

# **Final Abridged Report**

## **Uganda AIDS Commission Review – October 2001**

### ***Introduction***

1. The review of the Uganda AIDS Commission was initiated based on the recognition that the environment in which the national HIV/AIDS response was taking place had shifted considerably over the last few years, and that national coordination capacity was no longer adapted or sufficient to meet these new challenges. In addition, this capacity – while in the process of recovering -- had been severely depleted in the last few years due to poor management and institutional instability.
2. Thus a mission took place between September 17 and 28. The review team consisted of Louis de Merode (consultant to UNAIDS), Dr. Jantine Jacobi (UNAIDS CPA), Ms. Inge Tack (UNAIDS), assisted by Prof. John Rwomushana (UAC) and many other UAC staff.
3. Mission events included interviews, two half-day workshops with UAC staff, and a one-day retreat with about 40 internal and external stakeholder representatives.
4. Against the general background of the national response, this report will present the general messages emerging from the interviews and the retreat. It will conclude with a presentation of the directions along which these can be turned into action so as to produce an impact on the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS coordination in Uganda.

### ***Background***

5. Against the backdrop of considerable advances in the struggle against HIV/AIDS, several shifts have taken place in the national response:
  - The number of active partners has increased several fold
  - New initiatives, strategies and interventions have been introduced, notably in the area of care with the introduction of anti-retrovirals.

- The center of gravity of the national response has shifted from the national to the decentralized level, at District and lower levels, including the grassroots community.
6. Participants at the retreat commented abundantly on the implications of these shifts, thus they will not be analyzed further in this section given that they are being addressed in other fora.

### ***Interview/Consultation Results***

7. UAC organized several consultations prior to the mission, with:
- International NGOs
  - National NGOs
  - 6 Districts
  - Community-based Organizations
  - Several Technical Resource Networks
  - Thematic Technical Advisory Forum
  - Networks of people living with AIDS
8. The following consultations took place during the mission
- UAC staff (half-day workshop)
  - UAC and UNAIDS staff (half-day workshop)
    - Ministries of Presidency; Health; Gender, Labor and Social Development
  - External Partners (UNICEF, UNDP, WHO, USAID, World Bank, DFID)
  - The Parliamentary Committee on Presidential and Foreign Affairs
9. Overall messages are summarize below and organized by topic.
10. **Institutional Architecture.** Several conclusions emerged strongly:
- a) Shifts in UAC's reporting lines between MoH and the Presidency, poor management, a succession of reviews of coordination whose recommendations were not agreed upon by all partners, and debates over the Statute, left many with an impression of confusion over the role and the identity of UAC.
  - b) While its Statute gave UAC ample room to carry out its mission, it also allowed for overlaps between the roles of UAC and those of its partners, especially sectoral ministries.
  - c) The role of the Commission (the UAC's board) was not seen as providing a vision, strong leadership, direction and accountability to the Secretariat, but

rather as advocating for it and for its policies. This effectively left the Secretariat with considerable discretion and little focus or accountability, and also weakened its relations with some of its partners.

d) Finally, views were unanimous that the debate on where to locate the Commission had become futile and that UAC was indeed best situated at the Presidency.

11. These views lead to the need for:

- A more defined vision and roles of UAC, including the revision of the statute.
- Greater accountability.
- The elimination of overlaps and confusion about the roles of UAC and other partners in the HIV/AIDS efforts.
- A strong Commission providing leadership to the UAC Secretariat and holding it accountable.

**12. Priority Functional Areas.** In addition to an unsurprising list of coordination functions such as advocacy; planning, monitoring and evaluation; policy development, resource mobilization and knowledge management (experience sharing), the most notable message to emerge from the interviews is that UAC cannot do it all: it needs to focus on priorities, to delegate (e.g. to Districts), and it needs the support of those it coordinates, for instance through coordination intermediaries (e.g. the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS).

**13. Coordination Mechanisms.** The general view was that there was a lack of well defined, accepted and tested coordination mechanisms, both at the national and at the District levels.

