

NACC Restructured to Meet its Mandate

"The upshot of the restructuring is that the council has become more focused than ever before in championing the war against the pandemic in line with the HIV/AIDS National Response."



▶ **NACC, CODA MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES SIGN FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CONTRACT**

In its continued efforts to fight HIV/AIDS, in Kenya, National AIDS Control Council has signed an agreement with Coda Management Associates, a Financial Management Agency (FMA) to extend service for six months. The contract period covers July - December 2005, which coincides with the closure of KHADREP.

Coda Consulting Group Inc. has its head office in, USA. The Group has over 25 years of effective experience in provision of consultancy and advisory services in areas similar to those of FMA assignment especially in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa.

Coda Management Associates is a member of Coda Consulting Group worldwide and offers consulting services in areas of financial management, economics, management, accounting, policy, information management systems, capacity building and training and other related fields. CMA offices in Kenya are located at Anniversary Towers, Nairobi.

CMA is currently involved in the Kenya World Bank Financial Management Agency for HIV/AIDS, which covers all aspects of financial management, disbursement and receiving accounting reports related to the operations of the HIV/AIDS Community Initiative Account. CMA has had effective experience in providing consultancy services, not only to national, public, and private organizations, but also to the major international agencies such as the World Bank, ADB, EU, UNDP, UNESCO, FAO and other development agencies using its consultancy personnel from various parts of Africa, as well as specialized experts from overseas.

Coda Management Associates has been working with National AIDS Control Council since 2002.

MEDIA SUPPORT IN HIV/AIDS WAR: NEED FOR CLOSE LIAISON BETWEEN JOURNALISTS AND HIV/AIDS NGOs

In 2003, many Kenyans stopped visiting VCT centers after the media consistently reported that rapid HIV tests have inaccurate results. The sources of the reports were laboratory technicians who were unhappy about the money they were losing on carrying out ELISA tests. VCT centers, it seemed, took away their business.

The story was first published in one of the country's largest daily newspapers. Radio stations followed with early morning bulletins quoting the newspaper. The story spread rapidly. By lunchtime, the news about "inaccurate HIV tests" led almost every radio and television news bulletin.

These misleading and damaging stories were published as a direct result of two

things: poor journalism on the part of the news media and bad media relations on the part of the local AIDS organizations.

Had the journalist who first published the story had the knowledge and access to reliable sources at medical institutions and VCT centers, this fiasco could have been prevented.

This is why it is as important to train NGOs and government officials in effective media relations as it is to train journalists on HIV/AIDS reporting.

Very few Kenyan NGOs have a designated person to deal with the media. Even fewer have cultivated personal relationships with journalists or would be willing to give out their home

and cell phone numbers to journalists so that they can be reached after hours. Breaking stories such as the VCT one described above happen at unexpected times. When radio journalists wanted to get reaction from government or medical experts for their 6 am bulletins, most did not have access to such people. It may sound like an early hour to be interviewed on the phone, but the discomfort of an early morning interview would have been far less than the efforts to clear up the negative consequences of that story. But, the same can be said about journalists. The newspaper journalist who broke the story should have at least asked the opinion of a VCT expert to explain the real facts and politics of the AIDS world to him.

Part of creating good AIDS journalists, would be to create a pool of journalists who regularly report on these issues.

Increasing journalists' HIV/AIDS knowledge and giving them access to useful resources will certainly help them to produce more responsible stories. But, this can't be done if a large part of the resources – in this case AIDS experts – do not realize the importance of being available to them and don't understand how the news world works.

That could be one reason why trainings

that NGOs offer to the media often don't work. They mostly consist of expert after expert presenting medical issues to journalists without anyone explaining how those issues could become stories.

Part of creating good AIDS journalists, would be to create a pool of journalists who regularly report on these issues. In radio, for example, there are journalists like Esther Macharia from Radio Citizen and

Ann Mikia and Sammy Muraya of the KBC. They all have weekly HIV/AIDS programs.

Journalists who often report on HIV/AIDS get the opportunity to develop specialized knowledge on the issue. They also get the chance to create personal relationships with AIDS experts. But they can't do it alone. They need NGOs to work with them.

MEDIA TIPS FOR NGOS

- ▶ If you understand how the media operates, you will be able to manage its coverage of the issues you advocate for to a great extent.
- ▶ Journalists want a news angle to sell a story to their editors. They want the story to be published or aired as much as you want your issue to be heard. If you don't understand what a news angle is, your issue may not be published at all. A news angle is the "So what" part of a story. The part that tells people why they should care about your work. The launch of a new project is not a news angle. The reason why that project will change people's lives, is.
- ▶ People like to read or listen to stories with human faces. They don't just want to hear experts talking; they want to hear the story of a person

who is affected by the issue the story is about. Reporters call that a case study. If journalists ask your opinion on, say, the effect of property rights on women, they are likely to also ask your help with finding a woman who has been affected to speak to them. Help them with this – the case study is what will make the story come alive.

- ▶ You need to know your audience. When you organize a media event, you need to first identify who you want the media to reach. Do you want feature articles in newspaper supplements or a short front page news story? Feature and news journalists generally work in different departments and often even have different editors.
- ▶ Develop personal relationships with journalists who report on these issues.

Take them out for lunch, or phone them from time to time to inform them about new projects at your NGO and let them see the good work you are doing. You will be surprised about the effect this can have.

- ▶ Radio is the medium that reaches the most people in Kenya. Yet, NGOs and government officials rarely listen to it. There are several quality HIV/AIDS programs with high listenerships. Two examples are:
 - Hope Corner on Radio Citizen at Wednesdays at 2 – 2:30 pm
 - A Stitch in Time on the KBC English Service, Thursdays 11am – 12 am.

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