Locally Led HIV Programming:

The Story of Zimbabwe Health Interventions

In 2018, the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) announced a goal to transition 70 percent of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and PEPFAR funding to locally led organizations through direct awards. Local ownership of programming through direct delivery of HIV prevention, care, and treatment services is essential for the long-term sustainability of the HIV response.

FHI 360 has been implementing comprehensive HIV care and treatment services with PEPFAR and USAID funding in Zimbabwe since 2015. The Zimbabwe HIV Care and Treatment (ZHCT) project is just one example of FHI 360's work to support people living with HIV. The ZHCT project was part of a multisectoral effort that complemented the work of the Government of Zimbabwe to support community-level HIV care and treatment services and strengthen health facilities that provide HIV services. In 2020, ZHCT received a one-year extension from USAID that expanded its scope of work (SOW) to provide the following:

- technical support at the health facility level;
- direct HIV service delivery; and
- build the capacity of a new local organization, Zimbabwe Health Interventions (ZHI).

By building ZHI's capacity to become an independent organization in Zimbabwe, FHI 360 supported PEPFAR's localization agenda.

ABOUT ZHI

ZHI is an independent local organization founded by former FHI 360 Zimbabwe staff. In December 2019, USAID requested that FHI 360 develop a strategy for ZHCT to advance PEPFAR's localization agenda to increase ownership and involvement of local organizations in managing PEPFAR-funded programs. The overall purpose was two-fold:

1. Support the US Mission in Zimbabwe to meet both its PEPFAR service delivery targets and localization objectives by increasing the pool of promising local organizations (LOs).

2. Increase the probability that the learnings and established successes of FHI 360's ZHCT/**DREAMS (Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored and Safe)** programming will be sustained under a capable LO prime recipient of USAID funding.

To serve these aims, FHI 360 worked with USAID to transition technical components of the ZHCT/DREAMS activities to a LO through a transparent, carefully monitored, and phased approach. This meant transferring not only responsibility for managing specific aspects of the SOW, but also shifting offices, project assets, implementing partners, and staff. FHI 360 provided ZHI with organizational development (OD) and technical

support to meet specified milestones and performance standards; become eligible to receive and effectively manage sub-awards from FHI 360 under ZHCT project; and gradually take on greater resources and responsibility for the ZHCT/DREAMS program through a phased approach.

PHASE 1: Develop Governance Structures

In the initial, preparatory phase, FHI 360 staff helped ZHI comply with USAID requirements by setting up basic governance structures, documenting key organizational policies and procedures like human resources and finance, and establishing essential organizational tools and systems to support accounting and payroll.

## PHASE 2: Operationalize Systems and Policies

During the second phase, ZHI received a fixed amount award from FHI 360/ZHCT. This enabled ZHI to grow its team and operationalize systems and begin implementing its newly established policies and procedures. For example, FHI 360 staff that wanted to work for ZHI were recruited via a competitive hiring process. Once given an offer of employment, they resigned from FHI 360.

PHASE 3: Subaward Implementation

The third phase was the implementation of a subaward. This involved a systematic transfer of resources and responsibilities accompanied by more OD support and technical capacity development. FHI 360 strengthened ZHI's capacity for ZHCT project implementation, program management, and monitoring and evaluation by providing oversight and support during the development of ZHI's subaward program description, and by transitioning project staff and activities from FHI 360 to ZHI.

As part of the skills transfer, FHI 360 seconded the ZHCT technical director to ZHI, who provided leadership during national technical meetings and district performance review meetings. FHI 360 and ZHI also conducted joint technical and monthly review meetings. During which, FHI 360 assisted ZHI with developing its five-year strategic plan and providing financial management oversight and support from a virtual controller. This helped ensure ZHI's compliance with USAID's rules and regulations. These inputs were informed by an organizational capacity assessment and an institutional improvement plan that was conducted in the fifth year of the ZHTC project.

FHI 360's Capacity Development Approach
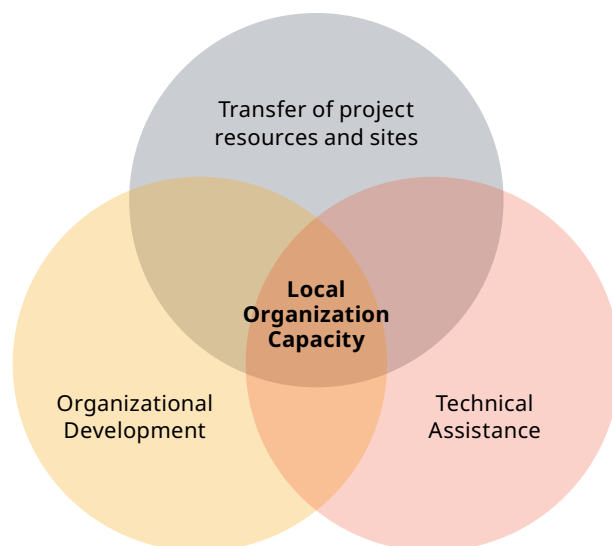
Capacity Building

The FHI 360 team built the capacity of the ZHI's national, provincial, and district-level strategic information and evaluation officers in data management using the District Health Information System 2 platform to manage community and facility-level HIV, tuberculosis, and cervical cancer management data. FHI 360 transitioned ZHCT project implementation in the Midlands province to ZHI in September 2021.

By working closely with ZHI throughout the process, FHI 360 helped build the organization's capacity in program management, finance, and technical assistance. In 2021, FHI 360 successfully transferred project activities and resources to ZHI. That same year, ZHI received two new cooperative agreement awards from USAID, including the Accelerated and Comprehensive HIV Care for Epidemic Control in Zimbabwe (ACCE) for the HIV Care and Treatment Project and Re-Ignite, Innovate, Sustain and Empower (RISE) for the DREAMS Project through a competitive bidding process. ZHI's qualification and award for these cooperative agreements is a testament to the successful institutional strengthening that FHI 360 facilitated through the ZHCT project.