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Strengthening High Impact Interventions
for an AIDS-free Generation



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AIDSFREE LESOTHO: FINAL REPORT CAPACITY STRENGTHENING OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

JANUARY 2016 - DECEMBER 2018

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ACRONYMS

AIDSFree	Strengthening High Impact Interventions for an AIDS-free Generation
ANC	antenatal clinic
ART	antiretroviral therapy
AYP	adolescents and young people
CAG	community ART group
CSO	civil society organization
DNA	deoxyribonucleic acid
EGPAF	Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation
EID	early infant HIV diagnosis
FSW	female sex workers
HTS	HIV testing services
LENASO	Lesotho Network of AIDS Service Organizations
LENEPWA	Lesotho Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS
LePHIA	Lesotho Population based HIV Impact Assessment
LGBTI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex
LOMSHA	Lesotho Output Monitoring System for HIV and AIDS
LPPA	Lesotho Planned Parenthood Association
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MOH	Ministry of Health
MSM	men who have sex with other men
NAC	National AIDS Commission
NSP	National Strategic Plan
PEPFAR	U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PCR	polymerase chain reaction
PMTCT	prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission
POC	point-of-care
PrEP	pre-exposure prophylaxis
PUSH	Providing Universal Services for HIV/AIDS
SIMS	Site Improvement Monitoring Systems
STAR-L	Strengthening the TB and AIDS Response in Lesotho
STI	sexually-transmitted infections
TB	Tuberculosis
TOT	training of trainers
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
YPGOL	Young Positive Generation of Lesotho

BACKGROUND

The Strengthening High Impact Interventions for an AIDS-free Generation Project – known as AIDSFree – is a five-year cooperative agreement, funded by the U.S President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and managed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of HIV/AIDS. The project is a result of USAID-Lesotho’s request for technical assistance under the AIDSFree Project, for the capacity strengthening of civil society organizations (CSOs).

AIDSFree commenced in Lesotho, in January 2016, with a rapid assessment of 12 CSOs nominated by USAID. Of the dozen, two were selected to participate in technical assistance for capacity strengthening: Lesotho Network of AIDS Services Organizations (LENASO) and Lesotho Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS (LENEPWHA). AIDSFree then conducted organizational and technical capacity assessments around prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission (PMTCT) and HIV care and treatment knowledge and skills with each organization, to develop individually-tailored capacity plans for community engagement and mobilization, community asset mapping, advocacy, communications / media and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Using support from this project, CSOs rolled-out community engagement and mobilization, focusing on district-level improvement around viral load testing, antenatal clinic (ANC) attendance, PMTCT, and HIV testing services (HTS) uptake.

In 2018, AIDSFree expanded its partnerships to include two new CSOs: Care for Basotho and The People’s Matrix Association (Matrix); the organizations work with female sex workers (FSW) and people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI), respectively. Further expansion of this initiative saw AIDSFree working with the National AIDS Commission (NAC) to coordinate stakeholders in the HIV and AIDS response. Such efforts facilitated communication, provided a platform for CSOs to engage with their contributions, and improved CSOs’ reports to the NAC, as the national coordinating body in the response. Beyond these collaborations, the project’s strategic priorities were aligned with its primary goal to build the capacity of local CSOs, thereby creating demand for services and bridging the gap between facility and community-based HIV services in Lesotho.

In support of the government of Lesotho and PEPFAR’s shared objective to prevent HIV and AIDS-related morbidity and mortality (through the scale-up of prevention, care and treatment interventions in targeted populations / geographical locations), AIDSFree supported the following objectives:

1. Build CSOs’ technical and organizational capacity – to improve access to, and provision of quality, HIV service delivery
2. Strengthen community demand for HIV treatment, viral load monitoring, adherence and retention support among people living with HIV
3. Ensure functionality of CSO-led platforms for advocacy and regulatory framework/ policy reviews, by strengthening the CSO coordination framework
4. Improve the capacity of CSOs, in the areas of communication / messaging and advocacy

TECHNICAL CAPACITY STRENGTHENING FOR CSOS

1.1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND MOBILIZATION

A significant portion of AIDSFree's technical support for LENASO and LENEPWHA focused on community engagement and mobilization. Each CSO identified and trained individuals within the community to serve as volunteer mobilizers. Most were existing members of LENASO-affiliated community based organizations or members of LENEPWHA-affiliated support groups. Using the Message Guide for Community Mobilizers developed by AIDSFree, 283 community mobilizers were trained on the following topics:

- Facilitation skills
- Approaches to community mobilization
- Identification of various target groups
- The benefits of antenatal care (ANC) and postnatal care (PNC), PMTCT and facility-based deliveries
- HIV testing services for different target groups
- Adherence and viral load monitoring
- Community support (support groups) for treatment adherence
- TB, HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Community asset mapping



AIDSFree also conducted a workshop for 65 area chiefs in the Berea and Mohale's Hoek districts. The purpose of this session was to share key messages with chiefs, who were advised to incorporate these principles into community gatherings and dialogues. The workshops prepared chiefs to promote HTS uptake, mobilize men to go to health facilities, encourage parents to test their infants and children and, finally, to encourage women to visit ANC, PNC and to deliver their children in health facilities.

