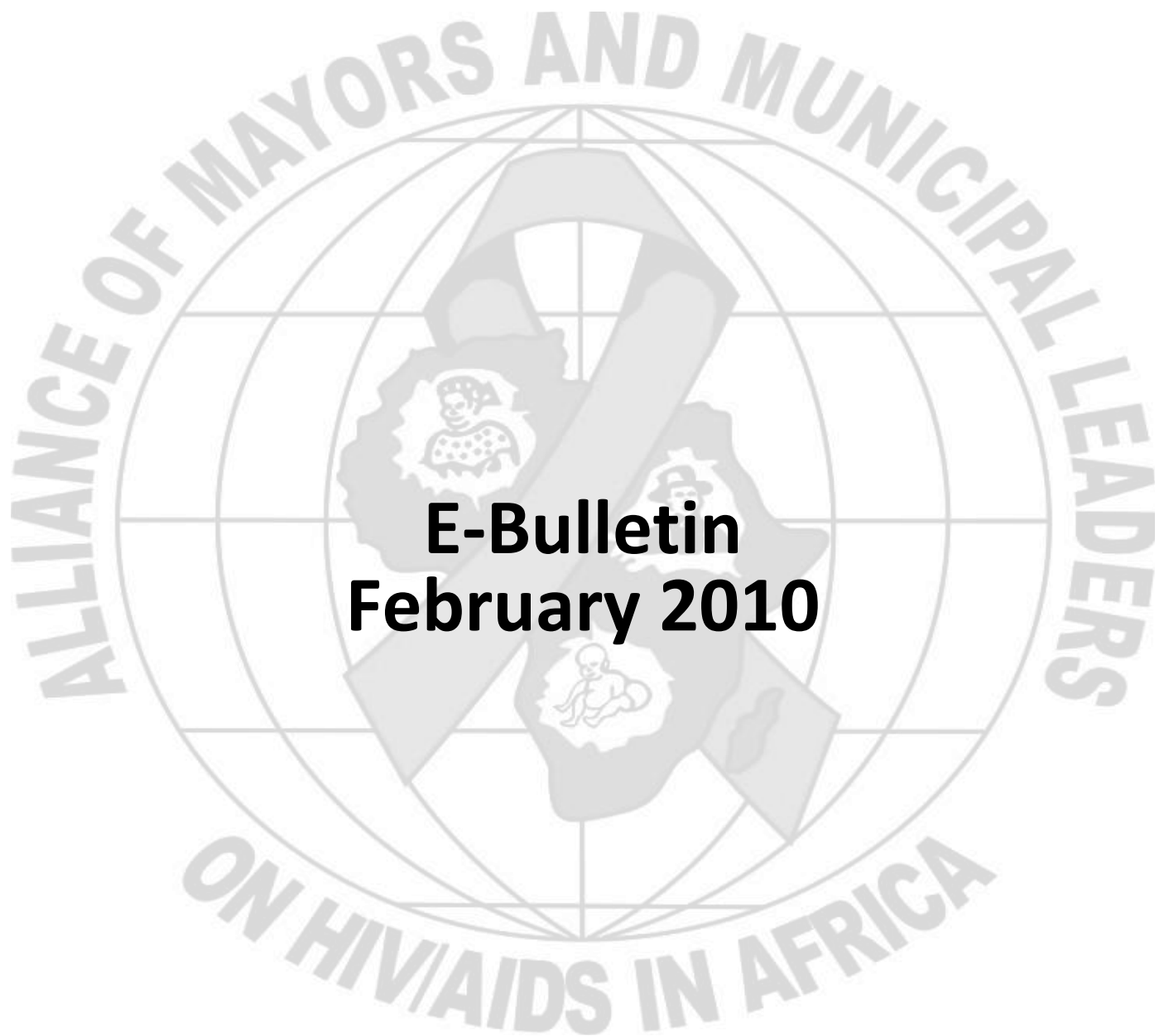




ALLIANCE OF MAYORS AND MUNICIPAL LEADERS ON HIV/AIDS IN AFRICA



E-Bulletin February 2010



Welcome Note from the Editor



*Eva-Maria Koesters,
The Alliance Communications Manager*

Dear Alliance Members,

Welcome to our latest edition of The Alliance E-Bulletin. We put a nice bundle of interesting stories for you together. In our last E-Bulletin we started a new series: in every newsletter you'll be introduced to one of our Alliance's Network members. This time you'll get to know AMICCAALL Cameroon Coordinator Narcisse Chimi. And talking about our team: The Alliance Secretariat has a new team member. Welcome Alice Mwanaumo Simushi! Alice is our new Communications Assistant in the Secretariat. You can read more about Alice in this newsletter.

Keep also an eye on our discussion forum, another new series. Every month we'll ask you for your opinion on a challenging topic. This time we asked you whether there is a linkage between Lobola and HIV/Aids in your country. As a result we got some contradictory answers. Some of you seemed pretty offended by the question itself as it puts a negative image on dowry. In other replies Lobola was linked with sentiments of power and claimed increasing HIV/Aids rates to be a subsequent effect. From a European perspective I personally like the original idea of Lobola: It means paying attention, respect, and love to each other. And it praises the high value of the family. Dowry should be far away from driving the spread of HIV/ Aids. I can't understand how men can even think about abusing Lobola in this way.

But now enjoy our February E-Bulletin. And please remember: The editorial staff always welcomes any kind of feedback regarding this letter.

Best wishes and keep up your good work! Eva

Person of the Month: Narcisse Chimi



Name: Narcisse Chimi

Role: AMICCAALL Coordinator Cameroon

Location: Yaoundé, Cameroon

What keeps you motivated to work for The Alliance?

My greatest motivation to work for the Alliance is the privilege to meet and work with local elected officials and the certainty that an effective local response to HIV/AIDS works through real mayors who have a duty of responsibility towards their people ownership and leadership. The Alliance is the only platform that allows the local elected representatives to express this leadership and to make this local response effective. I'm proud to make a contribution to this.

