



## **ALLIANCE OF MAYORS AND MUNICIPAL LEADERS ON HIV/AIDS IN AFRICA**

### **REPORT OF THE ALLIANCE CO-ORDINATOR, M. AYEBI GILBERT MANOUAN, TO THE 5<sup>th</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY 10<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2010**

Your Worships my fellow Mayors and Municipal Leaders, Alliance Members,  
AMICAALL National Coordinators  
Alliance Executive Secretary and staff  
Colleagues and friends, one and all

It has been my privilege to serve you in the office of Co-ordinator of The Alliance for the past three years. I have been honoured to be entrusted with this responsibility, which I have accepted with humility and diligence, committed to achieving the aims of our noble organisation.

At this auspicious time, it is my pleasure on behalf of the Coordinating Committee to present the Co-ordinator's report to this our fifth General Assembly, according to our Constitution.

The Alliance, in common with any dynamic organisation, is forever learning, evolving and maturing. We began this triennium by emerging from a challenging, even discouraging period in the life of the Alliance. However the past three years, although not without some inherent challenges, have seen some significant achievements and several changes for the better – overall I believe a successful period of operations in pursuit of our overall purpose to eradicate HIV/AIDS and reduce the social and economic impacts of the epidemic on our communities.

Let me begin by taking us back to the start of this triennial period. The Mid Term Review conducted in 2007/08 provided the opportunity for The Alliance to reflect on its operations, resulting in more attention being given to streamlining the way the organisation does its business. The most important outcome of this reflection exercise was the development of a forward looking Strategic Plan to guide the organisation for the ensuing five years. I am pleased to report that this Strategic Plan was the result of a full analysis of the achievements and shortcomings of the organisation based on the Review Report, inputs from members, the current focus of development partners and systems of local government in member countries – all underpinned by the mandate of The Alliance. The outcome is a source document containing six strategic objectives we must work towards achieving and against which the performance of The Alliance can be assessed.

It is critical that in an environment within which we operate that The Alliance can show evidence of tangible achievements and impacts of our work. The importance of constantly reviewing what we do, applying robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks and learning from our collective experiences cannot be underestimated. The Secretariat is reviewing the performance management and monitoring and evaluation systems for both its internal operations and programmes, and this work will be intensified in the near future.

Other key issues emerging from the Review were Alliance Communications and Resource Mobilisation.

An extensive exercise was undertaken for the purpose of improving our internal and external communications, enhancing relationship management and strengthening partnerships. A series of surveys were conducted involving a full range of stakeholders, focussing on means of

communication and how to improve relationships at several levels. The outcomes of this analysis were a communications and advocacy strategy, and relationship management programme. These initiatives resulted in the updating of The Alliance Profile which was widely distributed – a useful promotion initiative, and improved branding. Our regular publications, The Alliance quarterly Newsletter and e-Bulletin continued to grow in both substance and distribution. The Newsletter, which is distributed to a wide range of stakeholders – national and local governments, national local government associations, development partners, other HIV/AIDS organisations, NGOs – has been a valuable information dissemination and advocacy tool. The e-bulletin is our internal communications channel and provides regular updates on activities at Secretariat and National Chapter levels, as well as articles on contemporary issues related to The Alliance’s mandate. The Annual Reports are also a useful communications medium, as they gather together information on all programmes implemented by The Alliance network. The revamped Alliance website we have seen this week is a credit to the organisation and will provide an improved and regularly updated information source on our activities. Use of the new website for enhanced communication is also being explored. I commend the Communications Team at the Secretariat for their efforts in bringing us frequent and quality updates on a range of activities. The effectiveness of The Alliance communications strategy will be assessed on an ongoing basis and reviewed as required.

However the strength and effectiveness of our communications and relationship strategy is highly dependent on the cooperation of Alliance members. The importance of these components of our operations is very clear – we need to be able to promote and advocate for our organisation at many different levels and to do this we need information on, for instance National Chapters programmes, successes and learning. This is essential for The Alliance to meet its mandates in respect to information dissemination and advocacy, particularly targeted to development partners. I commend members for their support in this regard, but as usual there is room for improvement. I encourage members to maintain regular communication channels with the Secretariat.

