



EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

**8TH EAC REGIONAL
HIV AND AIDS PARTNERS' FORUM**

**27TH JUNE 2014
HOTEL DES MILLE COLLINES
KIGALI, RWANDA**

REPORT OF THE FORUM

**EAC Secretariat,
P.O. BOX 1096,
Arusha, Tanzania.**

JUNE 2014

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 Introduction

The East Africa Regional HIV and AIDS Partners' Forum is a coordination mechanism for the EAC regional response to HIV and AIDS. The Forum was established to respond to the complexity of the HIV and AIDS environment given the multiplicity of actors, partners and sectors involved in the response.

The Partners' Forum provides a formal and representative structure for information sharing, consensus building, coordination of programmes and better alignment to the Regional HIV and AIDS priorities of the 4TH East African Community Development Strategy.

The 8th EAC Regional HIV and AIDS Partners' Forum was convened in accordance with the EAC Secretariat approved Calendar of activities for the period January to June 2014. The forum was organised following the 3rd Forum of National AIDS Councils and Commissions that took place on the 25th and 26th June 2014. The meetings were organised in close succession to foster continued sharing of experiences, information and knowledge, between the Partner States and the regional HIV and AIDS partners. The Forum took place at Hotel Des Mille Collins, Kigali, Rwanda on the 27th June 2014.

1.2 Participation

The meeting was attended by heads of National AIDS Councils and Commissions from the EAC Partner States, Heads and Technical Officers from various international and regional partners involved in HIV and AIDS programming, civil society organizations, private sector organizations, faith-based organisations and foundations, Development Partners including UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women, WHO, UNDP, World Food Program, UNFAO and UNODC) and many implementing partners such as Open Society Initiative East Africa such as OSEA, IOM, FHI, NSA, GLIA among others.

Detailed list of participants is hereto attached as **Annex I**.

1.3 Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted and is hereto attached as **Annex II**.

1.4 Opening Remarks

Dr. Nsazimana Sabin, Head of HIV Division, Rwanda Biomedical Centre, Republic of Rwanda

Speaking on behalf of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health Rwanda, Dr Nsazimana welcomed the participants to the Republic of Rwanda.

He noted that that Partnership Forum is very important for the Region as it brings together key partners to jointly address the HIV epidemic. Dr. Nsanzimana pointed out that the fight against HIV is not an individual task but a shared responsibility and effort by all partners and other stakeholders. He acknowledged progress made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and targets including all efforts to control the HIV epidemic and urged Partner States and all stakeholders to use the available resources in an efficient way to sustain the gains registered so far.

Additionally, Dr. Sabin informed the meeting that Rwanda is doing things in a different way to achieve desired targets set for the 2015. This includes more efficient use of resources innovatively while ensuring allocation of reserve resources for future challenges. It is in the interest of this that the Republic of Rwanda is calling for collaboration with more Partners who can strategically support the efforts to achieve set target and address challenges.

Dr. Nsanzimana further noted that it may have taken 33 years to achieve the desired results; it will take short time to end the epidemic if all the Partner States and the other regional and international partners work together to. He said that this achieved by use of high impact, evidence based interventions.

Mr. Adam Lagerstedt, First Secretary, Health Systems, Financing, Private Sector and Social Economic Analysis, Regional HIV and AIDS Team, Embassy of Sweden, Lusaka

Mr Lagerstedt noted that that the resources available to address HIV are dwindling hence the need to use what is available prudently and efficiently and particularly, an integrated approach to programming.

He informed the meeting that SIDA is currently working on developing a new strategy for their development work with increased focus on rights based approaches integrating Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and HIV/AIDS in a broader agenda.

He noted the continued collaboration with the EAC and assured the partners of Sida's commitment to continue working closely with various stakeholders at the regional level.

Official Opening Remarks by, Hon. Jesca Eriyo – Deputy Secretary General, Productive and Social Sectors, East African Community

While officially opening the meeting, Hon. Eriyo reaffirmed EAC's commitment to regional and international fora bringing together Partners who support the initiative to fight HIV. She thanked all the Partners for attending the Forum and remaining committed to offering support to EAC and to SIDA for supporting the forum.