From your point of view, what are the main challenges The Alliance has to face?

The main and major challenge that we face in Cameroon is the mobilization of both internal and external resources. We have to ensure the viability of our chapter and conduct activities equal to our ambitions. Then there is our internal communication. Although we have put in place an effective tool: website to facilitate communication between municipalities and the Coordination Office, some municipalities are located in areas not yet covered by the internet network and makes it feel like a little orphan. As well as trying to find solutions.

If The Alliance wants to be successful what do we need to focus on?

To ensure that the Alliance continues to succeed, we must continue to strengthen advocacy for the fight

against HIV/AIDS in the Communes, continue to give opportunities to elected local authorities to express their leaderships in this area by strengthening their capabilities and integration and management of local HIV/AIDS responses in communities and finally facilitating development partnerships and networks that would be effective.

Where can we typically meet you if you are not at work?

For professional reasons, I am based in Yaoundé the political capital located at 250 km of Douala the economic capital of Cameroon where my family resides. As soon as an opportunity arises to join my little family which is very dear to me, I have no hesitation to take it.

The Alliance Secretariat

Namibian Gay Rights Organization up in Arms with Uganda over Bill

The Rainbow Project (TRP) is a voluntary organization that seeks to protect and advocate for the rights and interests of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender people (LGBTs) in Namibia. Established in 1996 and officially opening its office doors in 2006, the group has over the years garnered funding and support from organizations such as the Dutch group called Schorer. Schorer is a member of the Netherlands Public Health Federation (NPHF) and offers lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgenders information and knowledge with which they can improve their sexual health. Winning support from Schorer is quite a far cry from TRP's self-funded initial structure: In December 1996, TRP was originally formed to protest the sentiments of the then President, Sam Nujoma, who announced, "Gays and lesbians are not wanted in this country."