AIDSFree conducted an interactive Community Asset Mapping workshop for LENASO and LENEPWHA, wherein CSOs reflected on their own resources and assets (infrastructure, vehicles, volunteers, staff, funding, etc.) Participants also created visual representations of the geographical distribution of their assets and their national programmatic coverage. Attendees gained skills on how to identify and employ assets in their own communities and to share these skills among community members and leaders. Ultimately, the project's mobilization efforts allowed trained community mobilizers to reach 5,643 people with key messages around various health services from March 2017 to September 2018.

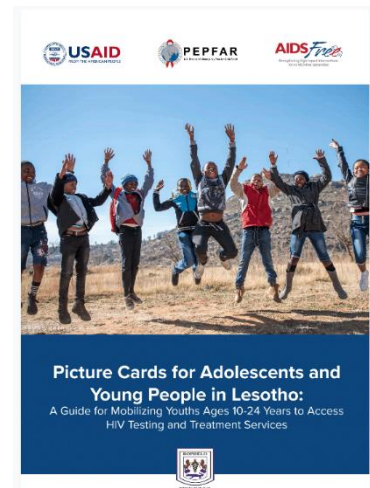


Youth at the AIDSFree Community Asset Mapping training, August 2017

1.2 ADOLESCENT MOBILIZATION

In recognition of LENASO and LENEPWHA's need for youth-focused resources, AIDSFree collaborated with the Health Education Unit (within the Ministry of Health), to develop [Picture Cards for Adolescents and Young People in Lesotho: A Guide to Mobilizing Youth Ages 10-24 Years to Access HIV Testing and Treatment Services](#).¹ The cards illustrate common social situations faced by adolescents and young people (AYP), aged 10-24, using photos with which this demographic can relate. Targeted youth were fully engaged during the design, pre-testing, and rollout stages.

AIDSFree subsequently conducted a training of trainers (TOT) for 20 participants from local and international NGOs, as well as government ministries, all of whom are working with youth organizations. The TOT served to introduce the picture cards, as a resource that participants can draw upon for the mobilization of this particular demographic. Indeed, the organizations in question intend to incorporate this resource into their adolescent mobilization efforts.





Youth Ambassador's Step-down Training, December 2018

A TOT was also held for 24 Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF) Youth Ambassadors, 40 youths from Young Positive Generation of Lesotho (YPGOL) and 17 young people from LENASO. During this session, the cards' potential to aid the mobilization of youth to access health services was made salient. The youth ambassadors then conducted seven district level step-down trainings, reaching 175 youth from community-based groups. Participants continue to use the picture cards to raise awareness about health services and encourage their uptake among young people. Youth ambassadors continue to oversee the mobilization carried out by youth groups at community level, and monitor the number of referrals to health facilities.

1.3 MOBILIZATION OF KEY POPULATIONS

As previously noted, Care for Basotho and Matrix are CSOs serving key populations in Lesotho: FSW and people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI), respectively. In 2018, AIDSFree provided capacity strengthening to these organizations, in an effort to improve linkages of key populations to health facilities, and to retain these target groups into care and treatment.

Due to the need for trained human resource persons at these organizations—identified as a major issue among CSOs—AIDSFree hired and deployed a key populations officer to each organization; the new hire coordinated trainings, peer mobilization activities, and community outreach efforts. The Care for Basotho officer facilitated the transition from a paper-based documentation system to an electronic one, thus making it easier to monitor FWS initiated on ART at the CSO's resource center in Maseru. From July 2015 through September 2018, 965 FSWs on ART were added to the database.

