

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO HIV/AIDS**

### **PREAMBLE:**

HIV/AIDS is an important issue for local government as it affects them much in particular and the whole country in general.

According to the statistics from National Commission Against Aids (CNLS) totals to 13.5% in the whole country, with one out of ten adults being infected with HIV/AIDS, and majority of this, 70% are living below the poverty line (1999) statistics.

The research which was carried out in 1998 showed that in urban areas it was 11.6% while in the rural areas by them it was 1.3% which is far different from the present.

In 1997 there was another research carried out and the results were as follows:

- Urban areas 11.6%
- Rural areas 10.9%
- Semi urban 13.9%

This was the result of 1994 war and Genocide.

### **Observation:**

The scourge of HIV / AIDS in towns is reducing while in rural areas and semi rural HIV/AIDS statistics show that it is going on increasing.

The gap between HIV prevalence rates in urban and rural areas has closed revealing increased prevalence throughout the country.

Woman particularly are at a risk with more than one quarter of all pregnant women testing positive for HIV (1997) and young people are also vulnerable with one out of ten infected (1997).

Rwanda indicated its commitment to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic since 1996. An educational campaign was launched at the time, along with a multisectoral strategic plan for HIV prevention up to date. The national Aids programme focuses its efforts on coordination, monitoring and evaluation of HIV prevention, research, mobilization and surveillance.

The regional Health Department implement preventive activities. The national Aids Commission has been put in place to carry out the research as regards to HIV in the whole country.

However these efforts are challenged by lack of voluntary testing and counseling. Aids is still somewhat stigmatized, discriminative and tests are not available in all health centers or District Hospitals.

## **The Local Authority response towards the HIV/AIDS**

- ❖ Mobilisation for the HIV victims to form their own associations which facilitate them to get the treatment easily.
- ❖ Formation of Anti aids clubs in all sectors and schools throughout the District
- ❖ Sensitisation of masses for voluntary testing

### **1. The district work place policy as approved by the government**

Objectives: The case study “Nyarugenge District”

- ❖ To provide a foundation for sustainable HIV/AIDS education programmes and services in the work place.
- ❖ To promote the active involvement at all levels in the development, implementation of HIV/AIDS prevention, management and care programmes in the work place.
- ❖ To promote consistence response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic to all workers.
- ❖ To articulate the District’s practices as they relate to workers who are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS.

### **2. Task team committee against HIV/AIDS**

It is among the objectives of Rwandese Association of Local Government (RALGA) to encourage task team committee against Aids.

- ❖ Formation of executive Committee chaired by the Vice Mayor in charge of Social Affairs
- ❖ Representatives of all the departments of the District
- ❖ Representatives of all Anti Aids clubs in the District
- ❖ Representatives of people living with HIV/AIDS
- ❖ Church leaders
- ❖ Non Government Organisations dealing with HIV/AIDS

### **Its responsibilities are as follows**

- ❖ To initiate, implement, monitor and evaluate on going basis on HIV/AIDS program in work place.
- ❖ Develop and implement sustainable information, education and counselling (IEC) programme in the work place.
- ❖ Create a conducive environment in the work place which is a non discriminatory to HIV infected workers.
- ❖ To provide material and other resources to improve health and safely precautions in the work place.
- ❖ Constantly monitor the trends and impact of HIV/AIDS in the work place.
- ❖ Not to divulge workers with HIV status without the worker’s consent.
- ❖ To ensure that all workers have the access to and be provided with sufficient and up to date information on HIV/AIDS.
- ❖ Develop, implement, coordinate and monitor HIV/AIDS prevention, care programmes and activities at the District and Sector levels in line with the national policy on HIV/AIDS.

- ❖ Make available and free of charge condoms to all workers by placing them at strategic places for easy access.

### **Priority areas**

Stigmatisation, discrimination and human rights. That is, people living with HIV/AIDS shall not be discriminated or denied their rights at work.

### **3. Prevention strategy**

- ❖ There has been mobilisation for condom use to people who cannot abstain or use other measures.
- ❖ Sensitisation for voluntary testing to young men and women who want to get married.
- ❖ Voluntary testing and counselling to already married couples.
- ❖ Use of anti retro viral drugs.

### **4. Care and support to Aids victims**

- ❖ Equal benefits at work like any other workers till the last minute.
- ❖ Also these people benefit from medical care in Health centres and hospitals around the Districts
- ❖ They also get the social and psychological support from the local administration, by assisting them in different fields.

### **Obstacles**

- ❖ There is limited resources to the organisation incharge of carrying out the Anti Aids programmes and even to the local authorities hence a continuation of the scourge.
- ❖ People's refusal to reveal their health status, by not voluntarily carrying out blood tests.
- ❖ Slow behavioural change, people do not change their behaviour towards the sexual relations.
- ❖ People do not follow the prescribed medical instructions and the end result is prolonged illness.

### **Question that was asked to Rwanda:**

How Rwandan Politicians involve themselves in the fight against HIV/AIDS?

There is a step forward being taken by the Rwandan Politicians in the fight against Aids, examples that can be cited are;

- There is a political will from the President of the Republic himself
- Among the Cabinet Ministers, there is a minister in charge of the fight against HIV/AIDS
- In the Parliament there is a commission which is supposed to go down in the village to sensitize masses in fighting HIV AIDS.
- The office of the First Lady is an advocacy for HIV /AIDS patients and it also supports local associations of Aids Victims.
- There is also a big part on national budget to fight against HIV/AIDS.

