

About the National AIDS Commission of Liberia

Background

The first attempt to establish the National AIDS Commission was made in the year 2000. However, it was not until June 2007 that the National AIDS Commission was formally reconstituted with the aim of promoting a more multi sectoral response beyond the health sector.

A steering committee was set up, and this committee developed a draft legislation and an initial strategic framework for HIV in 2008. The full functioning of the Commission was delayed due to delays in finalizing its legal status. The appointment of an Executive Director in February 2009; the passage into law of the Commission's Act in September 2010, and the completion and launch of the HIV and AIDS National Strategic Framework II 2010- 2014 marked the beginning of a more effective coordination of a truly multi sectoral national HIV and AIDS response.

Relationship between the National AIDS Control Program (NACP) and the National AIDS Commission

Following the discovery of the first case of HIV in Liberia in 1986, the National AIDS & STI Control Program of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare was established in 1987 to spearhead the government's health response to the pandemic. Due to the outbreak of the war and its duration, the national response to HIV and AIDS was hampered. The war itself also contributed to the increase of the disease in the country, through such occurrences as rape, the huge exodus of health practitioners from the country, and the collapse of the health system, among others.

The National AIDS Commission of Liberia (NAC) was established by an act of the Legislature in 2010 under the Office of the President as a demonstration of government's unwavering commitment to, and involvement in, the national response to HIV and AIDS. The Commission was established to ensure a multi sector, harmonized response. Hence, while the National HIV and AIDS Control Program (NACP) focuses on government's health sector response to the pandemic, the National AIDS Commission (NAC) is responsible for coordinating the multi sector response.

Mandate of the National AIDS Commission

The mandate of the Commission is to oversee HIV and AIDS prevention, care, treatment, and support activities throughout Liberia. It is an independent body under the Office of the President of the Republic of Liberia. Its purpose is to serve as the primary national body to coordinate, monitor, and mobilize resources for the national

response to HIV. The Commission is chaired by the President of the Republic of Liberia. It aims to promote the active involvement of the private and public sectors and includes all major prevention, care and treatment components, such as HIV prevention among most-at-risk populations, condom promotion, treatment of sexually transmitted infections, voluntary counselling and testing and Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission services, blood safety, ARV treatment and treatment of opportunistic infections, and Orphan and Vulnerable Children Support. The Commission is responsible for the overall coordination, supervision, and policy formulation of the national response. In this function, the National AIDS Commission oversees the implementation of the National Strategic Framework. It is also providing policy guidance to all national partners. In this regard, The NAC Secretariat manages on a daily basis key tasks in the field of national coordination, monitoring and evaluation, and advocacy and policy guidance in the field of HIV.

Organizational Profile

Liberia subscribes to the UNAIDS' global principles of "The Three Ones" in its effort to coordinate the national response. The "Three Ones refer to

1. One HIV and AIDS coordinating authority (the National AIDS Commission);
2. One HIV and AIDS action plan that provides the basis of implementation for all partners (The National Strategic Plan 2015-2020), and
3. One country level monitoring and evaluation system for planning and coordinating the national response in the country (The National M&E Plan).

Structure/Composition of the Commission

The National AIDS Commission's structure includes a 29 member Board of Directors; a five member Commission, and a Secretariat/staff.

Board of Directors

The National AIDS Commission is a corporate body governed by a Board of Directors whose members are appointed by the President. The Board presently is composed of 29 members drawn from the government and non-government sectors, People Living with HIV (PLHIV) and individuals who are selected for their outstanding expertise and commitment to the HIV and AIDS response. The Board of Directors is chaired by the President of Liberia. The Board meets biannually to receive and discuss technical and policy issues through the Partnership approach.

Members of the Board of Directors

The Commission's Board of Directors comprises the following members:

1. The President of the Republic of Liberia as Chairperson
2. Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Vice Chairperson
3. Minister of Education
4. Minister of Youth and Sports
5. Minister of Information, Culture, and Tourism
6. Minister of Gender and Development
7. Minister of Internal Affairs
8. Minister of Labour
9. The Liberia Council of Churches
10. The Liberia Chamber of Commerce
11. The Liberia Bankers Association
12. The Liberia Business Association
13. The Liberia Rubber Planters Association
14. Liberia Federation of Labour Unions
15. The Liberia National Teachers Union
16. The National Muslim Council of Liberia
17. The Liberia Medical and Dental Association
18. The Liberia Nurses Association
19. The National Bar Association
20. The Federation of Liberian Youth
21. The Liberia Marketing Association
22. The Liberia Pharmaceutical Association
23. The People Living with HIV and AIDS Representative (female)
24. The People Living with HIV and AIDS Representative (male)
25. The Country Representative of the World Health Organization
26. County Representative of UNICEF
27. Country Representative of UNFPA
28. A representative of NGOs in the health care services
29. All other persons or organizations as the President may appoint

Tenure and Removal of Members of the Board

With the exception of the President, ministers of government, and country representatives of international organizations, each member of the Board shall hold office for a period not exceeding three (3) years and shall be eligible for reappointment.

