

## **Foreword from The Alliance President**

A decade ago, I did not see any role for a political head in the HIV/AIDS struggle. After all, AIDS is a disease or a health problem better left to the experts – trained doctors, health practitioners and social workers. What role could I see then? I believe I was not alone with such warped thinking. The best that my fellow politicians and I could do was attend funerals where we privately commented about the cause of death of the departed relative or friend as AIDS related. We could never, ever utter such thoughts in public. It was anathema to ascribe death to HIV/AIDS. It was, at the time, politically incorrect to dishonor your relative or friend with public pronouncements like that. What with widow/widower inheritance and other traditional customs considerations! It was safer to make a funeral speech/oration largely ignoring the real issue - AIDS.

And then in the year 2000, AMICAALL came in with a simple direct message to us municipal leaders. *Be involved. You are influential in your community so say and do something about the scourge. It can make a difference.* In Uganda the President of the Republic had come out with a clear statement which was hailed the world over. This national leadership role had never filtered down to the municipal level. We were too preoccupied with roads, garbage, street lighting and others.

AMICAALL then became an important vehicle in the mobilization of local leadership in the struggle against HIV/AIDS. The linkage between governance and good and effective interventions in the HIV/AIDS is a given. A committed and energized leadership can and does have a significant role on interventions in respective constituencies. All existing HIV/AIDS practitioners not only feel good when local leadership appreciates their work but are also encouraged by the recognition and participation in their activities. Local leadership plays a vital role of offering coordination of the various stakeholders' interventions. Coordination and information sharing is key in these intervention and the local leaders are best suited for this role.

Local leaders also control local resources. They have personnel and some limited funding which can be used for some modest interventions especially assisting the affected and infected and sensitization programs. Empowered and committed local leaders can and do engineer budget support for HIV/AIDS interventions. These leaders can also authoritatively lobby central government and other partners for meaningful HIV/AIDS activities.

So it's imperative that we use all avenues to make local leadership count in this era of HIV/AIDS ravaging the continent. This website will endeavor to do just that. For all of you out there both – local leaders and partners, rededication to the cause is the only way to go. Do something, even as simple as listening. It can make a difference.

The AMICAALL President  
Mayor Peter Muwanga