



The sustainability of Local AIDS Council's

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Introduction

The North-West government established the *North-West AIDS-Strategy* document in October 2000, as a response to the HIV/Aids pandemic. AIDS Councils were established at three levels: the Provincial Council on AIDS (PCA), four District AIDS Councils (DACs) and Local AIDS Councils (LACs). The main task of these councils is to co-ordinate and implement policies.

A SANPAD funded research project examined how the LACs and their member organisations operated, and their strengths and weaknesses.

Main Findings

The research found that:

- Most LACs were dysfunctional.
- The LAC organisational system is rather top-down.
- The roles and duties of LAC members are not always clear.
- There was little evidence of two-way communication.
- LACs are co-ordinating bodies without any executive powers.
- The executive mayors who are supposed to be the patrons of the

LACs to provide political power, are generally not actively involved.

Conclusions

LACs have been given a contradictory mandate: they are trying to co-ordinate primarily community based initiatives, but they are also bound to top-down instructions and guidelines. Above all, there is not enough mutual agreement between the actors on crucial concepts, which inhibits their effective functioning.

The current position of LACs in the North-West is such that they play a marginal role in the government's responses to the HIV/AIDS problem.

Recommendations

To create accountability, a culture of ownership, improved communication and sustainability, we make the following recommendations:

1. LACs should be incorporated at the local authority level. They should be an integral part of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The focus should shift from the provincial to the local level. Policy developments and directives should be informed by the unique development needs of local people.
2. Membership decisions should be made by the stakeholders themselves, and not at provincial level. PCA members should be elected from all the members of the twenty two LACs in the Province



- rather than nominated by the. This enhances accountability and ownership.
3. Capacity building and training need should be provided to all members of LACs and not just to executive members. This would create a feeling of acknowledgment and, subsequently, ownership as well as increase competences.
 4. Participation by the community at all levels and civil society at large are imperative, to maintain the credibility of the process. The proposed bottom-up approach and the placing decision making power within the local community will create an appropriate environment for active participation.

Insert a picture of a LAC meeting