**14. Relationships.** Some powerful conclusions emerged regarding the nature of the relationships UAC maintains with its partners:

- Relationships need to be repositioned at the strategy level, not just information sharing.
- UAC needs to do more than convening: it needs to “bring something to the table”, such as a strategic vision. UAC needs to be in a selling or rallying, not in a buying mode.
- There is a need to build consensus, create buy-in and joint ownership of coordination.
- Relationships with NGOs and civil society generally are under-developed

**15. UAC Capacity in relation to its roles and responsibilities.** Findings here were :

- UAC finds itself recovering from a difficult period where it lost many of its key staff. Morale is improving since new management took over, but it is still low and thus its capacity to act effectively is still constrained.
- Key infrastructure and systems (notably to manage human resources and information) are poor to very poor and need to be rebuilt as a precondition to anything else.
- UAC is still resource-poor in terms of human, financial and material resources.

### ***The Retreat***

16. A one-day retreat took place in Entebbe on September 24, which constituted the culminating event of the mission. Three retreat-related documents are in Annex:

- I. Retreat Agenda
- II. Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities, by coordination function
- III. Directions for coordination Improvement, generated by retreat participants on Post-It-Notes.

17. The gist of the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities carried out by retreat participants was that:

- There is considerable support among its partners for strengthened coordination and a more visible, proactive role for UAC
- There is no clear vision underlying coordination efforts, no answer to the question: what constitutes successful coordination of the national response?
- There is a lack of institutionalization of coordination; too many ad-hoc, one-time, disconnected and poorly followed-up attempts at coordination, unsuitable for producing sustained coordination results
- The danger of complacency, notably, is making coordination more necessary than ever.
- UAC needs help in building the necessary capacity.

18. Finally, the retreat produced a clear set of priorities to strengthen coordination of the national response. These include four main areas:

a) ***Establish a well-defined coordination structure at all levels.*** This would include:

- Designing an overall coordination structure, including well-defined roles for UAC, key partners and partner groups, a clear focus on implementation of the National Strategic Framework, and a systematic, well-articulated coordination process.
- Helping establish a group of representatives speaking for the main partner categories, such as the UN TG, NGOs (international), NGOs (national), the sectors, and possibly the private sector. For most of the process the coordination interaction would involve UAC and the representatives, although a few events would be open to all.
- Designing a suitable coordination mechanism at the decentralized level, building on existing arrangements where they exist; developing corresponding guidelines, specify roles, and provide capacity-building support. This is a massive task. It should start gradually, and should not be expected to produce results in the short term.

b) ***Strengthen critical functions in the coordination system.*** This would include:

- Strategic management, including strategic vision, goals, priorities, and plans, and monitoring and evaluation of implementation
- Resource management, or the funding of the national response
- Policy: taking a lead role in developing an overarching HIV/AIDS policy.; providing inputs and facilitation for multi-sectoral policy development; identifying HIV/AIDS policy gaps.
- Establishing an HIV/AIDS advocacy role, beginning with the development of an overall advocacy strategy
- Strengthening and development of the Knowledge Center at national and district levels respectively, beginning with a repository of who is doing what in the national response.

c) ***Increase UAC capacity in relation to its roles and responsibilities.***

This would include:

- Infrastructure improvements, including facilities. Strengthening of basic systems such as information and human resource management.
- Developing UAC's capacity to fulfill its functional roles as per priority area b)

d) ***Shore up the Institutional Architecture for Coordination.*** This would include:

- Amending the Statute, principally to establish a clear division of labor between UAC and its partners, and provide for a clear, focused role for UAC.
- Creating a strong Commission, to provide the UAC Secretariat with a vision, leadership and accountability.

***From Intention to Action***

19. UAC has been handed a necessary but ambitious agenda for improvement. Yet the very capacity problems that have led to some of the problems will hamper the search for solutions. Indeed, the record shows that previous reviews have led to little or no action. Conditions are more favorable in this instance than they have been in the past, notably because contentious issues have been put to rest and the level of support and goodwill among partners is exceptionally high. Nevertheless, implementation will remain a challenge.