Whilst on the topic of advocacy, opportunities were taken since we last met to attend several regional and international gatherings to promote the work of African local governments in responding to the impacts of HIV/AIDS on their communities. These included:

- The United Nations Development Programme Local Government Forum held in New York, where I delivered a presentation on the role of local government in HIV/AIDS response and AMICAALL programmes.
- United Cities and Local Governments of Africa 1<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Congress in Accra, Ghana, where HIV/AIDS and AMICAALL featured prominently on the programme, with a presentation on Gender and HIV/AIDS being delivered by Fisho Mwale on behalf of AMICAALL. The presence of The Alliance also generated much interest from African countries to learn more of our work and to become involved.
- World Alliance of Cities Against Poverty (WACAP) 6<sup>th</sup> Forum in Athens, Greece, which focussed on a Roadmap for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which Mayor Kisauji and I attended. Presentations were made on Feminisation of the HIV/AIDS Epidemic and, HIV and Local Governance. Our advocacy efforts resulted in local government being included as a key partner in programmes aimed at achieving MDG 6 (Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases).
- World Alliance of Cities Against Poverty 7<sup>th</sup> Forum in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, which I attended and presented as a panel member on the topic of Vulnerable Groups and Poverty. The focus was on confronting the global economic crisis and natural disasters collectively, and working together to end poverty. This was also a useful networking event.

Turning now to the second critical issue that emerged from the Mid Term Review, that of resource mobilisation. The resources of The Alliance are many and varied, primarily the commitment of the

members, but including strategic partnerships, technical assistance and of course money. Given the need for a strategic approach to resource mobilisation, The Alliance developed a framework based on an assessment of existing efforts, contemporary approaches of development partners, identified gaps and needs. This framework includes a funding tracking list, donor database, fundraising strategy and resource mobilisation handbook.

A key factor in this analysis was that The Alliance's most active technical partner since its inception, the UN AMICAALL Partnership Programme (UNAPP) completed its tenure in April 2008. UNAPP had been working closely with the Alliance for almost ten years, and without this technical and resource mobilisation support the organisation would not have developed to where it is today. In gratefully acknowledging this assistance, I must also recognise the outstanding efforts of the former Director of the UNAPP, Mina Mauerstein-Bail. Along with the 'Founding Fathers' of The Alliance, Mina has been with us since the organisation was first established and can be credited with many of the early achievements in the areas of strategy development, partnerships, programme development, communications and 'backstopping'. We acknowledge Mina's tenacity, commitment, capacity and passion, and are grateful that although UNAPP has closed down, Mina continues to voluntarily support The Alliance. Unfortunately Mina is unable to join us at our General Assembly, however I am sure I convey the sentiments of the membership when I express our heartfelt appreciation to Mina and her team at UNAPP for all the support over many years.

However where one opportunity passes another comes along. Through the work of our Executive Secretary, the gap left by UNAPP was filled through the development of a strategic partnership with Volunteer Services Overseas (VSO) Namibia. Through this partnership experienced volunteers with skills in the areas of human resources, marketing, communications and fundraising are based full time at the Secretariat, enabling regular interaction and engagement with Alliance staff and AMICAALL chapters. This enabled skills transfer and capacity building in the respective areas of focus.

In addition, the recently established partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat, resulting in the placement of a regional technical adviser at the Secretariat for two years, will also enhance the capacity of the Secretariat, assist National Chapters and improve knowledge management.

