



OWNING PROJECT RESULTS— NIIWANANE CASE STUDY

Role Model for Mozambican CBOs

Association Niiwanane Wamphula is a community-based organization (CBO) of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH) in Nampula Province, Mozambique. Niiwanane works to alleviate the impact of HIV/AIDS, contribute to the fight against poverty, and raise awareness about women and gender issues. Niiwanane at first used personal funds to support sick individuals in the community, but slowly grew and now manages grant awards from international donors to carry out and expand its valuable work in communities in and surrounding the city of Nampula.

Niiwanane is a role model for civil society organizations in Mozambique. It is a small CBO that remains tied to its community roots and original mission, yet assimilates the knowledge and experience of external actors to develop sophisticated technical approaches and financial management systems. Its name is garnering greater recognition in Nampula, and government departments and civil society organizations call upon the organization to provide technical expertise and join networking events. This is an exciting time for Niiwanane; its spirit of volunteerism and sense of pride in its work is buoyed by an equal commitment to ownership of and excellence in program implementation.

Niiwanane is making an important contribution to the fight against HIV/AIDS, and this contribution is based on a fierce commitment to benefit the community. In addition to its commitment to capacity strengthening, staff

An Association with Strong Commitment

Niiwanane, a small, motivated association of PLWH, made huge strides in strengthening its organization and, in the process, became a role model for others. Two factors in its success were staff commitment to working hard to meet high standards and collaboration with community leaders.

“What makes us proud as an organization is that we help sick people understand that there is a solution to [many HIV/AIDS challenges]. These are the people that are discriminated against. It makes me proud that we are [in unity] with the sick and we give them motivation to survive.”

—Niiwanane accountant

Strengthening CBOs— Helping Communities

CAP Mozambique was funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and implemented by FHI 360. It was designed to strengthen the capacity of leading Mozambican organizations to contribute to the fight against HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence. From 2006—2016, CAP Mozambique integrated intensive capacity development of its Partners with grants to provide the organizations with opportunities to apply what they learned and demonstrate their capacities to affect HIV/AIDS at the community level. CAP Mozambique not only supported technical capacity, but also addressed organizational structures and systems, including financial and administrative systems and governance.

maintain their individual commitment and still draw from their personal resources to help community members and also dedicate extra hours to project activities.

This case study is told through the voices of Niiwanane and the Capable Partners Program (CAP) in Mozambique, who were in partnership from 2009 to 2016. From 2009 until mid-2010, CAP Mozambique led Niiwanane through a formative research and proposal-development process that culminated in a grant award to implement HIV/AIDS prevention activities in the city of Nampula. Niiwanane’s HIV/AIDS prevention grant ran from May 2010 to November 2011. The organization also competed for and was awarded a second grant by CAP Mozambique to provide services to orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in Nampula Province from December 2011 to April 2016.

Adaptation of a research technique called the “Most Significant Change (MSC) Process” guided conversations with staff of Niiwanane and CAP Mozambique. A facilitator solicited each organization’s perspective on the most significant changes within both individuals and Niiwanane as a whole. Board members as well as staff were present for the Niiwanane interviews, both those providing direct services in the communities and those responsible for oversight. In addition to information gathered from these interviews, CAP included evidence of Niiwanane’s improvements in the areas of financial management and report writing, based on data from project assessments focusing on organizational systems and deliverables. Results were revisited in February 2016 to add information captured through CAP Mozambique’s final assessments of its Partners.

Commitment to Growth: Increased Staff and Board Capacity

In 2009, CAP Mozambique had some concerns about the capacity of Niiwanane staff to implement a project effectively. The project coordinator, while very dedicated and competent, was frequently sick and unable to attend to the day-to-day management of the project. The project officer remained quiet and was reluctant to share her ideas during CAP’s early capacity-development interventions with the organization. The accountant faced difficulty keeping up with the stringent deadlines for financial reporting for the project. CAP Mozambique was cautious in these early months of project implementation.

CAP’s approach was to provide training, technical assistance, and coaching in specific areas linked to program implementation, financial and administrative management, and organizational development. Niiwanane was required to participate in a number of trainings and events. These included training in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) theory and practice, training in financial management, engagement in the participatory organizational assessment process (POAP), development of a capacity development plan based on the POAP process, training linked to this capacity development plan, participation

in quarterly Partners' meetings, and exchange visits. Niiwanane also received technical training in facilitation techniques for community *activistas*, training in leadership and governance, and almost daily technical assistance from the CAP team based in Nampula. At the same time, CAP reached out to the Niiwanane project coordinator and expressed concern about staff capacity to implement the project. It was important to be up front with the organization because the success of the project depended on the capacity of this small team.

