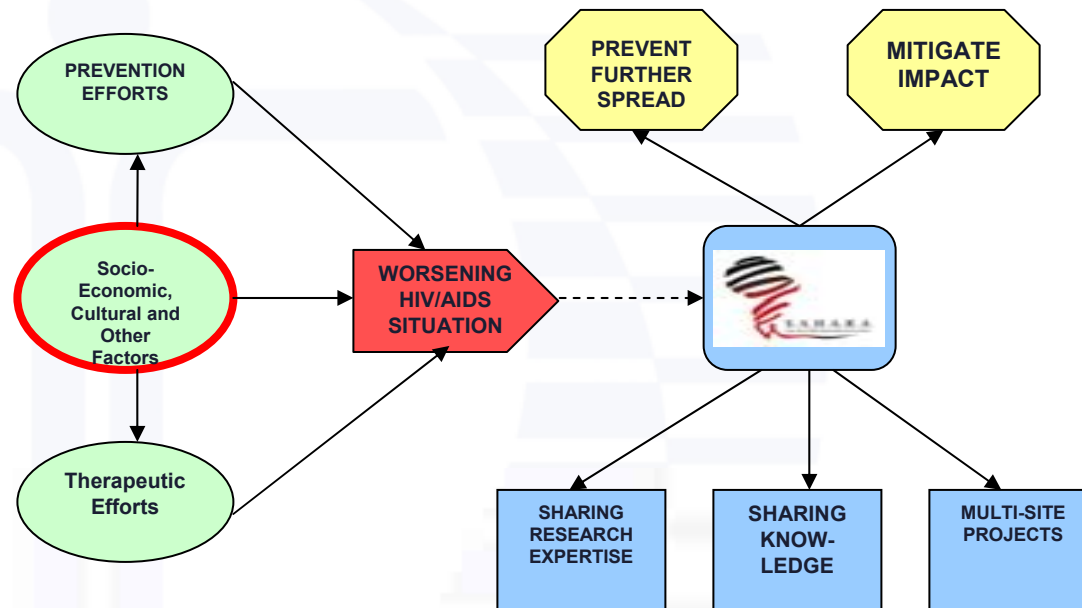
**UNICEF/UNAIDS/WHO/HSRC
EXPERT MEETING ON HIV
INFECTION IN CHILDREN AGED
5 – 14 YEARS**

**Dr. Vincent Agu,
Director/SAHARA**

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ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK, SAHARA



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Mission statement

To bring together key partners (civil society, donor and international organizations, researchers, policy makers, and people living with HIV and AIDS) to influence policy and responses through the production and dissemination of evidence-based research on the social aspects of HIV/AIDS



