There is increasing awareness about the concept of mainstreaming. However, initiatives are limited to internal HIV mainstreaming, very few municipalities are doing external mainstreaming. While municipalities have an idea of what is mainstreaming, no one is sure of what it requires in practice. The somewhat vague, non-precise character and lack of ownership of the concept are the main barriers to poor implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the impact. Mainstreaming is only a step towards multi-sectoral action and mainstreaming without multi-sectoral action and collaboration will promote silo working, and does not promote efficiency.

The aim of the study is to reflect on experiences of municipalities in the implementation of mainstreaming of HIV and AIDS in South Africa. The study was a case study of ten urban municipalities across nine provinces in South Africa. The study was guided by the following objectives:

**Background**

**Urban HIV**
- Urbanisation in South Africa has increased faster than in other African countries.
- More than 62% of the population is now urban.
- The HIV prevalence is found to be double in urban compared to rural areas.
- HIV and AIDS impacts on municipalities both internally and externally.
- Yet municipalities find it difficult to respond to HIV and AIDS which, from the bio-medical perspective, is outside of their mandate.

**National Guidelines**
- The NSP highlights the need for a multi-sectoral response to address HIV and AIDS, TB and STIs in SA.
- But with no clear framework or guidance on how it should be done.
- Provinces are also new to the concept.
- Developmental local government recognises the cross cutting and development nature of HIV and AIDS.
- So far, municipalities have operationalised multi-sectoral action through mainstreaming.

**HIV and AIDS in Local Government**
- Mainstreaming aims to integrate HIV and AIDS into the core mandate of sectors.
- The IDP process is a tool that municipalities use to mainstream HIV and AIDS.
- The rationale for mainstreaming is to effectively utilise resources and maximise health gains through multi sector efforts.
- While municipalities have a general idea of the concept of mainstreaming, no one is sure of what it requires in practice.

**Study Objectives**
- Describe current initiatives, structures and intergovernmental relations (IGR) involved in mainstreaming HIV and AIDS in municipalities.
- Explore factors that facilitate or hinder implementation of mainstreaming of HIV and AIDS in local government.
- Draw lessons and make recommendations to inform future implementation of mainstreaming of HIV and AIDS in local government.

**Methods**
- A purposive case study of ten urban municipalities across nine provinces in South Africa.
- Data collection included semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews with HIV Coordinators and IDP managers in selected municipalities as well as document review.
- Transcripts were manually coded and analysed using thematic content analysis.
- Ethical considerations were addressed through a letter of support from SALGA, participant information sheets and informed consent.

**Key Findings**

- There is increasing awareness about the concept of mainstreaming.
- Initiatives are limited to internal HIV mainstreaming, very few municipalities are doing external mainstreaming.
- Coordination varies across municipalities: IDPs and District or Local AIDS Councils structures are weak.
- Some municipalities receive good mainstreaming related support, but this only applies in municipalities where DCoG and SALGA provincial offices are strong on mainstreaming.
- There is an assumption that integration will just happen without any form of intervention.
- Implementation becomes easy if there is support from political leaders and senior managers (reflected in their contracts) (See Fig.1).
- A passionate driver plays a critical role in mainstreaming HIV and AIDS.

**Factors that facilitate the implementation of mainstreaming (30 interviews) (Fig.1)**

**Discussion and Recommendations**
- Good mainstreaming should go beyond responding to HIV and AIDS within the comparative advantage of sectors.
- There should be a strategy defining the intended goal of mainstreaming, and a clear indication of where and how each sector will contribute towards achieving the main goal of mainstreaming in that municipality.

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References