

Building the Capacity of Key-Population-Led Civil Society Organizations to Become Financially Sustainable

SUCCESS STORY | APRIL 2022



We have now realized the importance of resource mobilization for the sustainability of our organization. Thanks to the EpiC team for building our capacities through training and mentoring. Earlier, we did not pay much attention to resource mobilization.”

- Mahesh, President, INFOCEM

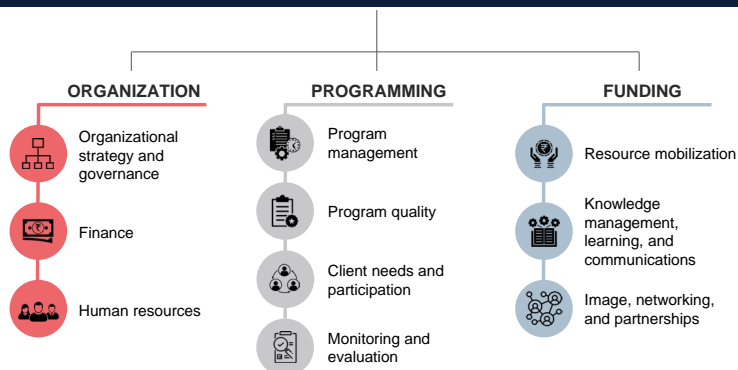
Over the past decade, the development community has focused increasingly on HIV service delivery that is implemented and sustained by local institutions. The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) is moving toward funding local implementers instead of U.S.-based organizations, while also encouraging host countries to explore funding solutions beyond international donors to ensure the long-term sustainability of local civil society organizations (CSOs).

A strong civil society is essential to a successful and sustainable response to the HIV epidemic. CSOs play a key role in the delivery of HIV services, especially for key and vulnerable populations who may feel more comfortable seeking services in nongovernment settings. As the international funding landscape changes, CSOs need to acquire funding from diverse sources to ensure financial sustainability and continue delivery of HIV services.

In India, the Meeting Targets and Maintaining Epidemic Control (EpiC) project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and PEPFAR and led by FHI 360 works with 32 local organizations in seven PEPFAR priority districts of Telangana and Maharashtra states. EpiC provides technical assistance to these local key population (KP)-led organizations, networks of people living with HIV, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to not only deliver services to KPs but also to build their organizational capacity for financial sustainability.

From June through August 2021, EpiC led 25 CSOs — 18 in Telangana and seven in Maharashtra — through a facilitated organizational capacity self-assessment to identify CSOs' strengths and areas for growth. Using a self-assessment tool, each organization scored their capacity in 10 organizational, programmatic, or funding-related areas (Figure 1). Following the scoring, each organization created a capacity development plan to prioritize areas to address.

Figure 1. Organizational capacity self-assessment areas





Members of civil society organization Mahila Abhivruddhi Samstha present a project proposal.

Photo credit: Lepra Society

During the self-assessments, all 25 CSOs ranked resource mobilization as one of the highest-priority areas for capacity strengthening. In response, EpiC organized two workshops in Telangana on resource mobilization and fundraising. These workshops were led by Lepra Society, EpiC's implementing partner in Telangana state and experts in resource mobilization.

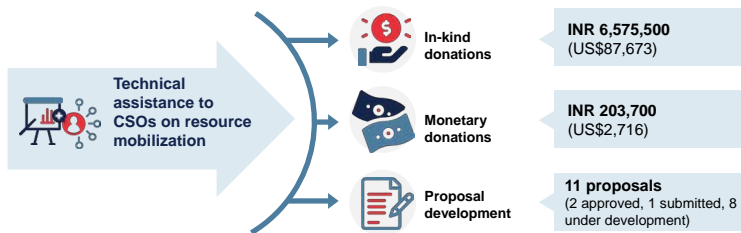
The first workshop was held in August 2021 with 16 of the 18 CSOs in Telangana and focused on taking a closer look at each organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges in relation to resource mobilization. Using this information, EpiC staff led CSOs through a resource mobilization strategy and planning session in which the organizations analyzed funding sources in line with their mission, vision, and goals. This included a donor and partnership mapping exercise which provided a better understanding of small grant opportunities that were available through local corporate social responsibility, government, and philanthropic initiatives. Organizations considered what would be needed to secure funding from these sources and any existing or potential challenges they might face. After the workshop, Lepra Society conducted virtual deep-dive sessions with each organization to discuss the opportunities available and prepare long- and short-term resource mobilization plans.

In September 2021, EpiC led a second workshop with 17 of the Telangana CSOs on how to develop an effective funding proposal. CSO staff practiced writing proposals for corporate, government, or philanthropic organizations. EpiC staff then reviewed each sample proposal to see whether it established need, clearly explained how the organization would use the funding, presented clear and transparent budget details, and effectively articulated the CSO's strengths. The workshop included a module on strengthening organizational financial and legal systems and covered common questions around compliance, such as how to become and remain tax-exempt and the requirements for receiving foreign funding. EpiC also encouraged the CSOs to hire or assign a staff member to focus specifically on financial sustainability.

Following the resource mobilization trainings, Lepra Society hosted an exchange program on financial management as an experiential learning opportunity for the CSOs. CSOs learned about core principles for securing donor funding, including proper use of funds, transparency, accountability, and maintaining statutory compliance.

Since the workshops and trainings, the CSOs have been exploring new avenues for financial support that align with the needs of their communities. As of December 2021, eight CSOs had formed resource mobilization committees to identify potential funders. Each committee has four members selected from their boards, staff, and communities who are trained on roles and responsibilities by CSO and EpiC staff. For many CSOs, this initiative has resulted in monetary donations from several local philanthropies, as well as in-kind donations from individuals, NGOs, associations, and private businesses (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Resource mobilization outcomes among EpiC-supported CSOs (August 2021–March 2022)



Following the trainings on proposal development and fundraising, EpiC mentors have continued to work with the CSOs in Telangana. In addition, the project is now planning resource mobilization workshops for the 14 CSOs in Maharashtra. EpiC will continue to support the CSOs to develop strategic communication for funders, including using data to highlight the needs of community members, creating pitches that align with donor priorities, and showcasing the impact of previous investments for vulnerable community members and their families.



Workshop participants engage in a donor mapping activity.

Photo credit: Lepira Society

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