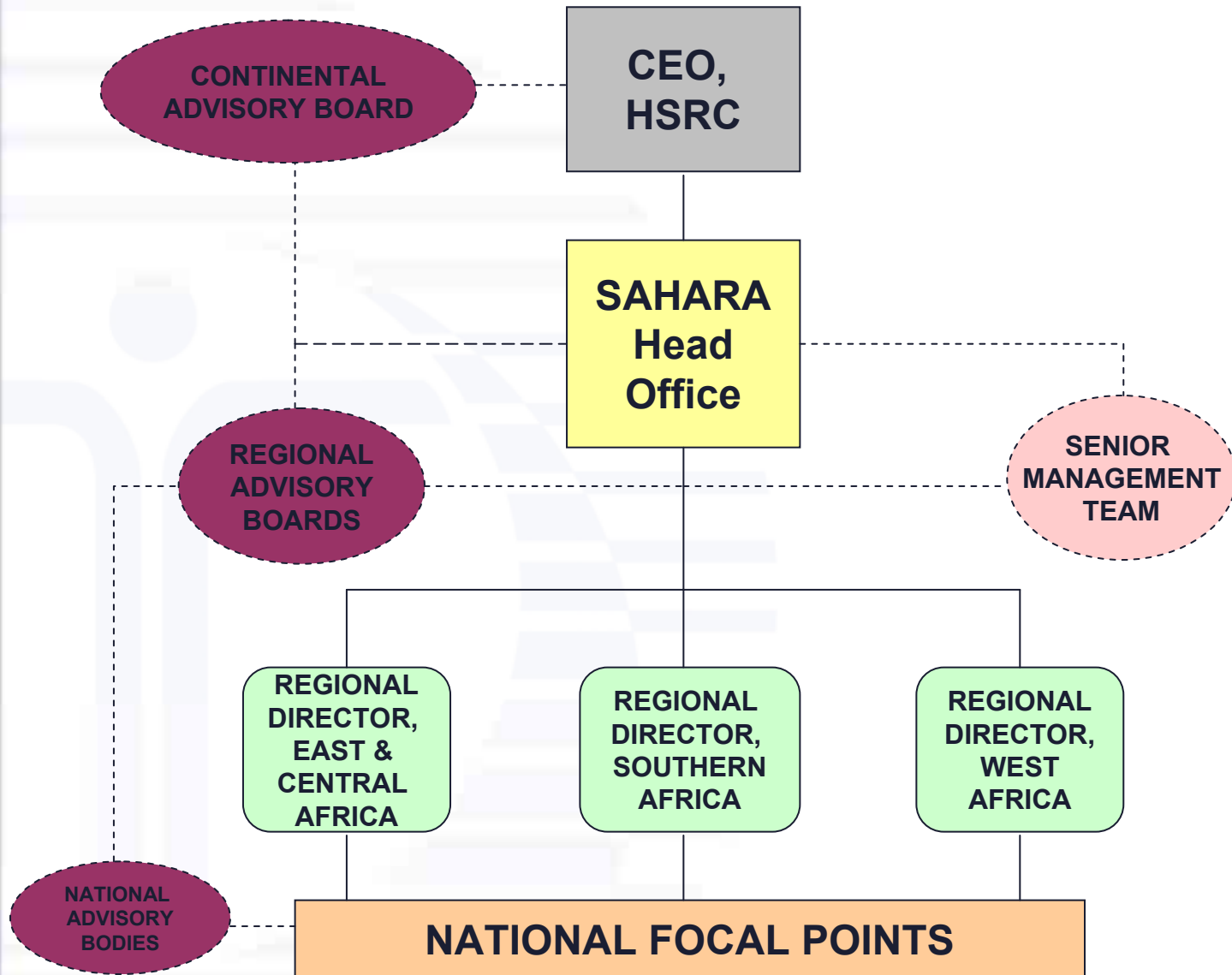
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African Countries with SAHARA Projects & Networks



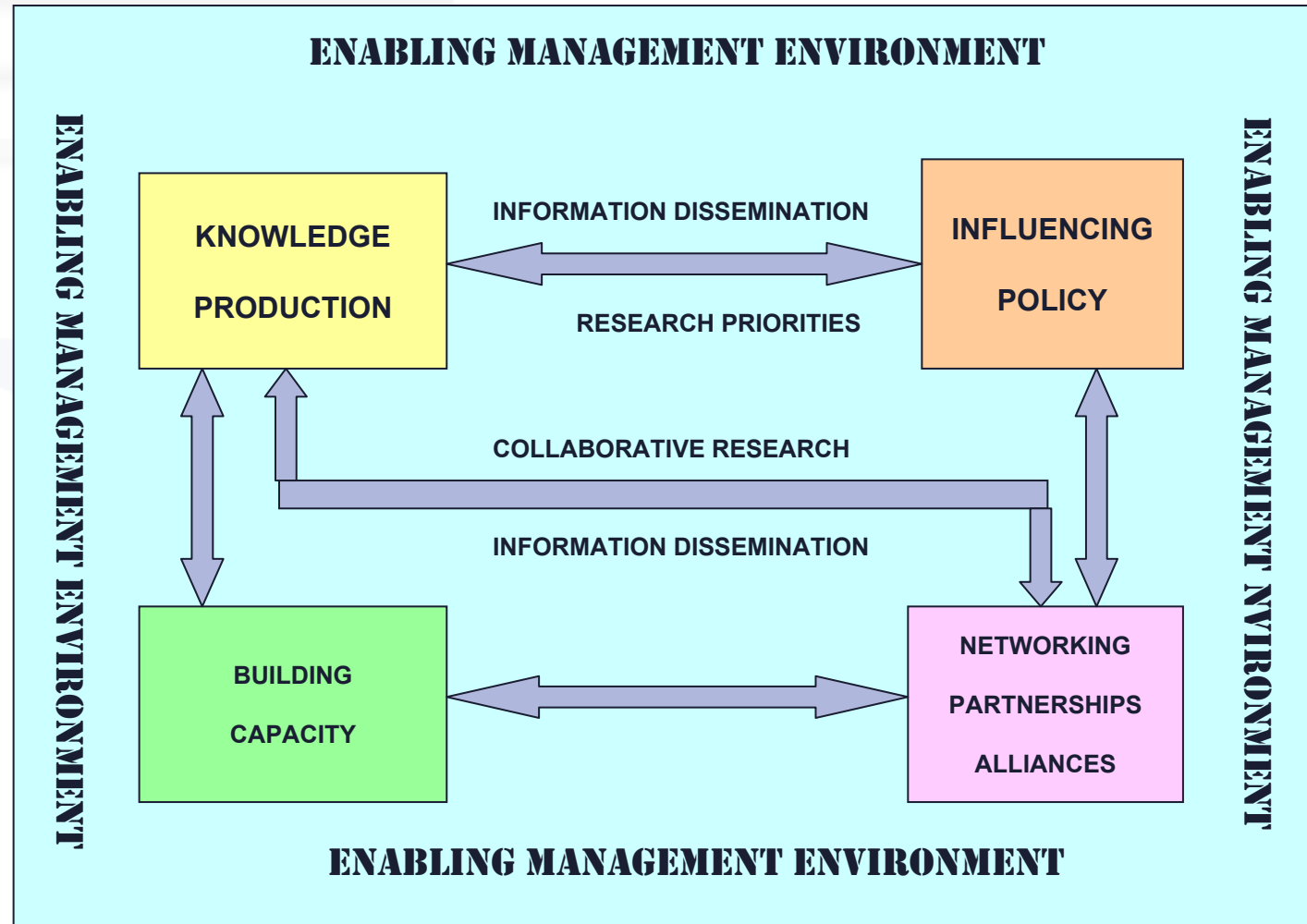
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Governance, Management, Coordination