According to published reports, The Republic of Uganda proposed an Anti-homosexuality Bill on 13th October, 2009. If passed the bill could provide the green light to death penalty for anyone convicted, HIV positive, or engaging in same sex acts with people under the age of eighteen. In addition, the bill not only demands for the extradition of any Ugandans outside the country who are convicted of homosexuality but also states that there will be penalties enforced against any organizations that support LGBT interests.

In a telephone interview with Linda Baumann, TRP Human Rights, Legal Reform and Media Coordinator, she expressed disapproval of the bill. She stated that her organization is taking a strong stand against Uganda and any other countries that might be supporting it. She said, "We as TRP in Namibia are calling for the repeal of the bill as it is an infringement of various rights and constitutional laws such as Articles 10 and 13 of the Namibian Constitution and those of the Universal Declaration of 1948. The situation in Uganda is strongly affecting other eastern countries such as Rwanda who are now feeling the pressure to pass similar bills. If not halted, this infringement of human rights will spread to other African countries such as Namibia."

In December, 2009, CNN correspondent Saeed Ahmed quoted UN Special Envoy on AIDS in Africa, Elizabeth Mataka, as protesting the bill and stating to reporters, "Who will go to HIV testing if he knows that he will suffer the death sentence? The law will drive them away from seeking counseling and testing services."

Baumann from TRP expressed similar sentiments and stated, "There is already discrimination against LGBTs as it is. Gay people do not have access to proper medical care. For instance, access of gay people to the post-rape drug called Post-Exposure Prophylaxis or PEP is scant. The drug, when taken within 72 hours of exposure to the HIV/ AIDS virus prevents its transmission. So there is a lot of discrimination that will only be worsened if this bill is passed. This bill ignores the concept of understanding sexuality and related issues such as countering the spread of HIV/AIDS through non-discriminative practices."

The majority of the international community has taken up a stance on Uganda with nations such as the United States urging that the bill be dropped. Public demonstrations worldwide by special interest groups have been and are still being carried out. For example, in February 2010, TRP organized a protest march along the city of Windhoek's Independence Avenue. If the bill becomes law, it will inevitably destroy all the cultivated environment of open talk on sexuality that only a few years ago, became one of the most influential factors of Uganda's drastic lowering of HIV/ AIDS transmission rates.

New Series: The Alliance Discussion Forum

In our February E-Bulletin we are starting a new series, The Alliance Discussion Forum. Every month we will pose a critical question and ask our Alliance Network Members for their opinion. The Alliance E-Bulletin editorial staff is looking forward to your active participation in this discussion forum. Let's use this platform to exchange ideas and let's give each other thought-provoking impulses!

This month we asked you:

Does Lobola (dowry) increase the spread of HIV in your country?

We got really interesting points of view on this topic. As the statements are pretty personal, we won't mention the names of the authors. Thanks for your understanding.

Reply from an anonymous reader:

"Dear Editor,

Men in Zambia generally seem to approve of the concept of Lobola. It could perhaps be due to the sense of pride it gives them to prove they can 'afford' and take care of their wives. But it could also be a subconscious demand for power; hence statements I have time and time again overheard by a few Zambian men: "My wife can't control what I do. After all, I paid for her. I own her and can decide what I want to do with her." If the latter sentiments and attitudes are what prevail, it is hardly surprising that some women find it nearly impossible to leave cheating husbands or more importantly, demand the use of condoms."

Reply from an anonymous reader:

"Dear Editor,

The spread of HIV/ AIDS is solely due to ignorance of the ABC principles: Abstain, Be Faithful and Condomise.

Lobola is a custom that binds the families of an engaged couple and makes the families one. If cattle are used for

Lobola the negotiated number will be surrendered to the family of the bride. One cattle will cater for the festivities at the time when the dowry is brought to the bride's family. Another or more cattle will be used during the wedding ceremony. In return, the woman is expected to take a beast with her to the in-laws where she will stay. This beast is the one from which she will drink milk. Overall the exchange of cattle symbolizes uniting the two families. If the families live in an urban environment, money will be used as dowry instead of cattle. In addition to cattle or money the bride also brings items (like bedroom furniture and kitchenware) that she will need as a woman and a wife (according to the gender roles).