20. The following recommendations addressed at UAC are made in this spirit:

- Implement sequentially. Do not attempt to do all at once.
- Start with high leverage/rapid impact actions. For instance, putting in place a strong Commission will subsequently strengthen the UAC Secretariat's implementation capacity. Designing the coordination structure will be beneficial to many other actions.
- Begin by identifying partners willing to provide expert and financial support. Approach potential partners together, not individually, to ensure the process of partnering is as open and transparent as possible and all partners have equal access to partnering opportunities.

- Develop action plans for each priority area, involving schedules, accountabilities and monitoring indicators. Some tentative and partial action plans are shown in Annex IV
- For each action, develop a consensus-building approach to ensure that in the end the outcome is owned by all partners. Associate partners in the development of proposals, so as to integrate partner perspectives from the start. Be willing to surrender some control over the process in order to create broad ownership of the process and thus greater support.
- Manage UAC's credibility carefully. For instance, convene partners only when UAC is able to show work in progress, not just to share plans or intentions (this recommendation is borrowed from UAC's Director-General).
- Be transparent and accountable for program management, to build trust and momentum with the Commission and among partners.

**21. First Step: Consensus Workshop by October 22.** The first step should be to convene rapidly (by October 22) a consensus workshop with all of UAC's partners potentially interested in supporting the coordination improvement program with staff resources, financial support or expertise. Objectives of the workshop would be to:

- Receive general feed-back on the proposed program and gauge the level of support
- Mobilize expertise and financial support for the various actions as needed
- Staff the various task forces and working groups
- Agree on periodic meetings to update partners on progress made, future plans and further support requirements.

22. This concludes our report. We wish to thank Dr Apuuli and his staff for their exemplary collaboration.

### HIV/AIDS Response Coordination

A partnership between government, civil society, private sector, external partners and PHA organizations, involving:

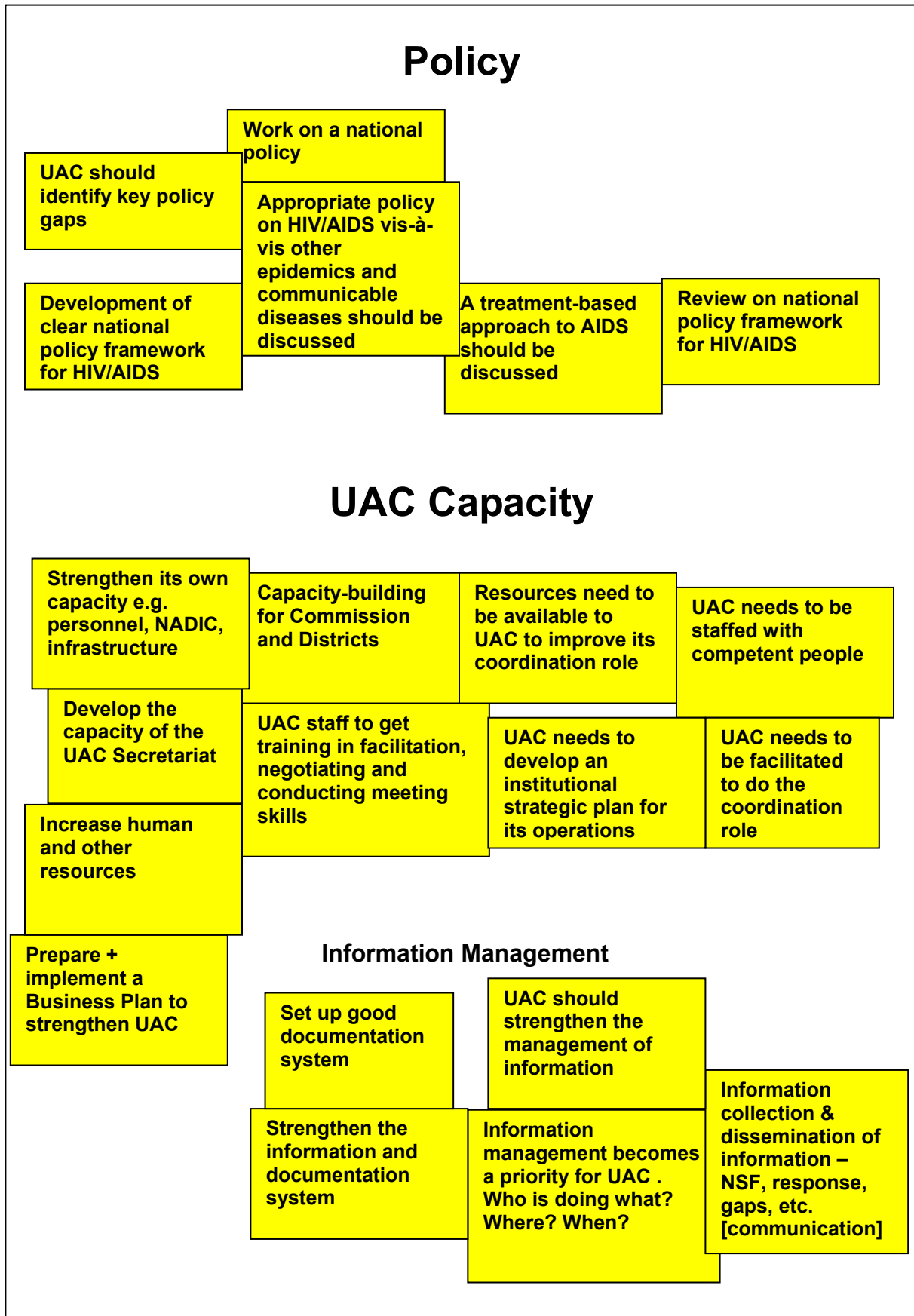
- Strategic management including:
  - Vision, Strategic Goals, Priorities and Objectives
  - Plans
  - M&E
- Policy input and facilitation
- Advocacy
- Resource mobilization
- Development of partnerships
- Knowledge management