She noted that the Partners' Forum brings together stakeholders with a wealth of experience in addressing HIV issues. Hon. Eriyo noted that though there are a number of challenges, the different roles played by the Partners are crucial in addressing the ever present threat posed by the HIV and AIDS epidemic. She emphasised the need for all key players such as the Local Government, Civil Society Organizations and the local community to work together to achieve the desired result.

She informed the meeting that the EAC has a consultative framework for engaging Private and Public sector and civil societies to work with all the partners to bring together experiences and support the fight HIV and AIDS. However, she noted, some challenges faced in the region including Gender based violence especially among young girls which in turn exposes them to a high risk of new infection. In addition, exposure of young people to risky situations especially the Refugees, those in schools and in conflict areas, also poses a risk to new infections. She called upon the partners to provide leadership, to invest in ending to HIV and AIDS, and to protect the population from re-infection and new infections.

Hon Eriyo informed the delegates about the 5th Health Scientific Conference scheduled for March 2015, in Kampala Uganda. She urged all partners to participate in the HIV and AIDS, TB and STI Symposium, and support financially to cover costs where possible. Further, she requested partners to provide HIV counselling and testing services during the conference to ensure more people get to know their status.

Further the DSG called for upon continued collaboration at national, regional and international levels to work toward achieving sustainable funding for health and HIV and AIDS, TB and STI programming in the region. To this end, she informed the Partners that EAC will be organising a

High Level Dialogue Meeting to discuss mechanism for domestic financing for HIV and AIDS, TB and STIs and also the how to sustain the gains already achieved.

2.0 Objectives and expected outcomes of the Forum

Objectives

The Forum aimed at facilitating multi-stakeholder interaction among HIV and AIDS programmers in order to help shape the sector's EAC Regional Agenda. Among the objectives were: -

- i. Briefing on progress in the implementation of the Regional Multisectoral HIV and AIDS programme
- ii. Share strategic information on emerging issues and challenges related to HIV and AIDS and identify areas in need of policy, programming and technical support
- iii. Identify opportunities for new and or strengthened collaborations in the area of HIV and AIDS services, coordination, alignment and harmonisation among of HIV and AIDS programming in the region

Expected Outcomes

- i. Better understanding of the EA HIV and AIDS Regional programme
- ii. Harnessing both technical and financial support for the implementation of the EAC regional HIV and AIDS, TB and STI programme



3.0 PRESENTATIONS

3.1 Progress of implementation of EAC HIV and AIDS Multisectoral the Strategic Plan (2012-2014)

The EAC secretariat provided a detailed account on the progress made in the implementation of the EAC HIV and AIDS multisectoral strategic plan 2012 - 2014. The presentation also outlined mission and vision the objectives, of the strategic plan, achievement and key challenges. The presentation ended by providing an outline of the planned activities for the period 1st July 2014 to 31st June 2015.

The presentation is hereto attached as **Annex III**.

The Partners' Forum took note of the progress report. The EAC was asked to clarify some issues which were raised by the Partners regarding the implementation of the EAC Programme. At the same time, the Partners made the following suggestions:

- It is imperative for the EAC to harness the comparative advantage of partners, particularly the International Organisation for Migration, to strengthen the interventions to along the transport corridors

