

**Scaling-Up the HIV/AIDS and Orphans response to accelerate
poverty reduction in Uganda: 2000/1-2005/6**

Uganda AIDS Commission
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1.0 Context

The 1999 Uganda Poverty Status Report states that "HIV/AIDS poses the most serious challenge to the future success in reducing poverty" in the country:

- An estimated 9.5% of adult Ugandans - 1.9 million people - are infected with HIV
- In many urban areas of Uganda, HIV infection appears to have peaked. However, infection rates in some rural areas are either going up or leveling off, thus the need for an expanded response.
- The rate of mother-to-child transmission is estimated at 15-25% and access to effective interventions, including anti-retroviral drugs which can reduce this transmission rate is very limited. It is projected that if this route of transmission is not checked, under-5 mortality rate will increase by more than 100%.
- Young people (15 - 19) make up the group most vulnerable to HIV infection. Girls in this age group are 4 - 6 times more infected than boys.
- Uganda is one of the countries with the highest number of AIDS orphans in Sub-Saharan Africa. An estimated 1.1 million children below the age of 15 years have lost a mother or both parents to AIDS. The capacity of traditional family systems to cope with this increasing burden is being over-stretched.
- The life expectancy of economically productive Ugandans dropped from 48 years in 1990 to 38 years by 1997.
- HIV/AIDS is now estimated to annually reduce GDP by up to 2% in severely affected countries like Uganda. Agricultural production has been shown to decrease by 37-61% in such countries. It has been observed in some parts of Uganda that there is a shift from high to low labour-intensive farming systems and a decline in production of cash crops.
- The persistent armed conflicts in some parts of the country are also likely to exacerbate the spread of HIV/AIDS in the country and in the Great Lakes Region.

While acknowledging the documented declining HIV prevalence rates from 1993 to 1998, Uganda's multisectoral response must be reinvigorated at all levels of society. There is great potential for success in the on-going battle against HIV/AIDS as the country has demonstrated.

Uganda AIDS Commission therefore seeks to revitalize and expand the national societal response against HIV/AIDS. The following immediate priority actions were developed in March 2000 by UAC and its partners to promote the involvement of all sectors of society as Uganda scales up its response against HIV/AIDS. These efforts closely to the fight against poverty in the country:

2.0 Immediate priority actions

2.1 Building and strengthening capacity for coordination, planning and implementation at all levels.

This mainly targets UAC, the national coordinating body, government ministries and districts.

2.1.1 Strengthening the institutional capacity of Uganda AIDS Commission to implement the scale up actions

UAC was established with the aim of facilitating national policy formulation on HIV/AIDS and coordinating the national response to the epidemic. A comprehensive review of the mandate and roles of the Commission and discussions about its appropriate location has indicated that for long periods of time the UAC Secretariat has functioned under severe hardship and without a clear vision of its future. It is therefore recommended that:

- The process of reviewing the UAC/UACS organization strategy and UACS organogram and developing the action plan should be finalized;
- The capacity of the Office of the President should be strengthened to ensure supervision of HIV/AIDS policy formulation and coordination in the country;
- Where necessary, ad-hoc, time bound and action oriented Technical Resource Networks should be established to support the coordination of the implementation of decentralized HIV/AIDS interventions.

2.1.2 Finalizing the National Strategic Framework of HIV/AIDS activities 2000/1-2005/6(NSF) and the sector specific planning and budgeting exercises

To ensure that the multisectoral response to HIV/AIDS is strengthened, revived and linked to poverty eradication instruments and programmes, it is important that sector ministries revise and develop strategic action plans. These plans should describe the comparative advantages and planned interventions of each ministry in the fight against HIV/AIDS, including the problem of orphans in Uganda. Proposed actions:

- The National Strategic Planning exercise should be finalized by ensuring that sectoral Ministries develop sector specific strategic plans;
- Integrate HIV/AIDS strategies into the Uganda Program for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA);
- Integrate HIV/AIDS strategies into the Uganda Medium-term Competitive Strategy for the Private Sector (2000-2005).

To ensure that sector plans are incorporated into annual budgets and the mid-term budget framework and in order to facilitate resource mobilization for plans prepared, a detailed costing of the UAC plan and the sector strategic plans needs to be carried out.

The costing and budgeting of the NSF and Sectoral Frameworks should be carried out using a standard template

2.1.3 Strengthen the capacity of district, sub-county and grassroots levels to plan, supervise and implement HIV/AIDS initiatives at

A scaled-up response to HIV/AIDS should include greater involvement of district, sub-county and grassroots levels into HIV/AIDS planning, implementation and monitoring. The participation of lower levels of government and grassroots is necessary in order to:

- a) Mobilize additional human resources to fight the epidemic;
- b) Improve national absorption capacity in case additional financial resources are made available for HIV/AIDS interventions in Uganda;
- c) Ensure that HIV/AIDS programming meets the specific needs of districts, sub-counties and local communities;
- d) Create ownership at all levels; and

- e) Ultimately sustain the impact of interventions initiated for impact mitigation, comprehensive care and behaviour change.

