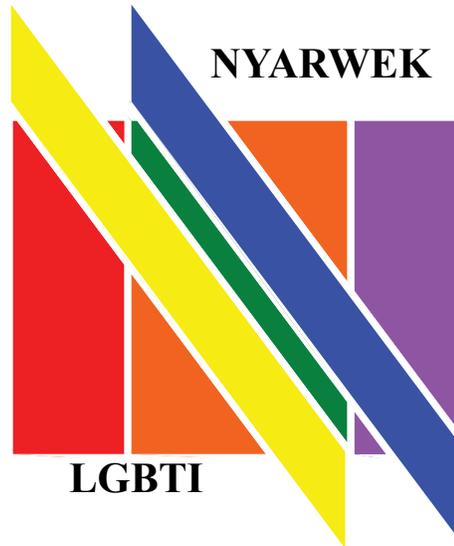


**Let Good Be Told In us (LGBTI)  
COALITION**  
**Nyanza Rift Valley and Western Kenya  
LGBTI (NYARWEK) COALITION**



**METHODOLOGY MEMBERS  
ENGAGEMENT (CLUSTER APPROACH)**

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## INTRODUCTION

Nyanza Rift valley Western Kenya (NYARWEK) is a membership regional LGBTI coalition based in Kisumu conceived the idea to reach out to the LGBTI individuals, partner groups within Western, Nyanza & Rift Valley region of Kenya in order to develop the existing relationships and coordinate workings and organization. It was also necessary for the groups to take stock and find the way forward in preparation of the CFCS by UHAI EASHRI meeting slated for May 2013 and to evaluate the baseline survey study on LGBTI organization in this region of Kenya. Currently, Nyarwek has 23 member groups who are involved in a myriad of activities around health, human rights, art & expression, advocacy and support groups for the LGBTI and sex worker populations in the region.

Against the background of the temporary closure of Kenya's national coalition GALCK and the tireless efforts of the transitioning team in the solid attempts at salvaging and restoring the crucial national organization, NYARWEK felt the need to step in and boost the LGBTI movement psyche by providing some much-needed action and direction. NYARWEK and its members laud the efforts made to restore the national coalition and hope that it bolsters the Kenyan movement to progress even further.

To this end, NYARWEK came up with an initiative to reach out to its member groups and inviting them for a two-day forum in order to discuss organizing, programs and activities in the region. It is during this meeting that the groups validated the cross cutting issues and formed synergies and a joint way forward and set of plan of actions. A survey in form of a questionnaire was disseminated to all the 17 LGBTI member groups of NYARWEK via e-mail subsequent to which a 2 day meeting was held on 21-22 May 2013 to reflect and map the way forward in movement building.

The questionnaire questions focused on drawing out the groups, their constituencies, their objectives, main activities, achievements, challenges, partners if any, strategies and the way forward.

These conversations, convening's, discussions and dialogue between various group representatives and the regional coalition bore fruit in echoing and acknowledging common goals or challenges; parallel or divergent activities and other commonalities and divergences that then paved way for the groups to see the need to partner, create synergies, merge and develop clusters that can enrich their work. It is important to mention that the groups in this coalition include urban, peri-urban and rural groups who are based in remote parts of the country. Majority of the groups are not based large towns or cities that are a unique aspect to organizing in Kenya.

Some of the groups also specialize in combating alcohol and substance abuse and domestic violence within the LGBTI populations and this is a groundbreaking in LGBTI movement organizing in Kenya. It is from this meeting where the cluster approach was established with the member groups.

### **Mutual Crosscutting Issues across the NYARWEK Member Groups**

Following the questionnaire survey, a two-day meeting was held to discuss the findings of the results. It was in this meeting facilitated by Nguru Karugu that the groups validated the major cross cutting issues that affected their organization in one way or another. The major and crucial issues were categorized into five core problem areas.

1. Funding
2. Health
3. Community Organizing/Networking
4. Security
5. Organizational & Personal Skills Development

#### **Funding**

Lack of resources and funding made it very hard for the group to do their activities whether it be to acquire a safe space to meet, or plan talks, participate in advocacy drives, provide or distribute safe sex material is virtually impossible to implement without funding. Many groups echo the grinding to a halt effect the lack of financial resources has caused them; some groups are long members while others have no way of uplifting the morale of the members.

