

MAINSTREAMING HIV/AIDS IN WATER SERVICES SECTOR

INTRODUCTION

The Water Services Sector Leadership Group (WSSLG) took a decision in 2005 to mainstream HIV and AIDS within the water services sector. Mainstreaming HIV/AIDS is a process that address the causes and effects of HIV/AIDS in an effective and sustained manner, through usual work and within the workplace .(UNAIDS) There has been a conceptual shift from the narrow biomedical approach to HIV/AIDS towards a broader developmental and socioeconomic approach.

Insufficient access to water contributes to slowing down of development and worsening of water-borne and water-washed diseases to those infected by HIV and suffering from AIDS. In some cases caregivers use portable bed pans for both urine and solid waste for bedridden patients and current health and hygiene education does not adequately address their safe disposal.

The overall aim therefore is to determine what the Sector's contribution is to the epidemic, how the epidemic has affected its goals and objectives and how best it can respond to the impact of HIV/AIDS when doing its core business.

THREE-PRONGED APPROACH

The proposed 'multi-sectoral approach', guided by the dplg framework for HIV/AIDS encourages participation of stakeholders that maximises on their strengths, without undermining any existing efforts.

- **Internal Mainstreaming**

This focuses on the reduction of susceptibility of the sector employees to infection and giving support to those already infected by HIV. It includes workplace policies and guidelines that inform day to day activities. Worker awareness, prevention, care and treatment are at the center of this intervention.

- **External Mainstreaming**

This aspect addresses how the sector might increase the risk of infection of the community by the manner in which it provides the service. It looks at ways of assisting individuals, households and the community at large to cope better with the impact of HIV/AIDS.

- **Policy review and update**

The main aim of this intervention is to create an enabling environment for both the internal and external mainstreaming processes to take place using existing policy structures and the legal framework.

Two Pilot sites have been identified, one rural and one urban. It is envisaged that these will achieve the following:

- Raise Sector-specific HIV/AIDS awareness
- Inform which policies need review and how best to do it
- Identify barriers and opportunities for effective inter-sectorial and inter-governmental collaboration in addressing HIV/AIDS at LG
- Test a tool that identifies those rendered vulnerable by HIV/AIDS, their unmet needs and how these can be addressed by municipalities
- Establish a systematic way of involving CSO in watsan and HIV/AIDS issues
- Ensure that employees are supported in terms of prevention, care, treatment of HIV and AIDS and that the organizational business aspect is nurtured