



PRESS STATEMENT

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CRUSADERS AGAINST AIDS!

PLHIV decry the move to dissolve the Uganda AIDS Commission to subsume it under the AIDS Control Programme under the Ministry of Health.

In 1992, Uganda was the first in the world to set up a National AIDS Commission to oversee the first ever Multi- Sectoral response. This brought together multiple players in their cohorts known as Self Coordinating Entities (SCEs) in the national and decentralized partnership mechanism. They are; Parliament, Line Ministries, AIDS Development Partners (ADPs), Civil Society Organisations (NNGOS, INGOS, Young People), Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), PLHIV Networks, Private Sector, Research Academia Science and Professionals (RASP); Media and Culture.

The constituency of People Living with HIV (PLHIV) under their umbrella organization NAFOPHANU are against the recommendation made recently by the Budget Committee of Parliament to dissolve the Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC) and to subsume it under the AIDS Control Programme of the Ministry of Health as per sections 129 and 169 of the National Budget Framework Paper FY 2016/17 and Fiscal Medium Term Framework for 2016/2017-2020/21 respectively. The Committee indicated that by maintaining UAC under Office of the President, it makes government duplicate activities by having the AIDS Control Program under the Ministry of Health carrying out similar activities. They thus recommended that the law which established UAC be amended so as to have it answerable to the Ministry of Health and eliminate duplication of roles on AIDS Control.

This is totally wrong since the roles of the two entities are quite distinct and do not overlap at all. Uganda AIDS Commission plays the overall oversight and coordination role of the multi-sectoral response be it at national and decentralized level, policy development, advocacy, resource mobilization and planning in a bid to fulfill the 3 ‘Ones’ principle (One National HIV Strategic Plan, One Monitoring & Evaluation Plan and one Coordinating Entity). The Ministry of health and other sectors use the plans to develop sector specific plans and guidelines. On the other hand, the National AIDS Control Programme (ACP) of the Ministry of Health is focused on the Public Health sector response- mainly the biomedical interventions targeting health workers and patients in a health facility. To a large extent, the behavioral and structural interventions remain a role of UAC and multi sectoral players of which UAC coordinates.

“Being a Self Coordinating Entity under the UAC structure, we believe that dissolving the AIDS Commission at this time would be a major strategic mistake that will lead to a reversal in the gains that Uganda has started to make and would negatively impact the PLHIV constituency, communities and the population at large.” Said Dr. Lydia Mungherera of Mamas Club

As PLHIV, we are deeply concerned and totally reject the recommendation since it has a very high potential to reverse the gains that Uganda has started to make such as reduced HIV National Forum of People Living with HIV/AIDS Networks in Uganda (NAFOPHANU)

incidence, PLHIV living longer, fewer AIDS related deaths and fewer children born with HIV. We do not want to see a disruption of the all-inclusive partnership structure to oversee the response, that has stood the test of time as a model of excellence that other countries and WHO replicated to set up own commissions and UNAIDS. This high level coordination and mainstreaming of the national and decentralized can only be achieved when the Commission is independent of any sector and is located at a level that is higher than the individual sectors that it coordinates.

As a constituency we appreciate the role UAC and the partnership mechanism has played to strengthen our lower level network structures, visibility, governance, increased advocacy and voice of PLHIV, operationalisation of GIPA/MIPA (Greater/Meaningful Involvement of PLHIV) principle in a bid to achieve the 3 Zeroes; Zero new HIV infections, zero AIDS related deaths and zero stigma and discrimination. This has been possible with reduced AIDS related deaths, PLHIV are living longer and HIV incidence has reduced.

We call upon all stakeholders to join us so that the response remains on course. We need to continue being the model that we are. For instance, Tanzania copied from Uganda and the office coordinating the HIV response is under the Prime Minister's office and doing well. In Zambia, the same office is under Ministry of Health and many challenges have been registered especially when it comes to mainstreaming. Similarly, the office coordinating the HIV response in Kenya that was formally under the president's Office is currently under Ministry of Health and this has presented several bottlenecks and are struggling to get out. We thus recommend that Uganda AIDS commission is not merged with Ministry of Health's ACP to avoid any setbacks in the response.

"It is a recommended best practice to have the oversight role quite distinct and separated from the implementation management roles of the implementing sectors for better accountability and transparency. This explains why the Uganda model has been successfully replicated globally." Said Ms. Stella Kentutsi, Executive Director, NAFOPHANU

"As People Living with HIV, we demand that Uganda AIDS Commission remains as a standalone entity coordinating the HIV response at all levels for the betterment of PLHIV which the Ministry of Health's ACP is not mandated to do." said Ms. Milly Katana, HIV Activist

'Uganda AIDS Commission has the mandate on the GIPA MIPA principle which it has effectively expedited has structures both at national and lower levels where PLHIV are represented. A costly mistake should not be committed by Parliament to take us back' said Ms. Lillian Mworeko

We call upon our legislators and duty bearers at different levels to resist the move to dissolve the Uganda AIDS Commission. With UAC steering the coordination of HIV, we believe we shall realize the 3 Zeros and the 90x90x90 targets with Uganda leading the global pace again!

The End

Together for a Positive Difference!