Many groups are unregistered or lack the stringent organizational capacity and systems that donors expect and insist on having prior to even considering funding. A few donors have exceptionally come on board and partnered with the groups and provided much needed funds and capacity support for example OSIEA, amfAR & UHAI EASHRI. The realist however is that majority of the groups are unable to attract the attention of donor partners.

On a more individual level, many group members are also struggling to make ends meet to sustain their basic needs.

Therefore the circle of poverty is a pandemic crippling the LGBTI groups in rural and peri-urban settings. It is imperative that we recognize that homophobia in rural Kenya is intense as the setting and environment is insular and making it stifling for

the LGBTI community there. This also means that the LGBTI organizing in rural settings is distinct and the nuances and workings are very different from those based in larger towns and cities. There is need to appreciate that the social set up, the domestic situations, social spaces and the close-knit community that emphasizes traditionalist norms and are resistant to change or non-conformity would have a separate set of characteristics that we need recognize and find ways to support.

It is evident that there is substantial ignorance around the reality of the rural folk and this is from all corners, be it allies and partners and donors alike. Without addressing this crucial need, the chances of losing out on progress made from groups that have succeeded to organize in deep rural areas spread across a larger geographical reach are likely.

### **Health**

Many groups core objective was to find ways to improve health and well being of the members and by extension to the community in extremely intolerant spaces with less than adequate health care services that at best lacking even for the general populations.

Some of the groups have sparked initiatives that seek to advocate for better health care and adoption of human rights to all regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation. They find ways to bring to fore the discussions of social justice among the rural folk. There is significant progress reflected in some of these ventures but the fact on the ground is that many members lack basic care and service. The concern of the groups in ensuring members are keeping health and encouraging better healthcare access for all is an urgent priority.

There is also a significant high rate of HIV/AIDS infections in these regions. One plus is the fact that several MARPS programmes are in place to help address HIV/AIDS focused issues. However, sometimes the allies and partners of the groups' inadvertently and carelessly breach confidentiality of the members be it outing them or reveal their status either due to lack of sensitivity to the environment or due to incompetencies. This oversight is extremely dangerous for the LGBTI and sex worker populations in these areas as their lives can be at serious risk. It has been one of the reasons that groups in rural areas hesitate to partner with allies and service providers, as it seems that there is no real investment or effort in understanding the unique risks posed because of where they are located.

There is need for service providers to think through tailor made system that adapt to rural folk and their service needs.

## **Community Organising & Networking**

A lot of the workings in organizations is disjointed causing a lot of duplication and reinvention of the wheel so to speak. Duplication of activities is also a waste of precious resources. Duplication brings rise to competition and unnecessary rivalry. Some solutions to this problem is to allow for groups to open to each other and seek synergies, partnerships in for a common goal is key in growing the both the movement and the groups.

It is unfortunate to note however that the primary motivation for some groups to come together and for an LGBTI group is to receive funding and not for any other social justice cause. This becomes clearer to peer organizations when attempts to create synergies and partnerships are sought.

It has become necessary for groups to come out of their comfort zones and reach out to other organizations in order to implement their missions.

## **Security**

Security is the backbone for the groups and their members. Personal safety is crucial for the LGBTI populations especially in rural Kenya where homophobia and intolerance towards non-conforming individuals can be life threatening.

Without resources to ensure that groups have a safe space to meet, without a steady income to ensure that the individuals have access to options when under threat or attack from society all contribute to making them vulnerable.

For male and female sex workers, the lack of protection from violent clients or police harassment is a reality they face each time they are in the streets working. For sexual minorities in Kenya the lack of protection and the high rates of state sponsored intolerance and high presence of extra judicial harassment contributes in hampering the growth in numbers of populations that can benefit from the groups and their work.

There are persistent threats, shunning and also affects the LGBTI individuals and contribute in silencing them.

Another issue that came up around security was the need for constant security updates, trainings, emergency protocols; safe houses and so on are necessary to continue to assure the group members that their safety is important and planned for allowing them to play their parts in building the movement.