Through CAP's consistent support, Niiwanane began to develop strategies for submitting financial and programmatic reports on time and complying with other project-related deadlines. CAP's grant accountant coached the Niiwanane accountant to plan his work over a period of time, rather than save everything for the last minute. With the support of the project coordinator and Board of Directors, the small team became more confident, participated more actively in training events, and began seeking out CAP staff to support program and financial decision making. Both Niiwanane and CAP staff credit the Board of Directors for providing ongoing support to the staff.

Niiwanane's quarterly reports soon became one of the best program deliverables submitted to CAP. The organization began providing much greater detail to describe project activities and improved its accuracy in reporting project results. CAP tracked the quality of quarterly reports by assessing those submitted over a specific period of time with the CAP Report Writing Assessment. In early 2011, Niiwanane scored 37.34 points (out of a maximum of 54 points) on the Report Writing Assessment; by the end of 2014, it scored 43.33 points. Overall, Niiwanane received one of the highest scores out of all CAP Mozambique grant recipients on its quarterly reports. Niiwanane's reports accurately illustrated project progress and demonstrated a capacity for analysis through descriptions of problems encountered and solutions found. Several participants in the assessment process noted how important improvements in report writing and writing in general were. The Niiwanane project officer noted:

I [now] have the capacity to write a quarterly report. I have the capacity to write an activista job description. I can develop a terms of reference for trainers. I learned how to develop a guide for activistas. I know how to develop monitoring instruments and an M&E Plan, an Implementation Plan.

In late 2011, Niiwanane's HIV/AIDS prevention program ended, and the organization initiated a new project (also with CAP Mozambique funding) targeting orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). The ability of Niiwanane to shift from HIV/AIDS prevention to OVC programming at that time also reflected an increase in the capacity of the organization to adapt to change. The OVC project provided Niiwanane



ACTIVISTA ON HOUSEHOLD VISIT. (MAURO VOMBE | FHI 360)

with an opportunity to improve its OVC delivery model. CAP Mozambique applied its OVC Assessment to Niiwanane four times from 2012 to 2015 and watched as Niiwanane's capacity to provide quality care to OVC beneficiaries leapt from an initial score of 14 points to 72 points (of 72 total).

"When a child grows there is always change. There is increased space for dialogue between me and others on the Board of Directors.

There is transparency in the implementation of the project. We always know what is happening."

—Niiwanane Fiscal Council member

Niiwanane also worked hard to improve its financial capacity and administrative systems. The accountant responded well to CAP training and coaching, and the Niiwanane staff and Board were committed to improve systems and boost the capacity of the entire organization.

Prior to receiving a grant award, Niiwanane participated in a Financial Health Assessment with CAP as a precursor to the technical assistance the organization would receive. The assessment examined organizational strength in the areas of Basic Accounting Systems, Financial Reporting, Internal Controls, Grant Management, and Staffing. This initial assessment was conducted in May 2010; Niiwanane received an overall score of 153 points out of 300 total. This score placed the organization just barely above the high-risk category. Over the life of its grant award, Niiwanane applied knowledge gained in training and coaching from the CAP team; when the assessment was conducted for a fourth and final time in September 2015, the overall Financial Health Score had risen to 240—placing the organization on the borderline between medium and low risk.



FINANCE AND HR FILES ARE NOW ORGANIZED. (MAURO VOMBE | FHI 360)

The Niiwanane team was modest in commenting about any personal improvements. They talked more about unity within the organization, team work, and the pride they have in the work they do. It is clear, however, that individual change was also a key component of the organization's story. The project officer transformed into an individual who has ideas to share, participates actively in trainings, supports other CBOs in Nampula, and can be relied upon to follow through on issues. The accountant was groomed by the project coordinator and Board of Directors to assume the role of coordinator and is able to present quality deliverables on time and provide input and support to program interventions as well as finance.

Not only staff members experienced change over the prior year. Board members learned the value of deadlines and quality reporting and how to provide active oversight of project activities. The space for dialogue between the Board and staff increased, and there is now greater transparency in project

implementation because the Board and staff are in constant contact with each other. According to the CAP prevention coordinator:

The coordinator and Board of Directors are always pushing the team to make decisions. The president of the Fiscal Board is always watching. He goes to the field to monitor activities and supports the staff.

In mid-2015, CAP Mozambique surveyed 30 staff associated with 20 CSO Partners (including Niiwanane) to identify improvements in internal governance and how these changes affected their organizations. For Niiwanane, significant changes to internal governance occurred since the organization began working with CAP and resulted in:

- An updated Strategic Plan
- Updated organizational statutes
- Clear separation between Board and staff roles
- Regular Board meetings documented with minutes
- Board-approved policy and procedure manuals



ACTIVISTA ON HOUSEHOLD VISIT. (MAURO VOMBE | FHI 360)

Effective Collaboration with Community Leaders

Niiwanane's original project proposal did not describe in detail the role of community leaders within the project, but Niiwanane quickly acknowledged the important role these leaders would have in the overall success of the project. They began to include community leaders in each of the critical decisions related to the project—seeking their input and advice in ways that respected their roles within their communities and provided information that would be valuable in achieving project results.