In November 2018, the Matrix key population officer mobilized people to attend LGBTI outreach events, for men who have sex with other men (MSM), hosted by Lesotho Planned Parenthood Association (LPPA)—which is overseen by the USAID Providing Universal Services for HIV/AIDS (PUSH) project. There were 90 participants

in the Mafeteng district and 70 participants in the Maseru district. These events included health talks on HIV and AIDS, TB, STIs, post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). LPPA offered HTS and PrEP services during the event in Mafeteng while in Maseru it provided HTS (with JHPIEGO offering PrEP at the event). In December 2018, the PUSH Project and AIDSFree collaborated with Matrix to train 15 MSM Matrix peer educators from Maseru, Mafeteng and Mphahlele's Hoek as lay counsellors to provide HTS. Starting in 2019, the peer educators are expected to organize interpersonal communication sessions to other MSMs, conduct HIV testing, and refer them to LPPA facilities for linkages and initiation.

With AIDSFree support, Care for Basotho and Matrix revised their peer educator's training manuals: additional information was added to cover topics such as PrEP, Treatment for All (known also as Test and Treat)², HIV treatment adherence and viral load testing, and TB.

AIDSFree also conducted a TOT for 20 peer educators at the Maseru Resource Center and 10 peer educators at the Berea Resource Center on Treatment for All, PrEP, HIV treatment adherence and viral load monitoring and TB. Care for Basotho held screening campaigns for FSW, where education on HIV and AIDS, PrEP, HIV treatment adherence, TB, STI, HIV self-testing and condom use was provided. During the campaigns, 33 of 35 attendees tested for HIV, 23 tested negative, and 20 were initiated on PrEP (three declined PrEP). Of 10 who tested HIV-positive, all were initiated on treatment and four were referred for STI management.

The Maseru Resource Center also played a significant role in the efforts to recruit FSWs into treatment, acting as a host facility for FSWs to receive peer-educator training from the CSO. These instructive gatherings readied participants to encourage fellow FSWs in various hot spots to receive HIV and STI prevention, treatment and care services, as well. Referrals for additional services, such as STI treatment, were also given, as needed, by FSWs.

1.4 OTHER TECHNICAL CAPACITY TRAININGS AND ACTIVITIES

SENSITIZATION TO POINT-OF-CARE (POC) EARLY INFANT DIAGNOSIS (EID)

POC-EID helps decentralize DNA PCR HIV testing for infants and shortens the result turnaround time (as a diagnosis can be made on-site, eliminating the need to transport samples / results from centralized laboratories). AIDSFree worked closely with the CSOs to disseminate core messages about EID, in support of the POC-EID roll-out. With guidance from the relevant technical team representatives, the messages were developed and included in the updated version of the community guide. Subsequent community trainings also included information on EID.

SENSITIZATION TO PMTCT

AIDSFree organized and facilitated a focused PMTCT and pediatric HIV training for CSOs' program staff and their affiliates. The initiative was facilitated by the AIDSFree regional technical assistance team, along with the Lesotho technical team, and attended by 26 participants (10 program staff from LENEPWHA, eight linkage officers and eight focal persons from LENASO).

SENSITIZATION TO ADHERENCE TRAINING

LENEPWHA organized an adherence training at two health centers in Mafeteng, targeting 50 parents and / or caregivers of children on ART. The training was a promising approach, as it targeted people already on

treatment and provided an opportunity for caregivers to share perspectives regarding the factors that inform their ability to support children's adherence to treatment.

SENSITIZATION TO TREATMENT FOR ALL

During the Community Engagement and Mobilization TOT held in November 2016, EGPAF technical advisors facilitated sessions on Treatment for All, revised HTS guidelines, ART enrolment and adherence. This initiative was undertaken to ensure that CSOs were cognizant of changes in technical guidelines, and the ways in which these differences shape their work, at the community level. As a follow-up to the TOT, step-down trainings were executed at the community level, for the benefit of CSO affiliates and support group members. These sessions focused on ways to disseminate messages at community level, for the promotion of HTS and timely ART initiation and adherence.

REFLECTIONS ON THE BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY ART GROUPS IN TREATMENT RETENTION

In 2017, AIDSFree conducted observation visits with Community ART Groups (CAGs) to gain insight into their operations and discuss their challenges and triumphs. CAGs are groups of people who have been on ART for more than six months, who have demonstrated good adherence to their treatment and who have undetectable viral load. One person from each group goes to the facility once a month to collect treatment for other members of the group. These resources serve to maximize the decongestion of health facilities (due to increased ART availability under Treatment for All) and to promote adherence at the community level.

In 2018, AIDSFree supported LENASO to hold a CAG campaign/reflection meeting at Nazareth Health Center. The campaign focused on 1) acknowledging CAG members for their commitment in joining groups (which has improved adherence among HIV-positive clients), 2) commending them for their dedication in participating in CAGs (which has reduced congestion in health facilities), and 3) educating ART clients not yet in CAGs about the benefits of these groups, thereby motivating them to join. The event provided an opportunity to discuss the successes and challenges faced by CAG members with CAG representatives.

