

Changing How Mozambican CSOs Design HIV&AIDS Prevention Interventions

FHI 360's Capable Partners Program (CAP Mozambique) strengthens Mozambican civil society organizations (CSOs) and networks to increase the quality and impact of their HIV&AIDS treatment, care, and prevention activities. CAP initiated activities in Mozambique in early 2006, when many Mozambican organizations focused their HIV&AIDS prevention efforts on public awareness campaigns. Few organizations at that time had the knowledge or experience to create strategies that would engage individuals and communities in making the changes necessary to bring around a reduction in the HIV&AIDS infection rates in the country.

CHALLENGE: Mozambican CSOs were not in the habit of designing HIV&AIDS prevention activities based on the real needs of their target communities. In many cases, the individuals designing interventions assumed they understood the needs of their communities and developed their own strategies based on these assumptions or on what they thought the donors wanted to see. Little or no consultation with the target groups happened prior to proposal development; the prevention strategies developed did not define the most appropriate target audiences, did not include an analysis of the social norms affecting individual behavior, and failed to fully understand the factors contributing to individual knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. This resulted in the creation of interventions that did not address the real problems of the community - or did so in a manner that appeared artificial and irrelevant to the community. Communities were seen as recipients of services as opposed to active participants that reflect on their reality and could contribute to creating change.

SOLUTION: CAP designed a training model to help organizations walk through the steps necessary to consult with their target populations, gather a clear picture of all of the issues that affect HIV&AIDS in the community, design a communication strategy targeting the specific needs of identified target groups, and create a strategy for behavior change. CAP's model for designing projects for behavior change includes: training in formative research, fieldwork to gather data, analysis and reporting, development of a communication strategy, and integration of the research and communication strategy into project design. CAP implemented this model with organizations participating in its Prevention Capacity Building Program and awarded grants them to implement behavior change interventions.

RESULTS: CAP partners have experienced a change in the way their target communities are responding to their behavior-change interventions. Communities are becoming more engaged in the activities being implemented since they were consulted during project design. In particular, the level of contact between the organizations and community leaders is a major change from before. Through the formative research process, organizations were required to seek out the opinions of leaders—the very individuals that can motivate the passion of their communities to participate in project activities. These same leaders are now suggesting new populations to include in interventions, engaging in prevention sessions themselves, and helping mobilize communities. “Now we know what kind of messages and interventions (to use). Now (our beneficiaries) will accept us with confidence, because our strategy responds to the realities of the community,” shared OPHAVELA's M&E Officer.

Organizations also learned the relevance of data, how to develop a problem tree based on this data, and how to develop hypotheses based on the data that may or may not correspond to the original assumptions developed prior to the research.