In the first months of the project, Niiwanane realized that they had incorrectly divided the geographic regions where their *activistas* would work. In one district, the *activistas* were overworked due to the size of the district, and in another some *activistas* had little to do. Niiwanane did not make a unilateral decision to redistribute *activistas*; it first went to the community leaders to seek counsel. Niiwanane also consulted the community leaders when faced with performance issues among its *activistas*, to ensure that the leaders understood these issues and supported Niiwanane when the organization was forced to replace *activistas*. According to the Niiwanane General Assembly President, "We always reported to the leaders. We always have their support."



A COMPLETED REFERRAL TO HEALTH SERVICES. (MAURO VOMBE | FHI 360)

Quality Support to *Activistas*

The CAP-funded prevention project was Niiwanane's first experience facilitating debates to stimulate conversations about HIV/AIDS prevention. In previous projects, Niiwanane had used community theater, but did not follow up these theater pieces with conversations among participants. The CAP project, therefore, was Niiwanane's first exposure to social and behavior change communication (SBCC). This was initially challenging, because it meant that Niiwanane had to first learn about SBCC and then teach these skills to its *activistas*.

CAP provided training in SBCC and facilitation techniques to Niiwanane staff and spent the first months closely monitoring the organization's progress in implementing the new methods. It was evident from the beginning that some of the *activistas* selected to participate in the project were not able to adapt to these new methods, and Niiwanane worked with community leaders to find replacements as necessary.¹ Niiwanane increased

its own monitoring visits to the field to ensure that the new *activistas* had the skills necessary to lead community debates effectively. Slowly but surely, with the support of the CAP Nampula Team, Niiwanane grew more comfortable with the new techniques and developed a manual for the *activistas* as well as innovative strategies to ensure quality performance by them.

Niiwanane designed a contract with each *activista* linked directly to results. Each was required to reach a certain number of individuals with prevention messages. The organization held quarterly meetings with all *activistas* to discuss aggregate project results and also individual *activista* results for the period. Niiwanane then worked individually with the *activistas* to help them reach their results along with community leaders.

Niiwanane developed an excellent relationship with its *activistas*. This was due in large part to the transparency in which they operated in the communities—including community leaders in key decisions and openly discussing results with all project staff. The organization serves as a role model for other organizations in terms of the support provided to *activistas*—monitoring performance and developing an atmosphere of unity through shared goals.

*"When we trained other organizations in facilitation techniques, [the Niiwanane Project Officer] asked if she could come along to learn more. She was there to help translate from Portuguese to the local language. There are moments when I think... what would I have done without her in the training? She had a great relationship with *activistas*, and was able to bring this [energy] to the training."*

—CAP Prevention coordinator

¹ See also the CAP technical brief, "Improving Community HIV Prevention: Choosing the Right *Activistas*."

Ownership of Results

Niiwanane took complete ownership of its CAP-funded projects. Even when problems were identified in the beginning—with staff capacity, growing pains in learning a new prevention methodology, and shock over having to adhere to CAP’s rigorous standards for project management—the organization took responsibility for these gaps, sought internal and external support, and committed to change.

When delays in identifying a qualified trainer to facilitate the initial training for *activistas* caused the organization to fall behind in meeting its project results, Niiwanane developed a system to slowly increase the number of individuals involved in each session to enable them to reach project goals and yet not overburden the *activistas*. Niiwanane’s original target for this project was 2,000 individuals reached with prevention messages through debates. By the end of the project, the organization had reached 2,521 individuals. Just shy of the final months of its OVC grant (with one reporting quarter remaining in the project), Niiwanane had reached 4,867 OVC with services—surpassing its original project target of 2,800.

When it came time to finalize the design of its new multi-year OVC award, Niiwanane decided that it was necessary to change one of its target districts. A new project had been initiated in that district by a consortium of international organizations, and Niiwanane wanted to avoid duplication of services and provide support to a district not being covered. Staff brought this to the attention of the CAP team and advocated to make this change.

In an environment where many organizations operate with the donor as “boss” (or wait for the donor to identify problems itself), Niiwanane’s ownership over the project, the results, the mistakes, and its own growth process is inspirational. The organization’s genuine and sustained commitment to its beneficiaries, commitment to quality, and active engagement with the community are exemplary and representative of the true spirit of civil society. Niiwanane is an example of how an organization does not need to have many staff or huge budget to be successful. It has good practices, good governance and leadership, and is actively developing the systems necessary to operate in a sustained manner.

Document written in 2011 and updated in 2016.

“They by themselves create conditions for the activity to be a success.”

—CAP Prevention
coordinator

www.FHI360.org
www.NGOconnect.net

This publication was made possible by the generous support of the American people through USAID under CAP Mozambique: Strengthening Leading Mozambican NGOs and Networks II, Award No. 656-A-00-09-00164-00. The contents are the responsibility of FHI 360 and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.