Developing the capacity of decentralized partners (District and Local Councils, NGOs, and private sector partners) to design, implement, and evaluate HIV/AIDS including orphans activities is therefore an urgent priority. Proposed action areas:

- UAC should identify and develop strategies for strengthening the ability of local government and civil society to plan and implement HIV/AIDS and Orphans interventions, and expand NGO HIV/AIDS networks in the context of the “Expanded HIV/AIDS District Response Initiative (DRI)”
- Information at the national and sub-national level needs to be optimized to support scaling-up of the national response to HIV/AIDS. Where feasible, it would be advisable to strengthen internet and e-mail connectivity and capacity for increased utilization of information technology by key national partners. Traditional means of communication like radio and dissemination of newsletters should be produced for partners at district, sub-county and grassroots level who do not have access to e-mail and internet.
 - develop actions for integrating HIV/AIDS partners into national and international information networks
 - Strengthen electronic database on HIV/AIDS interventions in Uganda

2.2 Address AIDS orphans crisis as part of scaling-up the response to HIV/AIDS

The problem of children start long before the death of a parent. Death is merely the culmination of a period of sickness, often followed by inadequate family guidance and emotional support, limited access to education, inadequate socialization, nutrition, material and financial support. Relatives are largely absorbing the burden of AIDS orphans in Uganda, but surveys indicate that the ever-increasing number of orphans overload extended family caregivers.

Gender disparities and cultural practices tend to render the girl child particularly exposed to exploitation and heavy responsibilities, especially in areas of housekeeping and agricultural production. A special focus on

children orphaned by HIV/AIDS is therefore needed in order to alleviate the impact AIDS has on the future options of these children. Proposed action:

- Prepare national strategy on how to address orphans crisis in Uganda.
- Integrate HIV/AIDS, including Orphans response strategies into the Universal Primary Education Sector Investment Programme

2.3 Stepping up advocacy for HIV/AIDS with particular emphasis on political leadership at all levels

The HIV/AIDS epidemic in Uganda is a security and developmental crisis that threatens to reverse the development achievements of recent years. Although the President has shown and continues to show an admirable example of commitment and leadership in the national fight against the epidemic, this commitment is not consistently reflected at all levels of civic and political leadership in the country. Proposed action areas:

- The Government of Uganda and cooperating partners should openly and visibly declare HIV/AIDS a continued security and development crisis in Uganda and throughout the Great Lakes Region. This declaration would be in concert with the unprecedented UN Security Meeting of January 2000 that declared HIV/AIDS a security crisis in Africa and would reassert Ugandan prominence in leading the battle against HIV/AIDS;
- Mobilize political, religious, and secular areas in all constituencies and at all levels of Ugandan society, including the Local Councils, to participate in combating the persistent threat of HIV/AIDS and the orphans crisis;
 - develop a "National Political Mobilization Strategy"
 - develop the "Uganda AIDS Impact Model"
- UN Agencies, World Bank and the IMF working in partnership with Uganda should continue to address HIV/AIDS, including the orphan situation as massive development catastrophes and on-going human development crises;
- Bilateral cooperating partners must renew their momentum and resources (technical and financial) to combat HIV/AIDS, especially in rural areas and to address the orphans and vulnerable children's crisis;

2.4 Mainstreaming HIV/AIDS issues into the country's poverty eradication instruments

The effect of HIV/AIDS threaten to compromise the development achievements of recent years and have the potential to negatively impact on Government's vision to eradicate poverty by 2017. The fight against the epidemic must therefore feature as a major element in the Uganda Poverty Eradication Action Plan and supplementing instruments and programs designed to eradicate poverty in Uganda. Proposed action:

- HIV/AIDS, including the Orphans crises should appear as a supra-sectoral priority - at the goal level of the Uganda Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP)/Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. HIV/AIDS strategies, among others defined in Uganda's National Strategic Framework 2000/1- 2005/6, should be integrated fully into the PEAP;
- The World Bank and the IMF should explicitly monitor public expenditures for HIV/AIDS and orphans and set ceilings for HIV/AIDS-Orphans public expenditures as part of the Medium-term Expenditure Framework;
- HIV/AIDS interventions, including those for Orphans should appear as measurable priorities in the IMF Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF) and the IMF/World Bank Enhanced HIPC documents;
- Earmark a proportion of the budgetary savings from the Enhanced HIPC debt relief for mounting a scaled-up response to the HIV/AIDS and orphans crises;
- HIV/AIDS, including orphan strategies to be considered as a an **additional** funding priority of the World Bank Public Expenditure Reform Credit (PERC) for 2001/2 and for agreed upon sectoral priorities (health, education). Appropriate HIV/AIDS experts could be added to the World Bank Pre-Appraisal Mission in April 2000 and the Appraisal Mission in September 2000.

2.5 Intensifying resource mobilization, streamlining resource allocation and monitoring utilization

As part of integrating HIV/AIDS into existing government poverty eradication instruments and programs, existing resource transfer mechanisms should be identified and modified to include funding for HIV/AIDS, including orphans. The PAF is one such common mechanism that could attract supplementary resources from the Government, from donor grants, the budgetary savings from Enhanced HIPC debt relief, from the Public Expenditure Reform Credit, and potentially from foundation grants. Proposed actions:

- Modify the Uganda Poverty Action Fund (PAF), managed by the Ministry of Finance, to include an HIV/AIDS-Orphans conditional grant component;
- Establish a PAF HIV/AIDS-Orphans conditional grant component as a resource transfer mechanism that can deliver resources reliably to decentralized public sector partners, NGOs, and the private sector on a supplementary basis;
- Integrate HIV/AIDS, including Orphans strategies into the PAF education and primary health care conditional grants;
- Create PAF competitive performance-based granting mechanisms.

2.6 Develop monitoring and evaluation frameworks

The impact of collected data on planning and delivery of cost effective programs and projects to prevent further spread of HIV/AIDS and mitigate its developmental impact on the Ugandan society cannot be underestimated. Such information is of crucial importance when monitoring and prioritizing interventions in a framework of scarce resources.

Tools for monitoring and evaluation should therefore be developed to allow for a careful monitoring of HIV/AIDS interventions in Uganda.