We are aware that funding for international development programmes is tighter and more competitive these days, meaning that we need to be more creative, ensure our work remains relevant and show real value for money in our resource mobilisation efforts. Several formal proposals for financial support to the Secretariat operations and national AMICAALL programmes have been submitted over the period. Although we have met with limited success so far, feedback has been positive and The Alliance is becoming better known. However, establishing and maintaining working relationships with donors and development partners is one of the more effective strategies. With this in mind, as part of our statutory and other meetings this year, a Donors/Development Partners Forum was held last Friday. The purpose was to establish a discussion platform with potential development partners and engage with them on areas where we can possibly work together. Although not all the partners we expected attended, the outcome of this Forum was quite positive. The opportunity was taken to introduce The Alliance and provide information on our history, purpose and governing structures, as well as our strategic approach and the variety of work being done at local level in our member countries. The collaborating partners present indicated that they wanted to stay in touch, and the Secretariat will be following up with the partners who attended as well as those who could not make it but showed interest.

Turning now to our current financial situation, as you would be aware our major donor supporting the Secretariat and programme activities for the past six years has been the Government of the

Netherlands. This funding has enabled the Secretariat to operate, statutory and other meetings to be held, leveraging, advocacy and communications activities to take place and funding support to National AMICAALL programmes to be advanced. However, in terms of our agreement, this programme will conclude at the end of this year. On behalf of all the Alliance members I wish to express our sincere appreciation to The Netherlands for supporting us so comprehensively, particularly through some quite difficult times.

In addition to our donors, The Alliance has established some strategic partnerships with other like-minded organisations to pursue shared values and goals. These include, as mentioned VSO and Commonwealth Secretariat on technical assistance; UNDP for assistance with national programmes; UNAIDS for support with monitoring and evaluation; and our ongoing partnership with UCLGA and the WACAP. We are also fortunate to have commenced negotiations on working with the African Union, the Organisation of African First Ladies Against HIV/AIDS and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. I am confident that new working relationships will be established over time as a result of the Donors/Development Partners Forum.

We must however look seriously to our future funding options in the interests of sustainability of the organisation and our national programmes. The Secretariat has been diligent in pursuing resource mobilisations options. Additionally, the Coordinating Committee has deliberated on this critical issue at length and decided for instance that for purpose of sustainability, Chapters should look at funding their representatives to the various Alliance meetings. The Committee also confirmed its support to the Secretariat in resource mobilisation efforts and members have already identified potential options within the development community and the private sector that are being pursued.

Whilst on the topic of finances, the issue of payment of membership fees is continually on the agenda. You will recall that the Coordinating Committee in 2007 decided to write off outstanding fees on the provision that strict adherence to payment of membership fees in future would follow. Apart from supplementing the running costs of the Secretariat and particularly supporting essential staff costs, membership fees are a symbolic commitment of members to the organisation, and I encourage all members to meet this obligation. The Coordinating Committee at our meeting yesterday decided that all members that have not paid their outstanding membership fees will do so by December this year at the latest.

One question that is regularly posed to The Alliance concerns our membership coverage. At present we have thirteen member countries, although at present only ten National AMICAALL Chapters are active. We are however encouraged by the renewed interest from our hosts South Africa and commend our full support to the South African Chapter. We are also anticipating that with the return to democratic local government elections in Malawi later this year that AMICAALL Malawi will be revived, and The Alliance will be working hard towards this end.

Nonetheless, our coverage falls well short of the number of countries in continental Africa. This can pose a threat to good governance and our legitimacy as an African organisation. It also means we are not entirely fulfilling our mandate in terms of the Abidjan Declaration. It is essential that HIV/AIDS remains firmly on the agenda of African local government. On the positive side, expressions of interest to learn more about the Alliance have come from Benin, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Togo, Ghana, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe. We need to develop a concrete plan to expand the membership of the organisation and may need to revisit our existing membership processes. The dilemma is that we must also be conscious that we should not have members in name only; there must be substantive programmes accompanying Alliance membership, as well as clear political commitment. The Coordinating Committee has addressed this issue and reinforced that Alliance membership is open to all countries

in Africa. Even if countries have the will to implement local HIV/AIDS response programmes, Alliance membership should be available, as much can be done with minimal funds and can be built upon over time.