Coordination includes the following elements::

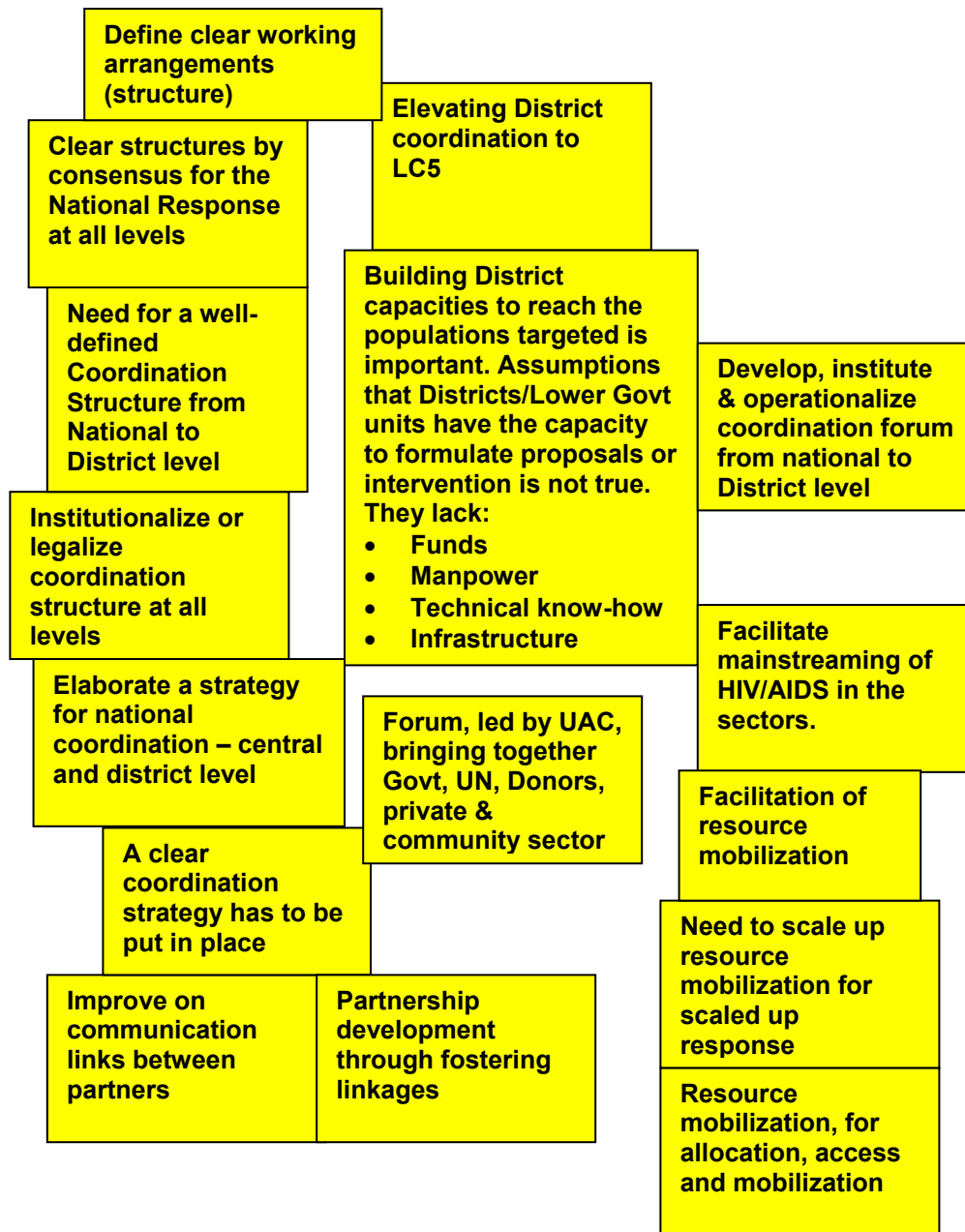
- Coordination mechanisms administered by UAC and its partners
- Coordination roles or functions, affecting the relationship between UAC and its partners
- UAC capacity to fulfill its coordination roles and functions



