

RENEWAL KENYA: HIGHLIGHTS ON CURRENT ROLES AND ACTIVITIES

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Although RENEWAL as a network has been functional since 2001, RENEWAL Kenya, a national network was established in 2005 as part and parcel of the wider regional network to address the complex issues of HIV&AIDS and its interconnectivities with food and nutrition security and livelihoods in Africa. The broader RENEWAL network is however presently active in South Africa, Zambia, Malawi and Uganda and its activities are supported by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

The core pillars of RENEWAL Kenya just like the RENEWAL Network are action research, capacity strengthening and policy communications. Specifically, RENEWAL Kenya's focus is to ensure that food and nutrition security and livelihoods become an integral part of HIV&AIDS research, programming and policy uptake respectively. RENEWAL Kenya's activities is guided by national advisory panels, a representative team from academia, civil society, government institutions, research institutions, UN Theme groups and networks of PLHIV.

RENEWAL Kenya works with relevant organizations in AIDS, public health, food and nutrition security to enhance the understanding of the worsening interactions between HIV&AIDS, food and nutrition security and livelihoods.

Current Activities of the National Network

Since its inception, one broad country level research study on HIV&AIDS, food and nutrition security has been completed. The study titled *"Linking Nutritional Support with Treatment of People Living with HIV: Lessons being Learned in Kenya"* by Elizabeth Byron, Stuart Gillespie, and Mabel Nangami representing has provided a basis for informing policy and scaling up nationwide best practices. Results of the study are available at the IFPRI website as a policy brief.

Through this study, National Aids Control Council (NACC) has recognized the vital role food plays in ARV treatment and subsequently, food and nutrition security and livelihoods now forms part and parcel of NACC's agenda for 2009 strategic directions. RENEWAL Kenya presently chairs a working group on food nutrition security within NACCs Monitoring and Coordination Group on Livelihoods and Food Security (MCG 3). Besides, RENEWAL Kenya is instrumental in the development of proposed NACCs national strategy on HIV&AIDS, food and nutrition security. This is a clear manifestation of RENEWAL Kenya's influence on policy directions on food and nutrition security & HIV&AIDS in the country.

A second study is underway. RENEWAL Kenya is in the process of conducting a research study under the EAC/AMREF Lake Victoria Basin Partnership (EALP), a program coordinated by Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC) and managed by AMREF. The aim of this research program is to establish a framework for improving the effectiveness of HIV&AIDS responses for mobile populations in agricultural systems in the Lake Victoria Basin region.

In consultation with AMREF, RENEWAL Kenya is in the process of conducting studies that will deepen the understanding of HIV&AIDS in the agricultural plantation systems within the Lake Victoria basin region (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania). The findings of this study will lead to piloting of HIV responses in the agricultural plantations within the Lake basin region. It will also lead to harmonisation of policies for seasonal migrant workers in agricultural plantations among the EAC member states.

As part of planning process, exploratory field visits to plantations in the Lake Victoria Basin region has been undertaken to establish the status of mobile workers regarding their vulnerability and risks to HIV&AIDS. The plantations so far visited are located in different provinces in the country notably; Rift Valley (Unilever Tea Kenya), Western (Mumias Sugar Company) and Nyanza (Sony Sugar Company).

In each plantation, the initial investigations involved interviews with the plantation management (Human resource managers and in some instances the Chief Executive Officers, medical staff (i.e. nurses, clinical officers & company doctors), communities of seasonal workers (desegregated by gender) and the district health management teams (DHMT's). It's important to note that these preliminary findings will be instrumental in the development of research instruments.

As well, the initial impressions and findings from the plantation visits have been documented in reports, shared locally in a Nairobi workshop with AMREF and LVBC team and internationally during the Ecohealth Forum in Merida, Mexico in December, 2008.

Note also that as part of this research activity, M&E and HMIS Taskforce has been set up within EALP and RENEWAL Kenya is a member. The aim of the task force has been to steer the implementation of the M&E/HMIS and to provide database on HIV&AIDS related information on mobility induced risks and vulnerabilities within the Lake Victoria Basin region of the five EAC member states. A number of meetings have been organized for task force members in the region and one of the outcomes of these meetings has been the development of the regional and national M&E indicators for HIV&AIDS mobility induced risks and vulnerabilities.

Additional Activities of RENEWAL Kenya includes:

- Identification of national priority issues and gaps, requirements and new opportunities for HIV&AIDS, food and nutrition security
- Developing research proposals and undertaking research on emerging issues on HIV&AIDS, livelihood, food and nutrition security;
- Networking and partnership development with relevant organizations and institutions
- Keeping track of on-going research studies e.g. (AMREF/RENEWAL), keeping in touch with new policy directions, trends and opportunities on HIV&AIDS food and nutrition security
- Organizing periodic round table meetings and workshops aimed at reviewing RENEWAL Kenya's activities and discussing the network's future directions
- Advocacy and policy influencing at the national level (e.g. through NACC)
- Participation in international, regional and national foras advancing HIV&AIDS, food and nutrition security issues

Partnerships

- International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)
- Partnerships with a number of credible local organisations e.g. AMREF; WFP; IDRC; UNICEF; UNDP; FAO; NACC; Valid International; Policy Project/ Costella Futures; CIAT; Institute of Policy Research Analysis (IPAR); LVBC; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Agriculture and local NGOs.

Secretariat

RENEWAL Kenya is presently hosted at the Kenyatta University

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