- How is EAC guiding countries on how to account for their HIV response
- The EAC was requested to clarify how it intends to use strategic information being generated in the countries
- Partners sought to know how EAC is planning to implement the legal review framework in the Partner States
- The need to avoid duplication of efforts while rolling out the harmonisation of WHO protocols
- It was suggested that the EAC strengthens the linkages with SADC for learning purposes
- The Forum also sought to know the progress in the operationalization of the EAC HIV prevention and management Bill 2012, and emphasized the need to have this fully assented to.
- The region should take stock of its successes so far in the response to HIV and AIDS and identify its niche – where the next focus should be
- There seems to be a disconnect between EAC’s work and the broader African Union Roadmap on share responsibility for AIDS< TB and Malaria;
- The EAC definition of key populations seems to vary from the UNAIDS one
- The forum called upon the EAC to take lead in pushing for the repeal of punitive laws that are to hindering access to health services by key populations
- The meeting pointed out the need to include children of key populations in the response to HIV and AIDS and recognise that they are also key populations
- Need for National AIDS Councils Directors’ and the Technical Working group on HIV and AIDS, STIs and TB to put in place mechanisms for follow up and coordination be used at regional and country level.
- Need for developing an indicator dashboard to improve reporting

Recommendations

The forum recommended to the EAC Secretariat to:

- i. Work closely with SADC secretariat, share experiences and learn from each other for better results and higher efficiency;**
- ii. Provide more updated information to the partners on the progress towards full assent to the EAC HIV and AIDS Bill 2012 by the heads of State.**
- iii. Advocate for EAC Partner States to repeal punitive laws that are to hindering access to health services by key populations;**

3.2 Current trends in the HIV epidemic and progress towards Reaching the HLM targets in the ESA region, by Dr. Pierre Somse, Deputy Regional Director, UNAIDS RST ESA

UNAIDS presented the progress towards meeting the 10 targets of the UN High Level Meeting. The presentation noted the considerable progress that has been made towards meeting the targets including significant increase in ART and PMTCT coverage; decline in AIDS related deaths and in TB/HIV deaths; declines in new adult and child HIV infections; extraordinary funding support for the HIV response which has enabled countries to significantly expand their responses and increase focus on improving effectiveness and efficiency of the response.

Even with the achievements outlined above, he noted that there was still more to be done, including focus on countries that are lagging behind while ensuring that the momentum in those countries that have made good progress is sustained; strengthening HIV prevention; investing in ART to treat and prevent HIV infections; improving paediatric treatment; seeking ways to eliminate gender based violence, stigma and discrimination; engaging the community and civil society in the response and ensuring that good Monitoring & Evaluation systems are in place to monitor progress.

The presentations are hereto attached as **Annex IV**

Observations

- The meeting noted significant efforts will be possible with sustainable funding from the domestic revenue.
- Human resource was key to the sustainable response.
- The definition for key populations varied
- It was noted that the uptake of HIV and AIDS services among children was relatively low and UNAIDS informed the Forum that this challenge can be attributed to the existence of a disconnect between political commitment and actual implementation

Recommendation

The forum recommended to the EAC to:

- a) Urge Partner States to unpack and address implementation challenges in a multisectoral approach including advocacy and community involvement to encourage uptake of services;**

- b) Double efforts to address low coverage and uptake of ART and other services for children in the region;**
- c) Urge CSOs to advocate for prioritization of interventions among children and young people and take a lead in identifying the causes for low coverage of ART services among young people; and**
- d) Convene retargeting meeting at a regional and national levels in collaboration with the UNAIDS RST to set new targets for the EAC region**

3.3 Reflections on the HIV and AIDS in the post 2015 development agenda and the Process for setting new targets for the HIV response post 2015

In this presentation, Dr. Somse focused on building the case for the post-2015 HIV and AIDS agenda, specifically, a concerted push to meet the Ten Targets of the 2011 Political Declaration, shaping the future agenda building on the unfinished business; sustaining the response and a focus on ending AIDS. The presentation emphasized the need to have a united stand as a region in order to push the post-2015 agenda and set deliberate ambitious targets.

He emphasized the importance of creating solidarity at the global level to put HIV and AIDS on the post-2015 agenda in view of other competing priorities and noted that the East and Southern African region should be at the forefront of these efforts. He further informed the meeting that it is imperative for the region to engage the Open Working group based in New York to ensure that East Africa's HIV and AIDS (and broader Africa's) priorities are included in the post-2015 agenda.

The presentations are hereto attached as **Annex V**.

