

DECENTRALISED RESPONSE TO

HIV and AIDS

In recent years, many municipalities have started formulating and implementing their HIV and AIDS response strategies and much progress has been made. However, most are still grasping with the issue and responses are often limited in nature, concentrating on some aspects of a comprehensive AIDS response but not yet to the extent of a well-coordinated and integrated HIV and AIDS strategy.

Several initiatives support and strengthen municipal responses to the epidemic. In this regard, the 'Decentralised HIV and AIDS Response in South Africa' is a three-year donor-funded project implemented in six selected municipalities. It is co-ordinated by the Centre for Municipal Research and Advice (CMRA), a joint initiative of SALGA and VNG-International and financed by the Royal Netherlands Embassy.

Background

The project aims to strengthen the institutional capacity of municipalities to respond to the epidemic by providing technical support and advice in planning, co-ordination, facilitation and implementation. It aims at structural and sustainable interventions that will improve and strengthen the municipal capacity to respond to the HIV and AIDS epidemic, identify best practices and provide lessons learnt and guidelines to other municipalities not taking part in the project through the development and distribution of a booklet at the project's end.

The six pilot sites are Buffalo City Local Municipality, Eastern Cape; Hibiscus Coast Local Municipality, Kwazulu-Natal; Emalahleni Local Municipality, Eastern Cape; Ethekewini Metropolitan Municipality, Kwazulu-Natal; Madibeng Local Municipality, North West Province; and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality, Eastern Cape.

Project objectives and activities

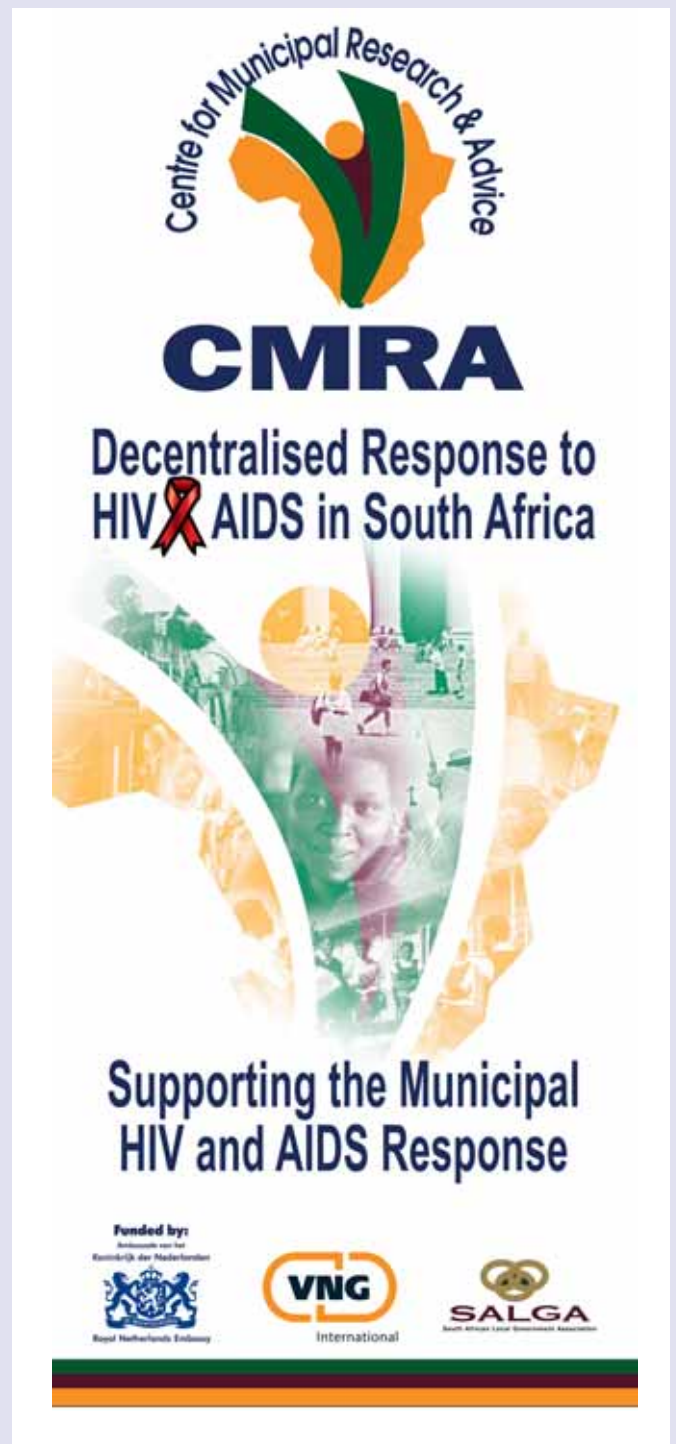
The overall project objective is to establish a more effective, HIV- and AIDS-responsive local government by strengthening municipal capacity in HIV and AIDS policy formulation, service provision and co-ordination. CMRA has appointed local project co-ordinators in each municipality, who work closely with the municipal staff responsible for the HIV and AIDS programmes. The project activities concentrate on:

Establishing/strengthening interdepartmental HIV and AIDS forums

An interdepartmental HIV and AIDS forum serves as the primary structure to co-ordinate the mainstreaming of HIV and AIDS responses by departments within the municipality.

Mainstreaming can be defined as:

A process whereby organizations [departments] analyse how HIV and AIDS impacts on themselves as organizations [departments] and on their work, currently and in the future, and determine how they can respond in terms of their core work and their comparative advantages (adapted from Elsey and Kutengale, 2003:12, HEARD).



Mainstreaming is often misunderstood as the sole responsibility of human resources, or as focusing on workplace matters only. Instead, mainstreaming means that each municipal department looks at its own core responsibilities through an HIV and AIDS lens and integrates HIV/AIDS into the core work of the department. This does not mean that the Department of Roads and Transport starts running a mobile unit. It could mean that the department builds a bridge between a community that is separated from the nearest clinic by a busy highway.

While the structure differs for each municipality, it ideally consists of at least one representative at decision-making level

from each municipal department. The structure would further oversee the development of mainstreaming action plans by each department and the incorporation of these plans into the integrated development plan. A four-day training workshop was run in all municipalities in the second half of 2006 to establish or strengthen the interdepartmental HIV and AIDS forums and to broaden the understanding of HIV and AIDS mainstreaming. More attention will be paid to the concept of mainstreaming and IDFs in a forthcoming issue of the *LG Bulletin*.

Establishing/strengthening local/metro AIDS councils

Working with local stakeholders in various sectors, the local and metro AIDS councils play a crucial role in the multisectoral response to HIV and AIDS. Their mandate, derived from the South African National AIDS Council, is to:

1. advise government on policy;
2. advocate for effective involvement of sectors and organisations in the implementation of programmes and strategies;
3. create and strengthen partnerships for an expanded response among all sectors;
4. monitor the implementation of the Strategic Plan in all sectors of society;
5. mobilise resources for the implementation of AIDS programmes; and
6. recommend appropriate research.

While many municipalities and metros have their own AIDS councils, some are more effective than others. Many local and metro AIDS councils struggle with poor attendance, poor participation and weak implementation of the mandate due to lack of resources and skills. To strengthen the functioning of the local and metro AIDS councils, this project has embarked on a partnership with the Institute for Democracy in South Africa to bring new life into the structures, putting people at the centre and transforming the councils into catalysts for unlocking citizens' power. The approach will be discussed in more detail in a later issue of the *LG Bulletin*.

Implementing a pilot project for HIV and AIDS service delivery

The project also co-ordinates the implementation of pilot projects aimed at improved service delivery. Based on their local situation and needs, the participating municipalities have chosen the following projects:

- *Buffalo City Municipality*: A project for the deaf and blind affected by and infected with HIV and AIDS, with the aim of making information education and communication materials more accessible to this group.

- *Hibiscus Coast Local Municipality*: An HIV and AIDS prevention and awareness programme at the Municipal Multipurpose Centre.
- *Emalahleni Local Municipality*: an outreach service to remote communities by a mobile unit
- *Ethekwini Metropolitan Municipality, Kwazulu-Natal*: an educational and support programme for truck drivers within the port areas of the metro.
- *Madibeng Local Municipality*: A programme for farm workers on HIV and AIDS prevention and care.
- *Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality*: Kicking AIDS Out: Using sport as a medium to target youth with HIV and AIDS prevention and support messages.