Some groups had successfully engage security bodies like the police to reduce attacks from their clientele. Learning and replicating from successful formulas that exist in rural and peri –urban settings will go a long way in enhancing safety of the group and its members.

## **Organisation and Personal Skills Development**

Like any healthy movement, the LGBTI movement needs to grow from strength to strength. In many ways the members of the groups have been marginalized in various ways whether it is lack of education or work skills or no livelihood especially in a Kenyan rural setting.

In order to address this gap and in an effort to improve organizational capacity it is necessary to invest in ventures that improve the skills of the members and the organization. Some of these skills will go a long way in creating work, income and personal growth opportunities for the members and allow them to be self-sustaining.

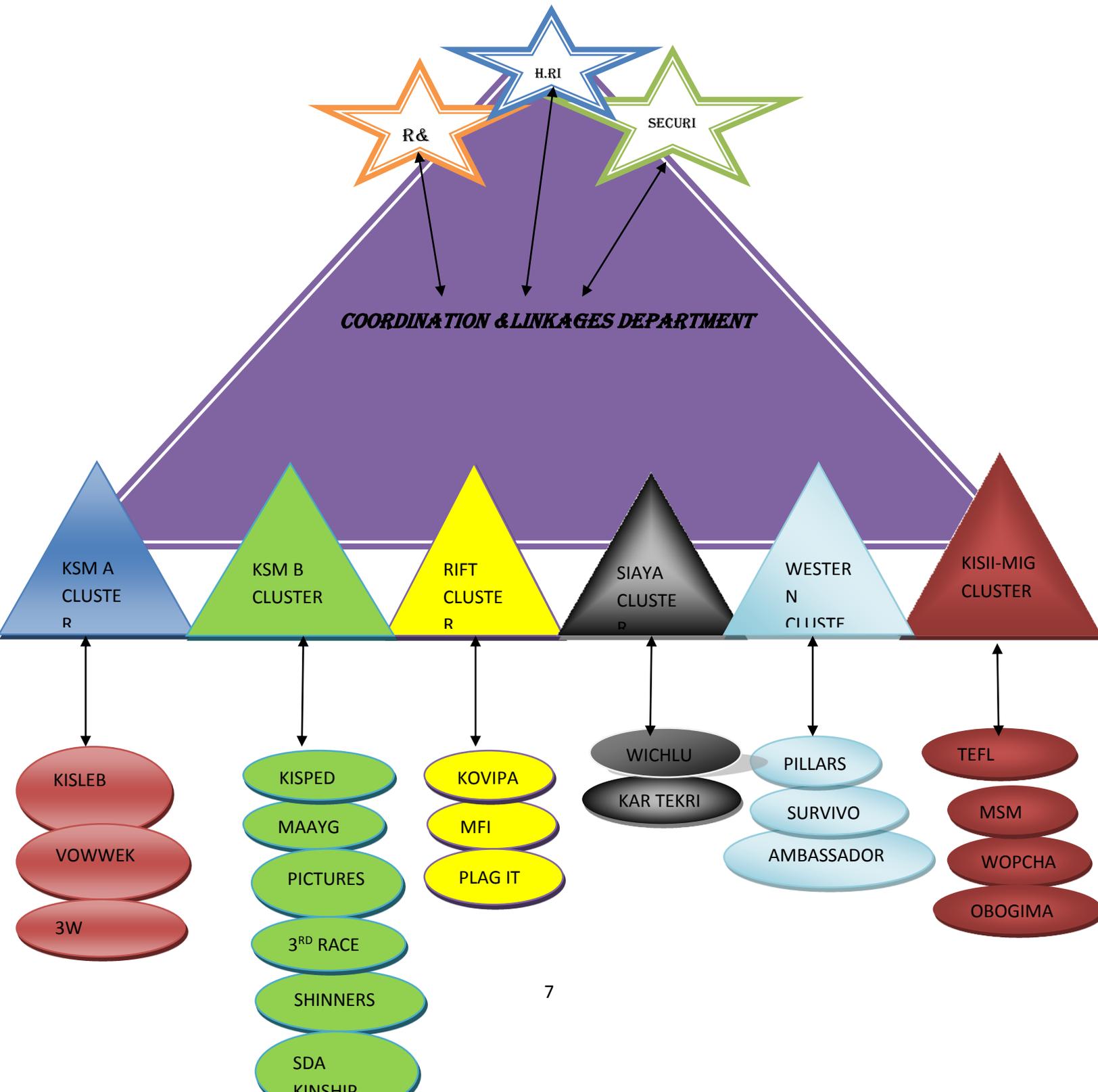
It is also important for the organization to find ways to improve their processes, or allow for alternative sources of income to fund projects and plans that they may want to implement.