3.4 Presentation of the East African Community Regional HIV and AIDS Response Report 2013 by Mr. Denis Busobozi, M&E Officer Uganda AIDS Commission

The EAC Regional HIV and AIDS response report 2013 was presented by Mr. Denis Busobozi, M&E Officer Uganda AIDS Commission, a member of the EAC Monitoring and Evaluation sub-group. The report provides an update on the recent patterns and trends in the HIV epidemic, a summary of the current response to the epidemic, best practices in HIV and AIDS

programme and an assessment of challenges and progress towards meeting the ten United Nations Political Declaration targets.

The presentation is hereto attached as **Annex VI**.

The forum took note of the report and commend the EAC for the report.

- There were questions raised about comparability of data form the Partner States as they vary in many ways, including size and population. It was suggested that some of the results be reported as proportions and not percentages
- It was noted that the report lacked comparisons for key populations, particularly female sex workers
- The Republic of Rwanda requested more time to review and validate the HIV Status report because they were not represented at the last validation meeting held in Arusha on 17th and 18th June 2014

However the delegates urged the EAC to ensre that comparable data is used to compare the perfomance of the EAC Partner States.



3.5 Comprehensive Analysis of the HIV & AIDS legislation, Bills, Policies and Strategies in the EAC Partner States

The EAC presented the report on comprehensive analysis of HIV and AIDS Laws, Policies and Strategies for EAC Partner States was presented by the Kenya National AIDS Council (NACC) legal officer. This is a report of a study done in collaboration with The Eastern Africa National Networks of AIDS

Service, Organizations (EANNASO) supported by UNDP Regional Service Centre for Africa, to provide a comparative analysis of the EAC Partners States' HIV, health and related legislation, bills, policies and strategies.

The purpose of the study was to identify strategic gaps, and challenges in the domestic HIV and AIDS legal and regulatory frameworks of Partner States and develop an HIV Legal and Policy Reform Framework for the EAC Region. The EAC Secretariat has made recommendations on how to strengthen and harmonize domestic HIV and AIDS' laws and policies.

The Forum requested the EAC to step up lobbying for the EAC HIV Prevention and Control Bill to be assented to by all the Partner States so that it can be used as the model law in the region

A detailed presentation is hereto attached by **Annex VII**.

3.6 Commitment on scaling up HIV Prevention and Sexual Health for Young People in the ESA Region

This presentation was made by Ms. Victoria Kisaakye Kanobe, the Regional Programs Coordinator for HIV and Health Education, ESA, UNESCO.

The presentation provided details on the aims of the ESA commitment of reducing HIV infection and improving sexual health outcomes for young people in Eastern and Southern Africa and was made reference to the set targets and the following key observations among young people in the ESA region:

- 52% of all new infections among young people occur in ESA region,
- Low levels of comprehensive knowledge on HIV
- Education on sexuality, condoms and safe sex is inadequate
- High levels of teenage pregnancy, gender inequality and human rights violations
- Poor linkages and referrals to SRH services, SRH needs of Young People Living with HIV largely unmet

The presentation is hereto attached as **Annex VIII**.

- The EAC was requested to ensure the Republic of Rwanda's involvement in the ensuring the implementation of the ESA Commitments

The meeting took note of the presentation and recommended to the EAC secretariat and UNESCO to facilitate the Republic of Rwanda to start implementation of the ESA commitments.

3.7 Mobility and vulnerability to HIV and AIDS,

The presentation was made by Ms. Michela Martini, Coordinator, Migration and Health for East and Horn of Africa, IOM Nairobi-Regional Office for East and Horn of Africa. The presentation highlighted, among other things, the main challenges that hinder the HIV and AIDS response along transport corridors as outlined below:

- Insufficient political commitment
- Fragmented implementation and lack of coordination
- Lack of comprehensive evidence-informed data
- Insufficient legal basis
- regular migration/ irregular migration
- Unclear / lacking division of responsibilities
- Deficiency of resources
- Insufficient technical capacity

Observations

The Forum noted that:

Urban areas generally have higher HIV prevalence than rural areas, the EAC was requested to consider advocating and facilitating municipalities in the region to develop joint HIV and AIDS response programmes

Rwanda was implementing an HIV and AIDS specific programme in Municipalities/cities with unique prevention, care and treatment strategies. The programme aims to allow networking between major municipalities/cities in the region.