Lobola gives dignity to both the family of the groom and the bride. Marriage in the African Tradition is not a ceremony but a rite of passage. The Lobola negotiations are the first ceremony of the rite and formal introduction of the umakoti (newlywed/bride) is the result of the negotiations. The woman is then introduced to the family, the community and most importantly to the ancestors as a child of this family. This also symbolizes uniting two families. Fulfillment of this rite alleviates the marrying individuals to a different and probably higher level in society.

Lobola comes with responsibilities and obligations for the couple and their families. The success of the marriage is guarded by the families as marriage in the African tradition is not only between individuals but between families. In the cases where there is evidence of abuse of any kind, the abuser is shunned and the man may be fined. The highest fine would be in the form of one or more beasts.

Lobola has been bashed by some families due to genuine ignorance of its symbolism and meaning. It has to be clearly stated that the practice doesn't indicate any form of individual possession or buying of a woman. The custom of Lobola is the very opposite of a financial transaction. As said before according to the traditional meaning Lobola gives dignity, respect and welfare to a couple. The spread of HIV/ Aids amongst couples due to unfaithfulness and cheating extremely disrespects the tradition of Lobola."

AMICAALL Uganda

UNDP Uganda Country Office receives 2009 Meritorious Award from AMICAALL Uganda Chapter



Alliance Executive Council Chairman Peter Muwanga (centre) handing over a meritorious award to HE Theophane Nikyema, UNDP Resident Representative. AMICAALL National Coordinator Dr. John Mugisa is on the left hand side.

Every year AMICAALL Uganda Chapter honors individuals, organizations, business and corporations for significant services, effort, time, and resources contributed to the cause of HIV/AIDS in the country. Awards are presented in recognition of outstanding contributions and seek to encourage the notion of excellence, voluntarism, and philanthropy among others. Recipients and nominees of these awards exemplify the true spirit of hard work, voluntarism and charity.

The 2009 Meritorious Award was given to UNDP Uganda Country Office. The award is a unique opportunity to recognize and celebrate the outstanding contribution of UNDP Uganda in leadership, technical and financial contribution to the fight against HIV/AIDS in urban areas of the country. Considering that, urban areas in Uganda experience the highest HIV prevalence, the role and contribution of UNDP to the urban HIV/AIDS response has been critical for the success of national response to the epidemic in Uganda.

UNDP Uganda Country Office has supported AMICAALL Uganda Chapter since its inception in November 2000.

Over the past years, UNDP has supported institutional capacity building in urban local governments, to ensure that urban authorities build local leadership and technical capacity to plan and coordinate HIV/ AIDS response in urban local governments. With the support of UNDP, AMICAALL Uganda has made a substantial contribution in galvanizing local government responses to HIV and AIDS in Uganda:

- Mayors and Municipal leaders in Uganda have been empowered with appropriate HIV/ AIDS knowledge and skills and have been inspired to lead the local response to the epidemic,
- Urban authorities have built the capacity to mainstream HIV and AIDS in urban local government planning and budgeting, thus making HIV and AIDS key priority in the urban development agenda. As part of HIV/AIDS mainstreaming, urban authorities have developed HIV/AIDS Workplace Policies and Programmes,
- Community based interventions for orphans and other vulnerable children (OVC) have been initiated including development and enactment of bylaws that promote and protect the rights of OVC and,
- Urban authorities have been supported to establish functional AIDS coordination mechanisms to coordinate local HIV/AIDS initiatives under the multi-sectoral approach.

Thanks to the leadership, technical and financial support of UNDP, HIV and AIDS response in urban areas of Uganda has been scaled up and strengthened. For this they are truly deserving of special recognition.