This survey and subsequent discussed also recognized that clustering of the groups based on common objectives and /or geographical location is an essential part of personal and organizational growth.

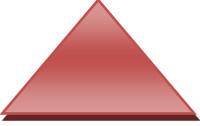
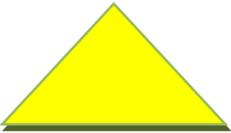
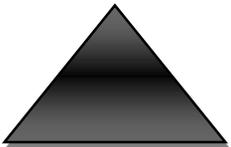
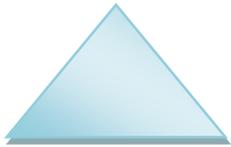
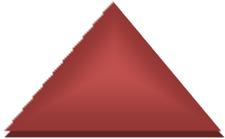
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**NYARWEK CLUSTER STRATEGY**



## **CLUSTER COORDINATORS NAMES AND CONTACTS**

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3.  DAVID DEO – [0722/0738/0772-875611](tel:0722/0738/0772-875611)/[deodavide@gmail.com](mailto:deodavide@gmail.com)
4.  PHILIP ODHIAMBO – 0704944258
5.  WEKESA EDDY -0719116134
6.  ASENEKAH EZEKIEL – 0715515717 /[ezekialarsenekah@yahoo.com](mailto:ezekialarsenekah@yahoo.com)

## **ROLES OF CLUSTER COORDINATORS**

- Receive program/project concerns from the member groups in the cluster.

- Contact person of a cluster between the cluster and the secretariat.
- Mobilize the cluster for joint activities.
- Make reports on cluster activity.
- Create allies within the cluster region.
- Represent the programmatic interests of his/her cluster at all times.
- Conduct him/ herself in a way that protects and upholds the image of Nyarwek at all times.
- Disseminate all the relevant information to the groups within the cluster in a timely manner.
- Support Nyarwek to achieve her mission and vision.
- Be aware of all the activities being done in the cluster and ensure effective participation of the cluster members.
- Be available at all times during working hours.
- Mobilization
- Reports to the Coordination and Linkages officer.

Nyarwek has 6 clusters divided according to the geographical regions. These groups within a cluster have the same focus areas of work. The cluster model works in such a way that the Coordination and linkages office is in charge of the groups within Nyarwek and through this department the other departments of Nyarwek get to work with the groups. The cluster coordinators work under the coordination and linkages office. The idea is to devolve the program work to the member groups so that they can own it from the grassroots level. Hence the secretariat acts as a coordinating body while the groups within the coalition run the programs by themselves.

## **Effective Communication**

This is very important and key on engaging with the cluster since it the foundation of organizing, the organization communication strategy is very clear on working with the coordinators within the cluster this always is usually through email, phone call or one to one meeting with the individual to strengthen the system.

## **Terms of Reference with the coordinators**

For the systems to run effective responsibility lies with the coordinator who is the contact person within the cluster in line with addressing the issues articulated above. The TOR is attached as for reference *Annex one*

## **Challenges:**

- I. Limited resources to run programs in all the clusters
- II. Most of the groups within the coalition are diminishing due to factors known to the groups themselves
- III. Effective Communication due to limited resources

## **Conclusion**

The cluster approach has proved to work in western Kenya as an approach to engage with the member groups on handling issues affecting them, the approach has increased ownership within the movement and formulated a clear structure on how to engage. The recommendation are one has to be careful while implementing the approach since we have to have a common understanding and a goal to fight together as a team work. This approach remains the rights of NYARWEK coalition for any one need to implement copy right reserved to acknowledge the organization.