

Leadership Development Program Yields Collaboration and Results in Cote d'Ivoire

Collaboration is a key element in the successful collection, dissemination and use of HIV/AIDS data in almost any situation. It is easy to imagine, however, a situation where multiple ministries are responsible for these Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) tasks and yet national indicators are not established, harmonized and validated because of a lack of coordination and collaboration. Such was the case in Cote d'Ivoire.

As a result of a leadership development program (LDP) with four ministries and the collaborative spirit engendered by this process, the country has made a giant leap forward. The development and publication of a compendium of harmonized and validated HIV/AIDS indicators accomplished the first of several previously illusive goals and has moved the country strongly toward having a high quality, timely and accessible national HIV/AIDS data based used for a coordinated response to the epidemic.

BACKGROUND

MEASURE Evaluation began providing M&E strengthening support as well as health information system (HIS) development and improvement to the Ministry of Health (MSPH) in 2004. Since then MEASURE Evaluation has expanded the scope of its activities to include M&E technical support to the Ministry of HIV/AIDS (MLS) in 2006, the Ministry of Women, Family and Social Affairs (MFFAS) in 2007, and the Ministry of Education (MEN) in 2008.

In addition, MEASURE Evaluation supports the work of the Strategic Information Working Group composed of representatives from a wide variety of organizations (donors, partners-NGOs, and ministries and agencies), including the four ministries.



Last year, Dr. Leontine Gnassou, MEASURE Evaluation Chief of Party, and her team identified leadership as the key challenge impeding the ministries' success. This was evidenced by difficulties bringing the teams together and by a lack of coordination among the ministries to produce national data. She attributed this to a lack of trust and commitment, and the desire of the different teams to "protect" their data and perceived national M&E positions and roles. For that reason MEASURE Evaluation offered a team-focused, Leadership Development Program (LDP) bringing together the M&E teams from all four ministries as an ideal way to address these issues.

PROCESS

In February 2010, the Leadership Development Program (LDP) was launched with a Senior Alignment Meeting attended by members of the four ministry cabinets and Directors of the M&E units within the ministries. At this meeting, the senior group developed a shared vision for



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the future: "The fight against HIV/AIDS in Cote d'Ivoire is coordinated by a Strategic Information Group that meets regularly and produces quality data for better monitoring and evaluation."

This statement alone was significant considering the history of the organizations. It also demonstrated high level support for greater collaboration among the four ministries.

The first workshop of the LDP was held with teams of M&E specialists from the four ministries. Again, like the participants in the Senior Alignment Meeting, the shared vision the participants developed was one in which collaboration was a central element: "A collaborative group representing an inter-ministerial partnership for the regular administration of strategic HIV/AIDS information is functional and produces high quality information that is accessible and used by all of the actors in the fight against AIDS to diminish the transmission of HIV/AIDS in Cote d'Ivoire."

Given the strong emphasis on collaboration, it was decided to have all of the participants continue working together as a single team to achieve their desired result which they stated as: "A compendium of all the national HIV/AIDS indicators fully harmonized and validated by all of the actors in the fight against AIDS within 6 months."

At the end of the first workshop, Dr. Edwige Bosso, MEASURE Evaluation M&E Advisor, exclaimed, "We have already achieved one important result. Before this program, we couldn't even get the participants into the same room, much less seeking to collaborate with each other!"

With enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and collaborative participants and teams as well as expert facilitators, the LDP in Cote d'Ivoire continued in March with the second workshop in which the focus was on moving from a vision to action. The team also identified a number of obstacles that they would need to overcome to be successful:

- Lack of clarity about the roles of the different ministries in developing HIV/AIDS data. The most confusing aspect of this challenge was that while the Ministry of Health has funding from



PEPFAR to produce the data, the Ministry for HIV/AIDS has the responsibility for coordinating the development of the data. By going back to the official documents pertaining to the authorities of the 4 ministries, the participants were able to clarify their understanding of their roles and work effectively with each other to overcome this challenge.

- Funding for activities. In putting together their action plan, the participants became aware that in order to reach their desired measurable result, they would have to hold two large workshops to harmonize and validate the indicators. Since funding was needed to allow these workshops to take place, one of the first tasks was to align and mobilize a donor. Working with the Ministry of Health and with the financial assistance of PEPFAR, the team was able to hold the two workshops as planned.
- Time requirements. In order to ensure the success of their plan, the team met frequently outside of the scheduled workshops, thereby demonstrating both commitment to the process and dedication to the desired result.

In May during the third workshop the group finalized their action plan and the leadership practices of aligning and mobilizing and inspiring were presented. In addition management skills related to giving feedback, making effective requests, and managing change were

addressed. Workshop 4 was held in Abidjan on October 5, 2010 and focused on preparation for the results workshop scheduled for the following day.

RESULTS

The results presentation was held on October 6th and included among the attendees Jennifer Walsh, Coordinator/PEPFAR, Bijou Muhura, Technical Advisor/USAID, and Anna Likos, Director/CDC as well as cabinet members, technical advisors, directors and other representatives from the four ministries. The results highlighted in the meeting included the published compendium of the harmonized and validated indicators representing the fulfillment of the desired measurable result as well as a testimonial by one of the participants who related the impact of the LDP program on his particular team at the Ministry of Health.

The compendium of indicators was developed with input and collaboration from all of the major stakeholders engaged in collecting HIV/AIDS information. Some of the organizations included were:

- Donors, including PEPFAR, CDC, USAID;
- Non-governmental organizations, such as EGPAF and Alliance CI; and
- Ministries and other government agencies, including the Ministry of Defense, the pharmaceutical agency, the national program for persons living with HIV/AIDS, the regional hospital authority, and others.

The completed compendium comprises the following:

- National Health Indicators

- » 8 Prevention indicators
- » 10 Prevention of Mother To Child Transmission indicators
- » 14 Coverage indicators
- Community Indicators
 - » 8 Prevention indicators
 - » 2 Prevention of Mother To Child Transmission indicators
 - » 7 Coverage indicators
- Harmonization of age ranges

In the second presentation, Dr. Yao from the Ministry of Health offered a testimonial of the impact of the LDP on his workgroup. His challenge was how to increase the rate of implementation in the group when there was a serious lack of organization. By focusing on the tasks at hand, by planning and prioritizing them, and by assigning due dates and specific responsibility, his group increased its effectiveness and completed tasks at a rate that had previously been unattainable.

As a result of the LDP and the team's success in publishing the compendium of harmonized and validated HIV/AIDS indicators, Cote d'Ivoire now has a pathway to move toward the vision shared by the four ministries. The next steps in creating a high quality, timely and accessible national data base used by all of the actors in the national response to HIV/AIDS are to complete a compendium of harmonized tools and to develop a strategic information plan. The collaboration demonstrated in the LDP and the momentum created by the program form the basis on which these additional steps can be realized.