The meeting also noted the need to include proper programmes for sexual and gender minorities and to focus on identifying and investing in drivers of the HIV epidemics.

3.8 Update on Roads to a Healthy Future (ROADS II)

This presentation was made by Family Health International (FHI 360) and highlighted the main activities of the ROADS II programme among the EAC Partner States. The presentation highlighted

- HIV prevention, care, support and treatment, Distinct strategies for mobile and sedentary populations,

- Community organizing for sustainable local responses, Root causes (economic inequality,
- food insecurity, substance abuse, GBV),
- Rapid diffusion of EA-supported innovations across countries; and
- Feedback from corridor towns to regional policy level & back.
- Targeted health services for mobile men (STIs, etc.);
- Family planning/reproductive health;
- Maternal and newborn/child health; TB and malaria.

The forum noted the need to have proper coordination of the interventions along the transport corridor specifically linking the one stop inspection stations points to the other sites offering services along the corridors.

The Forum was informed that the organization is currently collaborating with the EAC and other regional partners to conduct a mapping study existing health services, service providers and actors long major transport corridors in the East African Community.

The presentation is hereto attached as **Annex IX**.

3.9 Capacity Building - 2015 and beyond

The presentation was made by Mr. Daniel Mwisunji of the Africa Capacity Alliance and focused on why there is need to focus on HIV Capacity Building in the Post-2015 Agenda including:

- AIDS will be an unfinished MDG – the priority is to ensure HIV is prominently positioned in the post-2015 agenda, including ambitious, measurable targets towards the end of AIDS.
- End of AIDS is possible – The need for continued commitment at all levels, to sustain meaningful involvement in development, implementation, and monitoring of progress.
- AIDS continues to be a priority in the EA region –The AIDS agenda is relevant and should be promoted by all countries – as a public health priority and as an entry point for inclusive, rights-based development in all countries
- The presentation is hereto attached as **Annex X**.

3.10 Presentation on the Campaign ‘END AIDS BY 2030’ by African Young Positives Network (AY+)

The presentation was made by Paddy Masembe and it highlighted the organization's efforts in the Campaign to advocate for a Goal to END AIDS BY 2030, to be included in the Post 2015 development agenda. The presentation highlighted the key statistical data, and HIV and AIDS situation in Sub Saharan African.

The presentation also noted that young people remain particularly vulnerable to the HIV epidemic and in fact recent UNAIDS estimates indicate that AIDS related mortality went up to 50% among adolescents Living with HIV in the last 7 years. He provided evidence and justification of maintaining HIV and AIDS on the post 2015 development Agenda.

The presentation is hereto attached as **Annex XI**.

The Forum took note of all the presentations and made some observations as follows:

- The EAC should ensure an all-inclusive process in engaging the Partner States and other stakeholders, including both the Private and Civil Society Sectors in the response to HIV and AIDS
- The Forum noted the urgent need to address structural drivers of HIV as these have been largely ignored in most programmes in the region, yet they continue to fuel the spread of HIV

The EAC took note of the observations and concerns raised by the partners.
Discussion

- In response to the observations, the Secretariat informed the Forum that the Regional HIV and AIDS Response Report 2013 was developed based largely on the UN annual reports and that it had gone through several consultative and validation processes involving experts from all the EAC Partner States. The meeting was informed that the data presented in the report is up to 2012 and that it will be produced every two years.
- The EAC informed the meeting that the report will be shared with the republic of Rwanda for further verification and validation before dissemination.
- The EAC also noted the need to have more data on structural drivers of HIV and informed the Forum that during the compilation of the

report, there was lack of comparable data on these across the region. Most of the data available is programme data which was not applicable for the region and therefore could not be used in the report.

