

Building Local Institutional Capacity to Serve Key Populations and People Living with HIV in Ghana

BACKGROUND

Although HIV prevalence in Ghana has experienced a slow decline in the past decade, there remains a significant epidemic among key populations, particularly men who have sex with men (MSM) and female sex workers (FSWs). HIV programming efforts of local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have been challenged by a lack of cohesion, coordination, and strong district and national implementation. Targeted investments were needed in NGO capacity building and organizational development (OD) to strengthen their ability to effectively implement, monitor, and evaluate HIV programs for key populations and people living with HIV (PLHIV). In response, FHI 360 Ghana was awarded Strengthening HIV/AIDS Response Partnership and Evidenced-based Results (SHARPER) in 2010 from USAID's HIV/AIDS Service Delivery Support Program to reduce HIV transmission among MSM, FSWs, PLHIV and the sex partners of these groups.

By investing in strengthening local institutions' governance and leadership, strategic planning, and financial and human resource systems, these institutions are better placed to successfully deliver HIV programming and ensure local sustained ownership. Thirty-three local partners, including two networks, the National Association of People Living with HIV (NAP+) and the Ghana HIV/AIDS Network (GHANET), joined the SHARPER consortium as OD and capacity building beneficiaries. These partners worked in peer education; condom and lubricant promotion and sales; drop-in-center

services, including HIV testing, counseling, and screening; referrals to other health care services such as family planning and HIV care and treatment; and stigma and violence reduction. In FY13, SHARPER conducted a mid-term capacity review and selected 12 local NGO partners to continue receiving organizational development and capacity-building support. These partners were selected because they showed strong participation and commitment to capacity building and operated in districts with high proportions of MSM, FSWs, and PLHIV and high HIV prevalence.



KEY MESSAGES

1. Strengthening the organizational development of local institutions to coordinate and implement HIV programming in Ghana is a critical investment to ensure local and sustained ownership of a national HIV response.
2. Local institutions receiving SHARPER's organizational capacity training demonstrated significant improvement in strategic planning, data collection systems, human resources management, and gender integration.
3. More research is needed to determine whether strengthened institutional capacity is associated with better HIV prevention and care outcomes.

LINKAGES, a five-year cooperative agreement funded by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), is the largest global project dedicated to key populations. The project is led by FHI 360 in partnership with IntraHealth International, Pact, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views of PEPFAR, USAID, or the United States Government.



Learn more about LINKAGES by visiting www.fhi360.org/LINKAGES or writing to LINKAGES@fhi360.org.

PROCESS

Technical and Organizational Capacity Assessment.

Under SHARPER, FHI 360 used the Technical and Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool (TOCAT), adapted from the McKinsey Organizational Assessment Grid for nonprofits. Executive directors (EDs) from each of the 33 partner organizations used this tool to conduct a baseline self-assessment to determine areas that needed development support and capacity building. Similar weaknesses were revealed across local NGOs: governance and leadership; strategic planning and organizational systems; human resource management; finance and administration; contract management; monitoring and evaluation (M&E); resource mobilization and fundraising; and knowledge management.

A SHARPER-led dissemination meeting was held with partner EDs, and program and finance staff to share and validate TOCAT results. FHI 360 OD partner Urban Associates conducted onsite visits to corroborate results and assess whether other priority strengthening needs were not captured. Urban Associates developed another organizational assessment tool to capture more immediate implementing partner (IP) needs: implementing a functioning board of trustees, developing better management skills, and adhering to donor regulations.

SHARPER supported OD for HIV networks GHANET and NAP+ GHANA as strategic partners within the National HIV Response. The TOCAT revealed that they exhibited the greatest weaknesses in finance and administration, governance, and integration of gender into HIV interventions. In conjunction with each IP, SHARPER developed tailored organizational development plans with specific activities, key staff responsibilities and timelines.

Training, Mentoring, and Developing Action Plans.

