

## Western Region HIV/AIDS Advocacy Network The Statement of Launch: Kisumu, December 2006

**We, the people of the Lake Victoria region, including HIV positive women and men, this 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2006 are:**

***Deeply concerned*** that despite various interventions aimed at prevention, care, support and treatment of HIV and AIDS, the pandemic continues to have a devastating impact in our region;

***Further concerned*** that in spite of the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on the lives and livelihood of those already living with the virus, those working to reduce the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS are yet to recognize the role of advocacy in all HIV and AIDS interventions;

***Mindful of the fact*** that the disregard for people's human rights and the associated stigma and discrimination which is entrenched both in our cultures and our institutions compromises the provision of services and care for those living with HIV

***Aware for example,*** that there are now life prolonging antiretroviral drugs and other drugs for management of opportunistic infections; BUT that there are social, cultural and economic barriers that inhibit their utilization

***Acknowledging*** that the Kenya government and a host of civil society organizations are already committed to achieving a sustained reduction in HIV/AIDS prevalence and improving the quality of life for those already infected with the scourge in the region;

***Further acknowledging*** that a number of donors and well-wishers are putting their resources to reduce the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS among the poor and the marginalized

***Further concerned*** that despite clear frameworks that set forth governance structures of institutions charged with coordination of HIV/AIDS activities; in practice, these provisions, especially the ones relating to participation/involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS continue to be ignored. Worse still, weak systems and poor governance structures continue to provide avenues for misappropriation and mismanagement of resources meant for mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS.

***Noting*** with grave concern, that despite HIV/AIDS being declared a national disaster in 1999, many development practitioners still view the scourge as a

health issue; and that it is only through concerted advocacy that development actors will initiate and sustain the process of HIV/AIDS mainstreaming in their everyday work.

***Dismayed that***, notwithstanding the knowledge and experience that Tuberculosis is NOT ONLY related to HIV BUT ALSO worsens the health status of those living with HIV; there still continue to be lack of enhanced TB/HIV coordination at the regional level. TB/HIV Coordination efforts is an urgent advocacy Issue

***We note with urgency*** that there is a critical need to move from rhetoric to action if we are to achieve a sustained reduction in the spread of the HIV and AIDS pandemic and its increasing and alarming impact in the Lake Victoria region. Emphasizing that **ADVOCACY** is a critical strategy in realizing the commitment of: **Keeping the Promise and promoting Accountability** as renewed during the World AIDS Day 2006.

## **Subsequently,**

We, people living with HIV/AIDS gather here today on behalf of our organizations and on behalf of ourselves to launch **Regional HIV/AIDS Advocacy Coalition**. This Consortium to be known as Western HIV/AIDS Advocacy Network will, among others, spearhead all HIV/AIDS Advocacy Issues on behalf of institutions working to reduce the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS and PLWHAs in the Lake Victoria region

*December 8, 2006*

*Signed:*

AIDS Information Centre [AIC]; Association of people living with AIDS in Budalangi [APAB]; Association of People with AIDS in Kuria [APAK]; APAME; ALTAQWA Women Group; AMREF *Maanisha*; Busia Teachers Support Group; Central Youth Group CBO; Caring Widows Women Group; Day Aid Care; Eden of Hope Complex Programme [EDHOCOP]; Madeka HIV/AIDS/STIs; Kibisom W. Group ; *Kupambana* Network; *Lishe Bora*; Mbita PSG; Movement of Men Against AIDS in Kenya [MMAK]; Muhoroni Association of People with AIDS [MAPAS]; Mudomari Widows; Positive Families Network [+FN]; MOPLWA (Matungu Organization); *Musokoto* CBO; Multiface Development and Research Centre [MDRC]; *Moi's Bridge Community Welfare Organization [MUCOWESO]\**; Kisumu Youth Self Help Group; *Jiw Pachi* Advocacy Group; *Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS in Bondo [NEPHAB]\**; Nyakach Network of people with HIV/AIDS [NYANEPHA]; NEPHAUS; *Orongo* Widows and Orphans; SACRENA; Society of Women and AIDS in Kenya [SWAK Nyanza]; Seven Golden Sisters; *Shirika* Self Help Group; KACPLWHAS; The Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS in Kenya [TAPWAK Ugunja]; Suba Theatre Youth Group; SONY HBC; Success Women Group; *Tumaini* Support Group; *Tushauriane* S.H.G.; *Tuungane* Support Group, URUSI PTC.; Victory Post Test Group; Women Fighting AIDS in Kenya [WOFAK]

\* Network members that did not attend the launch.

Convened by: *Maanisha*: Community Initiatives to fight HIV/AIDS in the Lake Victoria region, a project of the African Medical and Research Foundation [AMREF] with funding from Swedish International Development Agency [Sida].