Directions for Coordination Improvements

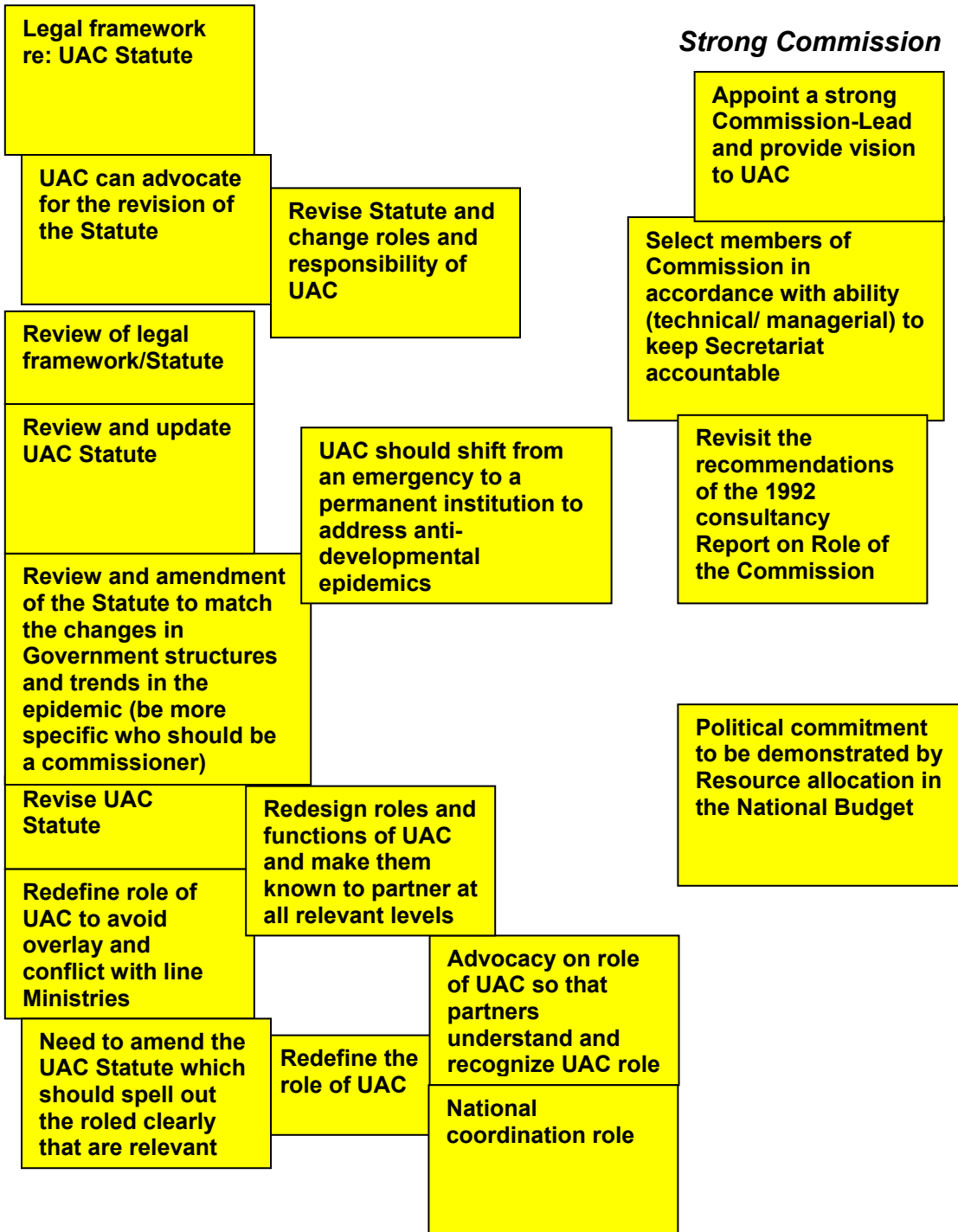


# Coordination Structure



# Institutional Architecture

## Statute/Role



# Roles, Critical Functional Areas

## Advocacy

Set up advocacy and media strategy

Advocacy – social mobilization for commitment

Advocacy strategy

Periodic experience sharing

Multi-sector plans, developed & costed across line Ministries + within Districts in accordance with National Strategic Framework

UAC to coordinate the production of annual report on progress in implementing the National framework, progress against indicators, etc.. To include inputs from sectors, summaries of District progress, NGOs, etc.

Strengthen M&E

M&E strategy, including reporting guidelines

Strengthen monitoring

Work on a M&E system

## M & E

UAC to establish & chair a regular monthly meeting to bring together representatives of stakeholders to monitor progress in implementing the strategic framework

UAC & partners to monitor & evaluate National Strategic Framework on regular basis.

Facilitate Joint Evaluation of Planning for HIV/AIDS and UAC to develop and share workplan

Facilitate performance review of sectors including resource mobilization

Need for clear M&E guidelines and terms of reporting

Monitoring & Evaluation of NSF



## ANNEX III

### Action Plans

Priority Area	Action	Steps	Time (By)	Respons.	Expected Output
<b>a) Establish a well-defined coordination structure at all levels</b>	<i>i) Designing an overall coordination structure, including well-defined roles for UAC, key partners and partner groups, a clear focus on implementation of the National Strategic Framework, and a systematic, well-articulated coordination process.