

Mainstreaming Local Government Responses to HIV and AIDS: The role of Technical Support Agencies

Input paper prepared for the Learning Event of the
HIV/AIDS and Local Government Learning Network

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Centre for Municipal Research and Advice (CMRA)
Democracy in Africa Research Unit (DARU)
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 **HIV/AIDS AND
LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEARNING NETWORK**

1. Introduction

HIV and AIDS has become one of the biggest challenges that has ever faced our society. Political and socio-economic configuration of our society has been severely disintegrated. Government, civil society and private sectors are equally threatened by this disease.

The HIV and AIDS pandemic is inherently linked with poverty, cultural behaviour, beliefs, social and economical inequalities between women and men. This pandemic has the potential of reversing some of the progressive gains made by our democratic government.

To reverse the impact of HIV and AIDS pandemic, developing countries such as South Africa need to develop comprehensive intervention mechanisms that bring together government, civil society and private sectors in well co-ordinated partnerships.

The response to HIV and AIDS has registered some significant gains in as far as prevention, treatment, care and support. However, these initiatives need to be escalated to higher levels. However, resources tend to be insufficient.

The South African government has committed itself to fighting HIV and AIDS through the social sector's National integrated Plan (NIP) which utilises conditional grants to provinces to ensure the realisation of national goals. These conditional grants are supplemented by provincial resources that are committed to the implementation of HIV and AIDS programmes.

In most instances government resources are not sufficient enough to effectively cover the societal needs and challenges, in this case the donor funds play a critical role in ensuring that HIV and AIDS programmes are implemented. These funds provide additional resources to governments in

their fight against the HIV and AIDS pandemic to ensure that the national goals are realised.

Countries need to plan, budget and properly co-ordinate national responses with or without donor funding. Equally important is the co-ordination and planning of donor funding to avoid duplication, competition and clash of national and donor interests.

Following the adoption of the AMICALL declaration, most countries in Africa have initiated processes to develop and implement multi-sectoral plans and strategies. However, national governments are not well positioned to guide and implement programmes based on local needs.

Local government is the sphere of government closest to people and it is strategically located to lead an effective response to the pandemic. More and more municipalities are beginning to understand their mandate and are acknowledging their role in mainstreaming HIV and AIDS into their programmes. However, most municipalities are faced with service delivery challenges and insufficient resources to even deliver on their core mandate.

Municipalities play a critical role in the co-ordination of local responses and mitigation of the impact of the disease in our communities through mainstreaming HIV and AIDS into the Municipal IDPs and LED strategies. But this role is being hamstrung by lack of resources focusing at equipping managers to (when doing planning for each municipal department) identify strategic areas for mainstreaming with existing plans aside from integrating new special projects or programmes.

This paper seeks to diagnose the much talked about weaknesses in the municipal response to HIV and AIDS and the impact of donor funding. Over the past few years we realised the extent to which we can maximise

efficient and effective usage of resources. The challenge has been lack of funding to provide relevant technical capacity training that is responsive to the needs of the society. To develop a clearer analysis of the municipal response, we need to look at various factors which among other things include resource mobilisation and the role of donor funders and their agencies. In undertaking this task, we need to look at the following critical issues:

- Unpack donor funding issues in local government by describing challenges in tracking donor funds going to HIV and AIDS and its impact.
- Outline the role of local government in donor co-ordination for HIV and AIDS in local government.
- Provide a brief analysis of the current status of the donor support at local government.
- Give an update on challenges, limitations, opportunities and recommendations of the donor assistance in local government.

As we deal with these issues, we need to ponder about a number of critical questions that are associated with the donor funding and the development of our society. Central to that, the following questions are important:

- What is donor funding and what does it seek to achieve?
- Where does this donor funding coming from – what is the agenda of the people behind the fund?
- Are these donated funds reaching the targeted communities that deserve them?
- Who spends the HIV and AIDS resources and for whose benefit?

These questions are just but a few of the questions that we in our daily programmes and engagements with government and civil society organisations keep on coming up. We might not have answers today but as

we continue with our work, we might have to provide guidance on them as they have serious impact on the direction that our society takes.

2. Definition of donor agencies and partnership

As HIV infection increases, the funding for HIV and AIDS related programmes is also increasing. For 2008 it is estimated that about \$ 22-billion will be required to fund HIV and AIDS programmes in the low and middle income countries. This figure is \$ 7 billion more than what was estimated for 2006.

The big question is where does this money come from and a simple answer is, this money comes from the international community such as USAID, PEPFAR, DFID etc. Funding for HIV and AIDS related programmes is usually channelled through four main streams which are;

- Donations from national governments;
- Multilateral funding organisations;
- Private sector funding; and
- Domestic spending

The next critical question that we need to address is what informs the distribution of donor funds. Different donors use different criteria to determine the policies that guide its distribution to different countries. Most funders are influenced by political and ethical motives which in most cases results in an unequal distribution of resources. Some of these factors include:

- HIV Prevalence: most funding institutions tend to focus in areas where there is high rate of infection;
- Geographic areas: some donors prefer to fund certain areas especially where there is media coverage;

- Type of HIV work: different donors are attracted by different kinds of HIV work that appeals to their interests.
- Perceptions of good governance: donors will always look at whether their resources will be used for the intended objectives and they are not used to pursue goals and agenda that contradict theirs. The existence of good administrative systems also influences the distribution of resources.