AMICAALL Uganda Chapter Initiates HIV Prevention Programmes in Universities

To address HIV infections among students in Ugandan Universities, AMICAALL Uganda Chapter in collaboration with Uganda AIDS Commission Civil Society Fund implements a project to scale up HIV prevention interventions in the three major universities. The project

specifically focuses on empowering young people with appropriate knowledge and skills for reducing risk of an HIV infection. The project is currently being implemented in the Islamic University in the Eastern part of Uganda, Kyambogo University in the City of Kampala and Mbarara University of Science and Technology located in the Western part of the country.

The interventions carried out by AMICAALL were based on the study findings of a situation analysis conducted by AMICAALL Uganda in 2008. Study findings showed that cross generational and transactional sex is pretty popular among university students. Interesting to note is that those involved in Cross Generational Sex are aware of the factors and risks involved in the practice.

Magnitude of cross generational sex:

- 10.6% of the girls had ever been involved in cross generational sex
- 6.6% were currently engaged in cross generational sex
- 16.5% reported to have had sex with a man 10 years older than them in the last 12 months preceding the study
- 21.6% of the girls who had ever had sex with a man 10 years older than them, continued in such relationships
- 68% of the girls have ever been approached by an older man 10 years or more for a relationship
- Identified contributory factors:
 - Money, peer pressure, desire to dress expensive and fashionable clothes, hold expensive phones, and own well furnished rooms
 - Other factors include fun and enjoyment, marriage expectations as well as preference to older men who have experience in handling women

Together with the university administrations the study findings were shared with the students to raise their awareness. Finally the students and university administrators came up with an action plan with a

number of interventions to reduce risky practices amongst students.

Consequently, these activities have been conducted:

HIV information provision through peer education

85 peer educators were trained and equipped with the necessary skills to provide AIDS education, distribute condoms and refer peers to service organizations. To date a total of 2,898 students have been reached through peer education and 25,634 condoms were distributed in the three universities. In addition, three Anti Aids Clubs involving 85 students have been established to provide education and entertainment (edutainment). So far 1,050 students have been involved in activities organized by the Clubs.

Notices

Terry Parker

On 1st of March Terry Parker from Australia will join The Alliance Secretariat team as Technical Advisor for the Commonwealth project. You'll read more about Terry in our March E-Bulletin.

Alice Mwanaumo Simushi

The Alliance Secretariat got a new team member. Alice Mwanaumo Simushi is our new Communications Assistant. Please join us in welcoming Alice and learn more about her:



Alice Mwanaumo Simushi

Alice originally hails from Lusaka, Zambia. She spent her childhood in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and her teenage years in Zambia. Four years ago, Alice moved to

Windhoek in order to pursue a bachelor's degree in Media Studies and Industrial Psychology at the University of Namibia. Over the years she enmeshed herself in several projects, such as voluntary work for a Lusaka-based Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). The NGO was called Youth Media and had a mandate to raise public awareness about sexuality and sexual health among young people. She says: "I refuse sitting around and doing nothing but I love to make a difference in people's lives. That is why I am enjoying my time so far at the Alliance Secretariat. It is always very satisfying to be part of a team that is working towards a common goal and more importantly, that welcomes you as heartily as the Alliance has done me."

On the Calendar

- Symphonia for South Africa is hosting the [Community Building Workshop](#) from 2-3 March in Johannesburg, 4-5 March in Bloemfontein, 8-9 March in Cape Town and 10-11 March 2010 in Durban.
- 25-28 March 2010, Yaoundé, Cameroon: [International Conference on ICT for Africa](#), this event will bring together a fine mix of practitioners and academicians in the area of ICTs for sustainable development.
- The [Dubai International Humanitarian Aid and Development Conference and Exhibition](#) will take place from 4-6 April 2010.
- 18-23 July 2010, Vienna, Austria: [International AIDS Conference](#) is the premier gathering for those working in the field of HIV

End on a light note... something to think about

"A tree is known by its fruit."

This Zulu proverb emphasizes that a person is successful because of actions, not words.



**THE ALLIANCE OF MAYORS AND MUNICIPAL
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(THE ALLIANCE)**

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