



**The potential and perils of partnership:
Christian religious entities and collaborative stakeholders responding to HIV
and AIDS in Kenya, Malawi and the DRC**

An ARHAP Report

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REPORT

Reporting on a participatory collaborative process

Suggested Reference

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Executive summary

The report, *The promise and perils of partnership*, concerns the possibilities and challenges of collaborative relationships in the struggle against HIV and AIDS in Africa, specifically between Christian religious entities on the one hand, and national governments and donors on the other. These collaborative partnerships are considered within the framework of the *Three Ones* policy promoted by UNAIDS, the principles of which include one agreed action framework, one national coordinating authority, and one monitoring and evaluation system.

The findings in the report emerge from a participatory research process with a range of stakeholders in three African countries, namely, Kenya, Malawi and the DRC. They point to both the real challenges facing collaboration in the Three Ones approach, but also to the potential that these partnerships have for responding to the HIV and AIDS epidemic.

These findings are presented as the first phase of an ongoing process. The second phase includes gathering a wide range of responses to the findings, and then engaging the same stakeholders in a way that enables them to develop a series of recommendations and strategies to guide their own work.

1. Background

In June 2007, the Christian relief and development charity *Tearfund* (UK office) in partnership with UNAIDS approached the *African Religious Health Assets Programme* (ARHAP) with a view to undertaking research into the relationships between donors and governments, and religious organisations. The primary purpose of this research was to build mutual trust and create effective and more long-term sustainable partnerships in the response to HIV and AIDS.

By common agreement between UNAIDS, Tearfund and the ARHAP research team it was decided that the research would take place in Kenya, Malawi and the DRC, and would focus primarily on Christian organizations as these represented the most prevalent form of religious organizations in the three countries. As the research involved partnership with government and donors, it was further decided to focus first on those organizations with a national presence. The term 'Christian religious entities' was used rather than the more common 'faith based organization' (FBO), as it better captures the reality of religious formations in Africa.

The Three Ones approach was not originally part of the research framework, but emerged as a significant structure for thinking about partnership through the research process itself.

The contract was awarded to ARHAP, through the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, in December 2007, for an initial study to be conducted from January 2007 to July 2008, with an interim report available for comment in August 2008. It was understood that the collaborative process would continue beyond the interim report. The lessons learned would be taken back to the three countries, and the process continued and widened to include a broader collaborative group.

2. Research overview

The research involved a qualitative research design using three methods, namely, desk review, participatory inquiry, and self-administered questionnaires. The desk review made use of previous ARHAP research reports, and a variety of further materials including academic databases, web-based information, and information gathered directly from religious entities and participants. In all cases, materials were individually assessed in terms of relevance, interest, the scarcity of other

documentation of its type, and quality. The report of the literature review is itself a significant contribution to the goals of the research.

For the participatory workshops, a stratified purposive method was used to identify the study population in the three countries, aided by fifteen key informants who were recognised to have significant knowledge of the research terrain. In each country the study population was divided into two groups, namely, Christian religious entities and collaborative stakeholders, (meaning government, donors and other religious groups), each with their own workshop, which meant that six workshops were held (2 in each country). 56 Christian religious entities in total were identified as meeting the research criteria in the 3 countries, and of these 38 participated in the workshops (67%). 58 collaborative stakeholders in total were identified as meeting the research criteria in the 3 countries, and of these 32 participated in the workshops (55%). These figures suggest that those who participated in the research are a significant cross section of the key organisations involved in responding to HIV and AIDS in the three countries, and that the findings are representative of the situation as it exists.

The self-administered questionnaires were used to confirm the findings of the participatory workshops, and to provide more specific detail where necessary. 22 of 45 questionnaires were returned by the Christian religious entities (48%), and 16 of 48 questionnaires were returned by the collaborative stakeholders (33%).

Because of the differences across the three countries, the findings for each country are represented in their own dedicated chapter. These findings fall into four key areas, namely, the context in which Christian religious entities are working, the work of Christian religious entities in the promotion of Universal Access, the strengths and weaknesses of collaborative partnerships between Christian religious entities and other role players; and the challenges and potential of collaborative partnerships between Christian religious entities and other role players. These chapters each conclude with country-specific recommendations for taking forward the process. These are understood to be preliminary suggestions to stimulate the second phase of the research.

3. Findings about collaboration

The final chapter in this report seeks to synthesise the findings in these three countries in terms of what this might mean for collaborative partnerships in Africa. Here the importance of the Three Ones approach has emerged as crucial. The principles of the Three Ones include: one agreed HIV and AIDS Action Framework that provides the basis for coordinating the work of all partners; one National AIDS Coordinating Authority, with a broad based multi-sector mandate; and one agreed country level Monitoring and Evaluation System

The report identifies seven key findings that are important in terms of strengthening the collaborative involvement of Christian religious entities in the Three Ones approach. These are:

1. Different contexts in Africa are at different stages of multi-sectoral collaboration as expressed in their commitment to the Three Ones principles. The implementation of the Three Ones principles is a development strategy, and not simply a response to a medical problem.
2. One national action framework, one coordinating body, and one monitoring and evaluation system, in and of itself, does not promote better collaboration between government, donors, and Christian religious entities. Trust is an important element in making the Three Ones work.

3. The Three Ones principles can only be effective if there is recognised and effective representation on the co-ordinating structures through which government operates, and a common commitment to monitoring and evaluation.
4. For multisectoral collaboration to be an effective response to the AIDS crisis, each group of collaborative stakeholders need to be in existing collaborative relationships within their sectoral grouping.
5. The nature of donor involvement is crucial to national governments and Christian religious entities 'owning' the agendas of strategic plans to mitigate the epidemic
6. Christian religious entities need to be recognised by national governments as having vital assets necessary to mitigating the HIV and AIDS epidemic, including reach, legitimacy, resources and structures. The leverage of these assets in this task necessitates ongoing collaboration
7. Christian religious entities need to acknowledge their conservative belief systems as being a hindrance to an effective collaborative and be willing to build a contextual theological response that recognises poverty as a key driver of the HIV and AIDS epidemic.

4. Recommendations

It was envisaged that Phase I would culminate in an Interim report. This report and these findings provide the foundation for Phase II, which involves the following two further steps:

- To make the findings of the research and the proposed policy implications available to key actors in the field of AIDS work, and to gain their perspectives. It was agreed that this would take place at the International AIDS conference in Mexico in August 2008.
- Thereafter to work with a representative gathering of key leaders from both the Christian religious entities and the collaborative stakeholders to establish ways of strengthening their partnerships, and their alignment around the National Aids Strategy.

It is recommended that this Interim Report be the basis for this second phase, and that all stakeholders be invited to participate in this on-going process.

5. Report Structure

This report presents the data and findings from the study in seven chapters:

Chapter 1, 'Introduction' covers preliminary introduction, the general research approach and the basic theoretical framework and assumptions on which this work rests.

Chapter 2, 'Methodology' works through the design and process of the research method.

Chapter 3, 'The context of partnership' draws on secondary literature to outline key thematic concerns emerging from current work on collaboration in the context of HIV and AIDS in Africa. This provides the backdrop for the country-specific analysis that follows.

Chapters 4 (Kenya), 5 (Malawi) and 6 (DRC) draw from the research process in each country to articulate what was learned about collaboration with Christian religious entities in each context.

Chapter 7, 'Recommendations' summarises the findings of the study and its general recommendations for sustaining and enhancing collaboration.