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Constitute stakeholder working group</li> <li>2. Draw up Terms of Reference and Work Plan</li> <li>3. Seek consensus around TOR and work plan</li> <li>4. Design structure</li> <li>5. Seek consensus around structure</li> <li>6. Implement structure</li> </ol>	Mar 02	UCA/UNAIDS	Well designed overall coordination structure in place including well-defined roles for UAC, key partners and partner groups, with a clear focus on implementation of the National Strategic Framework.
	<i>ii) Helping establish a group of representatives speaking for the main partner categories, such as the UN TG, NGOs (international), NGOs (national), the sectors, and possibly the private sector.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Help UN TG redefine its vision, role</li> <li>2. Support establishment of comparable groups for other partner categories.</li> </ol>	Mar 02	UNAIDS/UAC UAC/UNAIDS	Stake holder working group in place Number of comparable groups established
	<i>iii) Designing a suitable coordination mechanism at the decentralized level, building on existing arrangements where they exist. Developing corresponding guidelines, specify roles, and providing capacity-building support.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recruit consultant to produce District guidelines and a corresponding implementation plan.</li> <li>2. Guidelines produced</li> <li>3. Consensus-building workshop</li> <li>4. Implementation</li> </ol>	Mar/Apr 02	UAC/ LG  Consult/UAC/L G UAC/UNAIDS/L G	Well designed coordination mechanism at decentralized level in place  Guidelines on roles and capacity building support developed

