

UGANDA AIDS COMMISSION

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR HIV/AIDS INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

CONCEPT PAPER, November 2003

1. Background:

- Uganda's multisectoral policy and strategy against HIV/AIDS calls for individual and collective efforts against the epidemic within respective responsibilities and mandates. This approach has generated concerted efforts from a magnitude of stakeholders from both the government and non-government sectors at national, district and community levels. These actors are charged with or take up responsibilities in various areas including advocacy for HIV/AIDS work, policy and program development and implementation in the areas of HIV prevention, care and support for the infected and affected, coordination of partner efforts and conducting research.
- These efforts generate information that constitutes part of the institutional memory and is also fed back into policy and program development and implementation processes at the various levels. Information is also needed from sources external to the organization to share knowledge and learn from experiences.
- Besides program management, information is needed at individual level to build personal knowledge about HIV infection and HIV/AIDS management.

2.0 Information and knowledge management for HIV/AIDS work

- Timely, relevant and accurate information is recognized as a tool in decision making at individual, organization and national program management levels for the prevention of HIV transmission, care of the infected and affected and mitigation of impact of the epidemic. Information is also a key resource in ensuring a coordinated and harmonised response against the epidemic.
- One of the goals of the multisectoral policy was to establish an information base for HIV/AIDS in the country. This has been translated into strategies and activities in successive National HIV/AIDS programs resulting into, among other initiatives, the establishment of the National AIDS Documentation and Information Centre (NADIC), a unit of the Uganda AIDS Commission.
- NADIC is charged with the responsibility of anticipating and responding to information needs of all stakeholders through promotion of appropriate data and information gathering, processing, and dissemination. Within a framework of limited resources, NADIC has endeavoured to serve the needs of various information users mainly targeting policy makers, program managers, HIV/AIDS workers, researchers and the media. Consequently NADIC is recognized as a neutral and central source of information that links actors at various levels.
- Many actors especially in the non-government sector, have also established resources centres that promote access to HIV/AIDS related information to the constituents they serve.
- Similarly different actors exploit various fora to share experiences and knowledge, though systematic knowledge management for HIV/AIDS work has not been consciously developed in the country.

- It is recognised that a lot of information has been generated on the epidemic and the response in the country through research, surveillance systems and documentation of efforts against the epidemic by the various stakeholders. It is however also recognised that most of this information cannot be easily accessed from the various sources while other information is not well documented and packaged to promote sharing of and learning from experiences

2.1 HIV/AIDS Information users

- HIV/AIDS information falls under various categories depending on the users and their information needs. The following can be viewed as the major categories of users: policy makers and other leaders; technical workers and researchers; and individuals.
- HIV/AIDS information can also be specifically packaged for a desired impact on the behaviour of a specific target group, the basis for advocacy and behaviour change communication (BCC) initiatives. This however largely entails an information "push" process to deliver consistent messages for mass consumption as opposed to the pull process that recognizes individual or organizational information needs.
- Whereas many actors have over the years invested resources and consciously conducted advocacy and behaviour change communication campaigns, the area of information documentation and processing to inform policy and program development and management has not been exploited and comprehensively developed to ensure access to appropriate information to the right user, at the right time. Consequently, isolated studies indicate that most actors are not able to access the information they need to carry out HIV/AIDS work, yet barriers to information access are also not well established. This situation is attributed to a number of challenges.

2.2 Challenges to information and knowledge management

- Challenges to knowledge and information work are posed by both the epidemic and the socio-economic environment:
 - The dynamics of the epidemic raise the need to keep abreast with new developments thus the need to actively collect, synthesise and disseminate information. This is however constrained by lack of adequate resources (human, financial and material) to initiate and sustain efforts;
 - The multiplicity of actors demand consistent, relevant and timely information for HIV/AIDS information work to ensure focus on common national goals. The existence of actors at various levels and in different settings also poses the challenge of processing and packaging the same information differently;
 - Low literacy levels and a poor information culture that results in limited information literacy also increase demands for more information processing to add value to information and services to promote information awareness, accessibility and usability;
 - There is limited capacity (human, financial and structural) at organization level to document experiences and promote knowledge sharing among actors. In addition, there is lack of appropriate fora for sharing such knowledge and even lack of even distribution of knowledgeable individuals in various settings;
 - Absence of researched information about the various categories of information users, their specific HIV/AIDS roles, information needs and desired delivery mechanisms;
 - Fragmentation of information management efforts that creates potential for duplication of efforts and wastage of scarce resources;
 - Lack of organizational capacity and initiative for information management. Limited capacity at district level particularly constrains information dissemination efforts to communities;

- Inadequate structural and physical information delivery system at all levels that could be exploited for information access and sharing. Consequently, many actors are not aware of the existence of needed information and/or sources of such information and the appropriate channels for access.

3.0 Proposals for the way forward

Proposals for the way forward are based on the premise that:

- Every actor and every individual is an HIV/AIDS information user and a potential source of information and knowledge. Yet not all potential users are aware of their information needs, thus the need for an information service built around the needs of sensitised users;
- Different information users however fall in various categories that demand unique information services;
- There are many information providers but no single actor can manage an information service capable of satisfying the needs of various categories of users at different levels and settings. Information and knowledge management for HIV/AIDS therefore is not a prerequisite of a single actor but could be coordinated from a central point to ensure consistency and even coverage of services;
- There is need for systematic collaboration between the existing information providers to share resources and expertise to promote optimal use of scarce resources;
- Despite resource constraints, the available technical resource pool and other support could be harnessed to initiate the process for a harmonised information service.

3.1 National strategy for HIV/AIDS information and knowledge management

Against this background, this paper opens a discussion on strengthening the national information base through the development of a comprehensive policy

and strategy that seeks to address the information needs of all actors guided by the national priorities identified in the National Strategic Framework for HIV/AIDS activities.

Aim of the strategy

To establish a streamlined information and knowledge sharing and management system for quick access to consistent, relevant, accurate and timely information to all stakeholders in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the country

The policy and strategy should:

- Identify information implications/needs arising from the goals and strategic objectives of the NSF and the national indicators for monitoring the epidemic and the response.
- Identify various categories of information users and mechanisms for identifying their information needs
- Define the mechanisms for information and knowledge sharing and management at national, district and community levels
- Identify key stakeholders in information delivery and their roles, and define the resource requirements for implementation
- Define benchmarks for identified strategies and objectives

4.0 Time frame

Date	Activity	Expected outcome	Remarks
19 th Jan	Consultative meeting with key stakeholders	Consensus on strategy development	
January-March	- Develop TOR for a technical team to develop strategy - Constitute a technical team to develop the strategy	-TOR Technical Team in place	To draw from the locally existing technical resource in information management from various sectors
Week 2 March	Discussion of the draft strategy by the TRN	Draft policy and strategy	Input into the draft from a wider technical resource

Week 3 March	Submission to the Partnership Committee		Seek further input and guidance on the initiative and process
Week 1 April	Stakeholder consensus workshop on strategy	Final policy and strategy	To promote ownership and seek commitment on strategy implementation
Week 3 April	Production and dissemination of strategy	Copy availed to all identified stakeholders	
Week 3 April	Resource Mobilization	Resource mobilization strategy	To mobilize local and external resources to ensure sustained efforts