FHI 360 led training and mentoring for finance and administration, sub-award management, M&E, and proposal

development. Urban Associates provided support to IPs' capacity in governance and leadership, strategic planning and organizational systems, HR management, resource mobilization and fundraising, and KM. FHI 360 partner Social Impact delivered training in gender integration and gender mainstreaming to all IPs. Training multiple staff from each organization helped integrate gender into organizational culture, hiring and recruiting practices, and program implementation and evaluation. Coached by FHI 360 and Urban Associates, IPs then developed capacity-building action plans with specific activities to improve each area of concern.

Specialized workshops on structural improvement were conducted with EDs, board members, and key program and HR staff; 425 people were trained. To complement the training, Urban Associates conducted three two- to three-day on-site mentoring and coaching visits to support action plan implementation and assess the real-time needs and daily operations. IPs were encouraged to update their plans based on changing needs/priorities, document achievements, and report milestones.

Trainings, refining action plans, and onsite visits were sustained under LINKAGES (see below) to further reduce gaps IPs faced in delegating authority and decision making, resource mobilization and fundraising, staffing and HR management, data collection, governance, and strategic planning.

Peer-to-Peer Capacity Building.

To encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing, IPs were grouped by key population (MSM, FSWs and PLHIV) to form Communities of Practice (COPs). These COPs benefited from additional technical support from fellow IPs as well as SHARPER in reviewing and revising their institutional policies, manuals, and strategic plans. During Festivals of Learning, groups shared successes and lessons learned from the capacity-building process. Both activities strengthened alliances and encouraged appreciation and respect for each other's work.

Summary of Capacity-Building Activities



FINDING THE GAPS IN IMPLEMENTING PARTNER'S ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

STEP

1

Conducted an assessment using the TOCAT tool to reveal weaknesses in organizational development

STEP

2

Held a dissemination meeting with implementing partner (IP) staff to share and validate the results from the TOCAT assessment



FILLING IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL GAPS

STEP

3

Led training on areas needed for organizational and capacity-building strengthening

STEP

4

With partners, developed action plans with specific activities to improve each area of concern

STEP

5

Conducted on-site mentoring visits to support action plan implementation and assess the real-time needs and daily operations of IPs

STEP

6

Formed "Communities of Practice" to encourage peer-to-peer learning and capacity building



SUSTAINING CHANGE OVER TIME

STEP

7

Continued trainings in areas in need of further strengthening

STEP

8

Refined action plans to reflect current targets for improvement

RESULTS

To evaluate SHARPER's overall impact, an endline TOCAT assessment that included a section on Gender Integration and Sexual and Gender-based Violence designed by Social Impact was conducted of the 12 organizations and results compared to the baseline.

Organizational Development and Capacity Building for HIV Networks.

GHANET and NAP+ were supported to jointly develop a draft concept paper in response to the USAID Innovate for Health call for proposals. NAP+ has successfully obtained funding from USAID's Ambassador's Fund and Rural Enterprise Programme to support refresher training for PLHIV who provide adherence counselling and psychosocial support to newly diagnosed PLHIVs. This funding also provided small business grants for women living with HIV. Funding requests from GHANET have yet to be fulfilled.

Organizational Development and Capacity Building for Local NGOs.

Approximately 75 percent of IPs demonstrated more than a 25 percent increase in overall capacity as measured by the TOCAT from baseline to endline. The greatest areas of improvement across IPs were in HR management, strategic planning, data collection and use, gender mainstreaming, capacity of technical staff, and staff mentoring (see Table 1). Few organizations (one to two) were able to make significant improvement in resource mobilization.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Improved structural development and management skills of local IPs led to notable accomplishments.






- IPs have institutionalized many procedures and systems—such as an HR manual detailing workplace expectations and guidelines, including gender equitable policies; knowledge of proper procurement processes; and long-term strategic plans.