A Board member shall cease to be a member of the Commission if:

- a. He/she resigns from the Board;

- b. The representing institution for any good causes revokes appointment of such a member;
- c. A member is appointed to such other position that will be inconsistent with his membership of the Board;
- d. A member is absent from three consecutive meetings of the Board without sufficient cause, in which case the Chairman of the Commission shall by letter to the agency he/she represents, requesting a revocation of the appointment;
- e. Upon expiry of the three year term and is not reappointed for a further term.

Meetings of the Board of Directors

The Commission shall hold its Board of Directors meeting bi annually; however, it shall also hold emergency meetings, provided that the Chairman of the Commission, by directive of the Board Chairperson, may at any time, call such a meeting. The meetings of the Board of Directors shall be presided over by the Chairperson (the President), in whose absence, the Vice Chairperson (Minister of Health) shall preside. In the absence of both, the Chairperson shall designate a presiding officer.

The Commission

Section 2.1 of the Act Establishing the National AIDS Commission of 2010 states that the President, with the consent of the Senate, shall appoint five (5) Commissioners including a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson to steer the affairs of the Commission. Each Commissioner is appointed for a period of four years, for which they serve during good behaviour. Consistent thereto, the Commission has five Commissioners with responsibilities for five key priority areas as follows:

- 1. Chairman** – The Chairperson is responsible for the overall administrative and programmatic operations of the Commission. He/she serves as the official spokesperson of the Commission; he/she presides over all the meetings of the Commission; represents the Commission at all conferences, except where he designates another Commissioner or a staff for the purpose. The Chairperson submits an annual report to the President, Board of Directors, and the National Legislature.
- 2. Commissioner, Program and Policy** - The role of this Commissioner includes policy and program development, as well as directing policy and strategic program planning for the Commission.
- 3. Partnership Commissioner** – The partnership Mandate of the Commission is intended to develop and coordinate partnerships, which includes mobilizing all partners of the national response (public and private sectors, civil society, non-governmental and community based organizations) to mainstream HIV and create an enabling environment for HIV and AIDS interventions in all sectors.

- 4. Commissioner for Decentralization/County Support** – This mandate is responsible for building and supporting the National AIDS Commission’s county offices for the coordination of the county response activities, involving key partners, sectors, districts and communities, to generate active involvement and participation in the national response to HIV and AIDS.
- 5. Commissioner, Strategic Information Management/Monitoring and Evaluation** - The Strategic Information Management mandate area is intended to monitor the implementation and impact of the national response to HIV and AIDS. The main activities include coordination of data collection and reporting, assessing the national response indicators, evaluation of interventions of the national response, and research.

Secretariat

The Commission’s Secretariat is headed by an Executive Director appointed by the Commission through the normal vetting process. He/she is responsible for running the day-to-day operations of the Commission including finance, administration, procurement, human resources, and other support services.

Functions of the Commission

According to the act establishing the National AIDS Commission, the following are the roles and responsibilities of the Commission:

1. Ensure effective coordination and management of the decentralized, multi sectoral national response to HIV
2. Develop and implement a National Strategic Framework for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating all HIV and AIDS programs through a multi sectoral approach;
3. Mobilize, expend, and coordinate resources through an efficient allocation system;
4. Play a lead advocacy role for the prevention and control of HIV and AIDS;
5. Create strategic linkages among national and international stakeholders in a coordinated response to HIV and AIDS;
6. Collect, analyze, disseminate, and shares information on HIV and AIDS and its consequences;

7. Promulgate rules providing protocols for counseling, testing, caring, supporting, and treatment for all members of Most at Risk Populations;
8. Promote research, information sharing and documentation on HIV and AIDS prevention and control;
9. Develops policies to respond to the HIV and AIDS pandemic and manage its impact in Liberia;
10. Promotes positive living of people with HIV and AIDS;
11. Protects communal rights of people infected with and affected by HIV and AIDS;
12. Advises the government on all matters relating to the prevention and control of HIV and AIDS

Funding for the Commission

Financial resources for the Commission's operations and the fulfilment of its mandate are obtained from the following sources:

1. Such amounts as may be appropriated by government through the national budget;
2. Donations, gifts, grants, loans, bequests and sums as may be payable to the Commission;
3. Funds acquired in the course of performing its functions
4. Any other lawful source of funding