- Regarding the HIV Prevention and Management Bill 2012, the Forum was informed that consultations in the three Partner States that have yet to assent to it are on-going.
- The meeting was also informed that the EAC has a framework for supervision and well as monitoring and that all recommendations made by the Forum will be followed up and implemented. As far as the post 2015 agenda is concerned, the participants were urged to advocate for their countries to be well represented in the global target setting process and to particularly ensure that HIV and AIDS are included.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAY FORWARD

The meeting recommended to the EAC Secretariat to:

- a) Show clearly the linkages between the objective and work of the EAC and the African Union Road Map for Shared Responsibility and Global Solidarity for AIDS, TB and Malaria;**
- b) Strengthen the EAC Regional HIV and AIDS Partners Forum (PF) by development of a clear results and accountability framework to guide implementation;**
- c) Develop a mechanism (with clear indicators) to facilitate easy follow-up on PF recommendations and action points with clear indicators for the**
- d) Form a small multisectoral committee to support the EAC in implementation of the PF recommendations and preparation for the 9th PF scheduled for May 2015;**
- e) Lobby Partner States and the African and Partner States to HIV and AIDS Agenda on the Common Africa Position regarding the post 2015 development Agenda;**

- f) **Facilitate the Republic of Rwanda to participate in the implementation of the ESA commitments by liaising with UNESCO regional office in South Africa to organise an information meeting on the ESA commitment;**

- g) **Develop a concept not to implement the “Big City initiative” focusing on networking and linking all cities implementing interventions for mobile and key populations in the areas of HIV and AIDS, TB and STIs**

Next steps

- i. **Prepare report for 8th PF including matrix of recommendations and share with all Partners by 31st July 2014,**
- ii. **The meeting noted that June was a busy month for participation of partners in the Partners’ Forum, and agreed to hold the meeting in May 2015, on a date to be set and communicated by the EAC Secretariat; and
EAC Secretariat will develop TOR for a small committee that will support EAC in the implementation of the meeting recommendations and preparation for the 9th Partners’ Forum**

5.0 CLOSING REMARKS

Mr. Adam Lagerstedt, First Secretary, Health Systems, Financing, Private Sector and Social Economic Analysis, Regional HIV and AIDS Team, Embassy of Sweden, Lusaka

Mr. Lagerstedt thanked the Partners present at the meeting for taking their to participate in the meeting and share their experiences with others.. He also thanked the Republic of Rwanda for the excellent reception and progress made towards universal coverage and applauded the EAC for organising the forum.

He called upon all to think of the next steps in addressing HIV and AIDS in view of the post- 2015 agenda.

Dr. Nsazimana Sabin, Head of HIV Division, Rwanda Biomedical Centre, Republic of Rwanda

Dr Nsazimana thanked all for the fruitful meeting and noted that the Republic of Rwanda takes all recommendations made seriously and will work with EAC towards their implementation.

He pointed out that the progress so far in addressing HIV and AIDS is still fragile and called for team work in ensuring we achieve our goals to eliminate HIV.

Official Closing Remarks by, Dr. Canisius Kanangire, Executive Secretary, Lake Victoria Basin Commission

Dr Kanangire thanked all participants for attending and specifically the Republic of Rwanda for hosting the 8th Partnership Forum. He noted that the forum was very informative and an appropriate one to share experiences and best practices. He further thanked the Development Partners for their support in the effort to address HIV and AIDS, the EAC Partners States and Regional Economic Blocs for coordinating all the efforts and making EAC .

He emphasized the need to involve all actors from the different levels of the community in addressing HIV and AIDS. Including politicians, Members of Parliaments and Local Authorities

He emphasized the need for strengthening collaboration and enhancing coordination in order to realise our vision to eliminate HIV. While officially closing the meeting he declared

“YES TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE IT”.

Signed by

.....
Dr. Kamwigi
Chair
Republic of Kenya

.....
Hon. Jesica Eriyo
DSG PSS
EAC Secretariat