TABLE 1

Organizational Capacity Assessment Results under SHARPER

COMPONENT AREAS	BASELINE (AVG) (%)	END LINE (AVG) (%)	% POINT CHANGE
Number, Mix and Capacity of Technical Staff	68.30	88.13	19.83
Technical Supervision	77.50	87.93	10.43
Internal Training and Mentoring	63.60	86.81	23.21
Structure: Roles and Responsibilities	77.40	83.22	5.83
Structure: Delegation of Authority and Decision-Making	76.30	86.81	10.51
Staffing and Human Resources Management	56.90	80.12	23.22
Strategic Planning	53.90	83.04	29.14
Monitoring of Strategic Plan	54.00	67.22	13.22
Operational Planning	64.70	73.51	8.81
Governance	70.30	86.19	15.89
Resource Mobilization & Fundraising	45.10	54.70	9.6
Data Collection Systems	66.60	93.00	26.40
Use of Data and Culture of Information	65.30	90.41	25.11
Gender Mainstreaming and Equity	72.20	92.44	20.24
Gender Integration and Addressing SGBV	NA	92.19	No change

Improvement Scale

	Great improvement (>80%)
	Good improvement (>75% but <80%)
	Moderate improvement (>60% but <75%)
	Improvement (>45% but <60%)
	Least Improvement (>45%)

- Many organizations lacked functioning boards of trustees, financial systems, organizational charters, or human resource procedures and relied heavily on volunteers who lacked professional or technical capacity. Exposing these inconsistencies and weakness, and giving organizations the tools to self-correct them, was one of SHARPER's lasting achievements.
- Strong stakeholder alliances have been created between likeminded organizations through Communities of Practice and Festivals of Learning.
- Partners/local NGOs are now directing attention and resources toward their "image" to make themselves more marketable for potential program beneficiaries and donors. Partners have worked toward building technical partnerships with government stakeholders and other development partners.
- Management has been enhanced by instilling professionalism among executive staff, developing management skills, and improving the relationships between executive directors and program staff.
- Future support is needed to train local organizations on how to diversify funding and respond to diverse requests for proposals with different templates and requirements.
- Although not evaluated under SHARPER or LINKAGES, future resources should be dedicated toward measuring whether strengthened institutional capacity is associated with better HIV prevention and care outcomes.

CONCLUSION

SHARPER's success in building the organizational development of 12 Ghanaian organizations prompted USAID to continue this investment through the LINKAGES project after SHARPER ended in 2014. Under LINKAGES, FHI 360 continued to build the capacity of 11 of these 12 local NGOs delivering HIV programming to increase demand for comprehensive prevention, care, and treatment services among key populations. FHI 360 and Pact developed new measures to assess program effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and relevance and address issues identified in action plans using Pact's Organizational Performance Index. Highlights of this additional capacity building include: conducting donor mapping and search strategies for proposal solicitations to strengthen resource mobilization; developing operational plans that incorporate ongoing projects to maximize M&E effectiveness; and organizing gender trainings for program staff. FHI 360's commitment to local organizational development has reaped benefits: these organizations demonstrate how equipping local organizations with skills to sustain themselves as well as enhance their technical expertise has proved to be essential to the HIV response in Ghana.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Partnerships with local organizations to strengthen their capacity are critical to the success and sustainability of locally relevant solutions for a national HIV response that improves key populations' access to HIV care.
- Funders and international NGOs seeking to partner with local community-based organizations should understand and appreciate their context and perspective. Instilling the importance of processes and accountability was key for many IPs that seek to partner/receive funding internationally.



SPOTLIGHT: HOPE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Founded in 2001, Hope for Future Generations (HFFG) promotes health, education, and financial wellbeing of woman and children in Ghana. Through partnership with SHARPER, HFFG introduced dedicated programming for female sex workers. The TOCAT baseline assessment showed that HFFG needed support in M&E, finance and administration, and resource mobilization. Through training and onsite mentoring, HFFG determined that salaries were low and staff turnover was high. As a result, HFFG restructured their payroll processes and salary scale and instituted performance-based bonuses and funds for professional development courses to retain and recruit higher performing staff. "The capacity building process helped me to develop and implement policies and initiatives that I knew would help me achieve the dream and vision I had for my organization. Now I feel I understand my staff better, have stronger management skills, and work more effectively with other stakeholders who also support female sex workers."

-Cecilia Lodonu-Senoo, Executive Director of HFFG