In this same light, I am pleased to report that The Alliance signed a Memorandum of Understanding with United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA) at our Coordinating Committee meeting held in October 2008. This is a significant strategic partnership given the scope of UCLGA's mandate and the synergies between our two organisations. A Workplan to translate the objectives in the Memorandum into actions has been prepared and presented to UCLGA management. The Alliance is committed to pursuing this partnership irrespective of the current dynamics within UCLGA. Local government responses to HIV/AIDS should transcend any politics and I trust that any differences can be resolved in the short term so that UCLGA can continue to exert its mandate of building unity, representing and raising the profile of the institution of local government on the continent.

In any organisation such as ours, no matter how committed we as politicians are, without a competent and supportive administration, we will not be able to achieve our objectives. As mentioned earlier, there was an identified need to strengthen the administrative, programmatic and coordination mechanisms at The Alliance Secretariat, and significant progress has been made on this. The strategic plan is being implemented with some key result areas already being attained; our Executive Secretary will tell you more about these in her report. Constitutional and contractual requirements, including submission of annual audited statements of account, reports to donors, the mid term review and conducting of meetings have all been met. The Secretariat has also developed a Performance Management Strategy which is being implemented.

The statutory and related meetings which comprise the important governance processes of The Alliance have been held as required. The National Coordinators meetings were particularly useful to gather information on the work of the Chapters and assess performance of the organisation against targets in the strategic plan. These inputs also influenced the revision of the strategic plan. The Technical Steering Committee deliberated on programme reports, the mid term review and the 2009 – 2014 strategic plan. The Coordinating Committee devoted its entire 2008 meeting to reviewing and endorsing the new strategic plan. I express my appreciation to the Coordinating Committee and Technical Steering Committee members for their valuable contributions to the governance of The Alliance over the past three years.

As I alluded to in my opening, The Alliance is an evolving organisation, and the Secretariat is critical to the sustainability of the organisation. It is the remit of the governing structure to ensure the Secretariat continues to fulfil its role and purpose efficiently and effectively. The Coordinating Committee continues to deliberate on this important issue to ensure that the Secretariat continues to deliver what is important and to meet the expectations of all members.

On behalf of the members I would like to congratulate the Executive Secretary, Ayanda Nabe, for her capability, commitment and dedication to The Alliance. Ayanda faced a complex task in reviving the organisation following the mismanagement of her predecessor, but has handled the duty with competence and composure. A job well done.

The Alliance has a particular role of coordination, however it is at the National Chapter level that the real, on the ground work is done. Our Executive Secretary will be reporting in more detail on the work at Chapter level, but I would like to express appreciation to all the National Chapter Chairpersons, National Coordinators and their staff, local authority elected leaders and staff, a range of local partners, communities and supporters for all their hard work. Be it HIV/AIDS Service Directories in Zambia, Burkina Faso and Cameroon, programmes to engage traditional leaders in

Kenya, community conversations in Mali and Namibia or hands on support to people and local communities affected by HIV/AIDS in Swaziland, the range of programme activities carried out by our Chapters is admirable. I believe the most visible and significant outcomes from these activities relate to building the capacity of local Councillors to understand and address in a meaningful way the socio-economic impacts of HIV/AIDS on their communities. I thank you all.

As we embark on this our fifth General Assembly, I trust that all members will take this opportunity, which is only available to us every three years, to provide inputs to ensure we have the most effective organisation possible. In particular, we will be looking at proposed amendments to The Alliance Constitution, the first time this has been done since the current Constitution was adopted eight years ago. The opportunity to ensure our founding document meets the evolving needs of The Alliance should not be wasted. I wish you all a successful meeting and productive deliberations.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that an organisation such as The Alliance is only as strong as its membership. I remind us all that The Alliance is built on our collective solidarity, willingness and determination to work together to respond vigorously to HIV and local development. Let us move forward to greater achievements in the forthcoming years.

Thank you.