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CORE FUNCTIONS OF SAHARA



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Core Research Areas

- **Interventions and care for children, including OVC**
- **Stigma and disclosure, particularly among pregnant women**
- **Gender violence and HIV risk reduction**
- **Alcohol and HIV risk reduction**
- **Male circumcision as an HIV prevention tool in cultures that do not circumcise their males**
- **Culture and AIDS**
- **Social Aspects of HIV vaccines**



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HIV Infection in Children

- **Number of children (less than 15 years of age) living with HIV increased from 1.5 million in 2001 to 2.5 million in 2007**
- **Estimated new infections among children declined from 460,000 in 2001 to 420,000 in 2007**
- **High HIV prevalence among children 2-9 years in South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe – higher than would have been expected based on assumed MTCT rates**
- **Substantial number of new infections among children not yet sexually active in South Africa in 2005**
- **Concern about children who avoided MTCT, but became positive before their sexual debut**



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CRITICAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- **What are the incidence and prevalence of HIV infection in children in Southern African countries?**
- **What proportion of new infections in children who are not voluntarily sexually active can be explained on the basis of MTCT (vertical transmission)?**
- **What proportion can be explained on the basis of non-vertical transmission?**
- **What are the risk factors and possible transmission mechanisms for non-vertical infection?**
- **What immediate interventions can be taken to minimize non-vertical transmission?**
- **What is not known about non-vertical transmission?**
- **What studies (and methodologies) can be undertaken to generate data and knowledge about non-vertical transmission?**



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OVERALL AIM

To discuss detailed evidence on why children who are not sexually active are so vulnerable to HIV infection.



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SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- **discuss and interpret available quantitative and qualitative data;**
- **identify appropriate research methodologies for assessing HIV-associated risk exposures;**
- **identify suitable research settings for in-depth studies of potential risk environ;**
- **explore collaborative mechanisms for effective research in the region; and**
- **examine, and provide advice on, the policy and programmatic implications, beyond the research agenda**



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Expected Outcomes

- **Establishment of incidence and prevalence of HIV infection in Children in Southern Africa**
- **Consensus on what is known about HIV Infection in Children**
 - **Proportion of infections explained by vertical transmission**
 - **Proportion of infections explained by non-vertical transmission**
 - **Risk Factors and transmission mechanisms**
- **Consensus on what is not known about HIV Infection in Children (gaps in knowledge)**



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Expected Outcomes Cont'd

- **Agreement on the way forward:**
 - **Immediate actions to be taken to minimize non-vertical infections**
 - **Additional studies or data needed to improve on the knowledge gap**
 - **Collaborative mechanisms to support effective research and programme interventions**
 - **Policy implications of such research**



Expected Outputs

- **Report of the proceedings of the meeting, including all papers presented**
- **Summary report for wider distribution, including placement in SAHARA's website**
- **Publication of the findings of the meeting in the SAHARA Journal**



THANK YOU!!!



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