<b>Priority Area</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Steps</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Expected Output</b>
<b>b) Strengthen critical functions in the coordination system</b>	<i>i) Strategic management, including strategic vision, goals, priorities, and plans, and monitoring and evaluation of implementation</i>	1. Draw on USAID-sponsored work on monitoring	Apr 02	USAID/UAC	UAC Strategic plan developed and being implemented
	<i>ii) Resource mobilization, or the funding of the national response</i>	1. Appoint Task Force to be led by Ministry of Finance 2. Build overall resource mobilization into the coordination structure (see a )	Mar 02	UAC/Min. of Finance	Resources for the national response mobilized and allocated
	<i>iii) Taking a lead role in developing an overarching multi-sectoral HIV/AIDS policy and identifying HIV/AIDS policy gaps.</i>	1. Consulting over the development of an overarching (multisectoral) HIV/AIDS policy, and identification of policy gaps. 2. Defining policy role of UAC 3. Consensus-building	Apr 02	UNDP/UAC	Overarching (multisectoral) HIV/AIDS policy developed and operationalized  Policy role of UAC clearly defined
	<i>iv) Establishing an HIV/AIDS advocacy/communications role</i>	1. Secure funds for consultant 2. Complete overall advocacy strategy 3. Consensus-building 4. Finalize concept paper on communications strategy for education 5. Identify next steps 6. Mobilize resources for next steps 7. Development of comprehensive communications strategy	Aug 02		National Comprehensive Communications Strategy for all levels developed and operationalized

	<i>v) Strengthening Knowledge Centre at national level and developing centres at district level, beginning with a inventory of who is doing what in the national response.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Secure infrastructure</li> <li>2. Carry out and capture inventory</li> <li>3. Update continuously</li> <li>4. Design knowledge management process and capability</li> </ol>	May 02	UAC/USAID (?)	<p>National Knowledge Centre strengthened</p> <p>A number of district Knowledge centres developed</p> <p>Tracking study finalized and disseminated</p>
<b>c) Increase UAC capacity</b>	<i>vi) Infrastructure improvements, including facilities. Strengthening of basic systems such as information and human resource management.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seek partners views</li> <li>2. Organizational assessment to identify needs and draw up basic capacity building plan</li> <li>3. Implement plan</li> </ol>	Sept 02	UAC/DFID/USAID (?)	<p>- Better housing infrastructure for UAC</p> <p>- Better facilities and Equipment</p> <p>- Improved UAC human resource ( e.g. UAC staff trained)</p> <p>-Improved collaboration with partners</p>
	<i>Functional capacity</i>	Follow up actions under b) with actions to create corresponding UAC capacity	Oct 02	UAC/Partners	
<b>d) Shore up the Institutional Architecture for Coordination</b>	<i>Create Strong Commission</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Appoint new Commission</li> <li>2. Orientation of Commission members</li> </ol>	Dec 01		New Commission members appointed and oriented
	<i>Amend Statute</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consult Attorney General</li> <li>2. Draw up overall schedule of steps required</li> <li>3. Build systematic consultation with key constituencies at each step through working group with PLWA, sectors, etc..</li> </ol>	Aug 02	<p>UAC</p> <p>UAC</p> <p>UAC</p>	UAC statute reviewed