Situational analysis

In the first semester of 2006, a baseline assessment in the pilot municipalities assessed the *status quo* and the strengths, weaknesses and needs of the municipalities (see www.cmra.org.za). Forthcoming issues of the *LG Bulletin* will discuss the response of each of the participating municipalities including the particular challenges and achievements with which they are faced. Overall, it was found that the municipalities recognise the impact of the epidemic on their constituencies and workforce and have taken several initiatives to act on this. While some had made more progress than others and bearing in mind that the appropriate response depends on the characteristics of each municipality, it was found that some challenges are shared, notably limited funding, understaffing, poor performance of the AIDS councils and poor accessibility of services for parts of the communities.

Furthermore, departmental mainstreaming of HIV and AIDS was either weak or absent, approached in the main by not more than one or two departments and still very much considered a health and workplace issue rather than a concern for each department. At this level a lot of opportunities for an improved and integrated HIV and AIDS response are open to explore and act on.

Support to Salga

In addition to the support to the selected pilot municipalities, CMRA will work together with Salga in strengthening its role as disseminator of information in the local government field.

Contributions to the *LG Bulletin* are part of this, as are an HIV and AIDS section on the Salga website and a support programme for Salga's provincial HIV and AIDS co-ordinators.

Salga's response to HIV and AIDS

Salga recognises the serious nature of the HIV and AIDS epidemic and its impact on local government, and is committed to ensuring that its impact on the efficient and effective delivery of services is minimised.

HIV and AIDS is one of the programmes for which the Social Development Working Group (SDWG) is responsible in terms of advocating for and supporting the municipalities. The SDWG comprises councillors nominated to represent the nine provincial Salga branches. An HIV co-ordinator is also based at each provincial branch, playing a supportive role to municipalities. Salga's HIV and AIDS response consists of both an internal and external component.

Salga launched its HIV and AIDS impact management programme in 2006. Relevant information will be sent weekly to staff members with access to e-mail. Further, in collaboration with SA Cities Network and the Department for Provincial and Local Government (DPLG), Salga developed a guide for local government on managing HIV and AIDS in the municipal workplace (2006). It is a practical and user-friendly resource to help municipalities plan, implement and monitor appropriate and effective responses to HIV and AIDS in the local government working environment. It contains key information, challenges, minimum standards, development guidelines, implementation guidelines and checklists and can be downloaded from the Salga website at www.salga.net.

Salga is also in the final stages of developing its country plan for local government, which promotes an integrated and sustained municipal response to the epidemic both internally and externally. Finally, Salga was one of the contributing institutions to the development of the "Framework for an Integrated Local Government Response to HIV and AIDS" by the DPLG, with technical assistance from GTZ.

Salga is a member of the Alliance of Mayors Initiative for Community Action on AIDS at the Local Level and is a partner on the SA Cities Network.

News flash

Restructuring the South African National AIDS Council

The South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) is going through a process of restructuring to make it more effective and accountable in overcoming the HIV and AIDS epidemic. The aim of SANAC, which is chaired by the Deputy President, is to play a leadership role, ensuring consensus is built and maintained on issues of policy and strategy, as well as overseeing the overall implementation and review of the new National Strategic Plan (2007–2011) on HIV and AIDS and sexually transmitted infections and the National Comprehensive Plan for Management, Treatment and Care of HIV and AIDS for South Africa. To strengthen the efficient functioning of SANAC it has been agreed that its secretariat will be strengthened to create greater capacity, as well as technical expertise, to manage SANAC issues. (Source: The Presidency, 2006.)

Launch of DPLG Framework for an Integrated Local Government Response to HIV and AIDS

On 25 January 2007 a consultative workshop with municipalities and other local government role-players took place in Kempton Park to discuss the Framework for an Integrated Local Government Response to HIV and AIDS developed by the DPLG and GTZ and to obtain inputs from the key stakeholders. The purpose of the Framework, which complements the Department of Health's initiatives and strategic plans, is to "provide a platform for engagement between municipalities and all other relevant role-players to guide the development of locally appropriate responses". The Framework, which addresses HIV and AIDS from the developmental local government perspective, will be officially launched later this year.

Marije Versteeg, Senior Researcher
&
Minah Maredi, Project Manager
CMRA

Tel: +27 +12 347-3285 Fax: +27 +12 347-9565