The above criteria has an impact in the manner in which municipalities attract or get funding. Municipalities in the rural areas tend to suffer as they are not able to meet one or more of the identified criteria. It should be noted though that there are funders who have taken a keen interest in the development of rural municipalities and need administrative support. The Consolidated Municipal Transformation Programme spearheaded by the Department of Provincial and Local government has assisted a number of municipalities in developing strategies and plans to attract potential funding.

3. Role of Donor agencies

The next important question is how these resources filter down to those who need them. This is a very critical issue as it has got to do with the impact and sustainability of programmes and projects. Most large donor organisations tend not to link directly with organisations; instead they make use of intermediaries.

This arrangement tends to create problems as it becomes complicated to get resources to those that are directly involved in service delivery. The use of intermediaries sometimes tends to be complicated, time-consuming and expensive.

In some other instances, the use of intermediaries is affected by issues such as administrative weaknesses, lack of and skills within the human resources, challenges of political leadership, infrastructure and legislative processes.

As the money moves from one hand to another, extra charges and costs are added; as a result it gets spent even before it reaches its final destination. There are no clear records of how much money is lost during this period of changing hands. Delays in transferring monies from the funders to agencies and ultimately to the end users has serious impacts on the service delivery and sustainability of programmes especially by the small NGOs and CBOs who most of the time do not have reserves.

Poor understanding of the conditions and lack of capacity of some of the programme drives by the agencies has resulted in a number of initiatives by local communities to collapse.

4. Current status

Most HIV and AIDS initiatives in our country are funded by government resources with some initiatives getting direct funding from funders. One of the challenges is the monitoring of the direct funding to NGOs and CBOs. There is no centralised reporting mechanism that can assist in monitoring funding of HIV and AIDS programmes especially to NGOs and other civil society formations.

At local level Local and District AIDS councils are finding it difficult to implement joint programmes due to unwillingness of civil society organisations to disclose their finances. In most multi-sectoral partnerships, civil society organisations look upon government for the funding of joint programmes.

Most municipalities in our country have established Multi- sectoral local AIDS councils, and municipal council are expected to co-ordinate these structures. It is these councils that are supposed to drive and co-ordinate programmes and projects. In some of these councils there are tensions over the ownership and sharing of resources. Civil society organisations (especially the ones that receive funding from international organisations) tend to undermine and not participate in these important structures.

This is a serious challenge and we are not advocating for central control of funding to civil society organisation but some kind of declaration that will help to ensure that there is a fair distribution of resources and programmes covering all sections of our society.

This can also assist in reducing the level of monies returned to funders as a result of not being used.

The second critical area is the delay that organisations experience in transfers of monies between funders, agencies and the recipients. Most organisations especially those that have limited capacity are unable to meet deadlines set by the funders and when the money finally reaches them, their time is short. Funders and donor agencies tend to focus on projects and programmes neglecting capacity building that is needed to ensure effective responses to the HIV and AIDS pandemic. This in most instances results in the collapse of programmes and projects as soon as the funding dries up.

The last area of concern is the strict and stringent conditions and requirements that international donors set for local structures. In most cases these conditions are not informed by the prevailing conditions in our areas and capacity of various structures including municipalities.

5. Challenges and opportunities

Municipalities as the closest sphere of government to the people, given capacity can play a critical role in as far as coordination of programmes and projects run by recipients of donor funding and monitoring if beneficiaries are receiving the intended support.

Domestic and international funding is critical in the fight against the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS in our society. There are a number of factors that work against the effectiveness of the partnership between national and local government and these include:

- The poor understanding of Local government and its strategic location in ensuring effective transformation of our society, service delivery improvement and co-ordination of the civil society initiatives;
- The inability of funders and agencies to be flexible and development of a deeper understanding of the nature of and how things are done;
- Funders and funding agencies need to work closely with the local structures in identifying and responding to local needs and challenges.
- Support and interventions need to be directed at the right level;
- Identifying and responding to local government needs by providing appropriate support at the right support level.
- Implementation- gap" between planning and resources that exist at national level, compared with the resources and services available at the local government level and community level.

6. Recommendations

- Bridging the gaps between national, local resource and capacity and the need for decentralization of HIV funding and support:
 - It is in the interest of National government and various development agencies to participate or be informed by local planning and needs which in most cases must be contained in the IDPs of different municipalities;

- Funders and funding agencies need to conduct research on best practices in donor support and build on them instead of coming up with ready made systems that are not informed by the realities of the different countries and communities;
- The approach of funders needs to be informed by the community demands and should ensure lasting capacity development that can sustain programmes beyond funding period;
- Proper co-ordination of funding and funding institutions as well as the technical support is one of the key pillars for sustainable development;
- Countries, government and civil society organisations have their own priorities based on the needs and challenges faced by the communities they serve, it is imperative for funding institutions to recognise them and build on them;
- There is a need to replicate best practices and ensure sustainability of programmes that are successful;
- Prepare local government for exit of donor support
- Context informed based support and sustainable programme
- List of existing planning tools and government framework to inform development agenda
- Develop partnership rather than dependency- definition: well managed process and communication, role definition and clarification according to responsibilities
- Adopt a systematic approach of learning by doing!

Mainstreaming HIV and AIDS by all municipalities, government institutions and private sector is critical in ensuring that the fight against the disease is escalated to another level. Mainstreaming will ensure that our institutions are not overly dependent for the success of our programmes.

Effective co-ordination of donor funding is essential if we want to ensure that our programmes reach as many areas as possible.

There is a need to ensure that our organisations are well capacitated especially in the areas of budgeting, resource mobilisation and management of limited resources.

Most of our resources are wasted through competition that is not necessary and duplication of programmes that leave rural and semi-urban areas not covered by our programmes.