SENSITIZATION TO VIRAL LOAD MONITORING

AIDSFree technical assistance improved the technical capacity of CSOs on the promotion of viral load monitoring and testing. AIDSFree collaborated closely with EGPAF technical advisors in Lesotho, to facilitate trainings aimed at imparting information to the CSOs and their affiliates. The sessions helped CSOs understand the importance of viral load testing, as the principal method to monitor the efficacy of ART and detect possible treatment failure. Another key discussion point among EGPAF and CSOs was the ways in which to effectively convey viral load information (specifically to ensure that individuals know that a suppressed viral load is not synonymous with cure). Messages on viral load were also included in the community guide and disseminated via community mobilization.

TECHNICAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT OF THE CSOS

In October 2018, AIDSFree facilitated an end-line technical capacity assessment for LENASO, using the same tool administered at baseline. The instrument allowed the CSO to rate its level of capacity in various technical areas as foundational, basic, moderate or strong. At baseline, LENASO rated three technical areas at foundational level, six at basic, three at moderate, and one at strong. The end-line results indicated that LENASO's overall capacity was strengthened, with zero classified at foundational level, two at basic, five at

moderate, and six at strong. The greatest improvements were reported on PMTCT, pediatric HIV knowledge and skills, and community engagement in HTS and viral load access.

1.5 PARTNERSHIP AND LEVERAGING OF EXPERTISE AND RESOURCES

To improve awareness about health services and care / treatment and retention, AIDSFree collaborated with EGPAF's PUSH and Strengthening the TB and AIDS Response in Lesotho (STAR-L) projects, conducting targeted trainings for different cadres across Lesotho. AIDSFree provided human resources and financial support for these sessions, which served to strengthen CSOs' technical capacity on new initiatives to improve demand creation for each organizations' activities.

AIDSFree conducted a training among 147 lay counsellors to improve the quality of counselling services (as a way to reduce the number of people who decline HTS) and to strengthen the demand for index testing and partner notification. The trainings targeted lay counsellors from LENEPWHA and other CSOs, as well as lay counsellors from the government and the Christian Health Association of Lesotho's health facilities.

Trainings on stigma and discrimination were conducted for 282 police officers in eight districts. These sessions aimed to improve retention in treatment and adherence in the workforce, which had exhibited challenges in that regard.

AIDSFree also trained 50 individuals from various CSOs across all 10 Lesotho districts on TB and HIV demand creation. The training sought to enhance CSO's capacity in terms of advocacy, communication and social mobilization approaches. The undertaking also provided technical capacity strengthening on HTS, including: self-testing, index testing and partner notification, viral load monitoring, PrEP, community ART initiatives, linkages and referrals, TB and HIV epidemiology, TB contact tracing and the importance of reporting. The CSOs developed work plans with activities to strengthen demand creation for various services at community level, improve collaborations among the CSOs, and strengthen linkages between community and health facilities.

2. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

2.1 COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA

In April 2017, AIDSFree facilitated a training workshop on communications and media, to capacitate CSO participants with communications and documentation skills. There were 15 participants from operations and programs departments, as well as affiliates of LENASO and LENEPWHA. During the workshop, participants shared their experiences in communicating with various stakeholders and engaging with the media. A local media practitioner provided guidance on the ways in which CSOs could benefit from working with the press. The gathering provided skills building exercises for writing press releases, developing media kits and developing communication strategies. Through this workshop, LENASO and LENEPWHA developed press releases for their various events.



LENASO & LENEPWHA Staff at Communications and Media Training, April 2017

In collaboration with the MOH, AIDSFree conducted two trainings for 12 media personnel from newspapers and radio stations. The purpose of these events was to share information with media practitioners on programs implemented by the MOH and other stakeholders, and to increase participants' understanding of health issues. The principal goal was to improve media coverage on health issues and support demand creation for health services. As a follow-up to the trainings, media practitioners participated in site visits to health facilities, factories, higher learning institutions, and clinics providing services to the youth and to males. Additionally, representatives from the MOH, international and local NGOs, and the NAC participated in radio programs. The media practitioners wrote articles for the print media on what they learned from the trainings and the site visits.

MEDIA-RELATED ACTIVITIES:

Matrix participated in two radio programs which sought to inform listeners about various services available for the LGBTI community. EGPAF's communications department worked with Matrix's key populations officer to develop a structure for the programs, which helped keep the interview focused and relevant. EGPAF's communication department also supported Matrix with the preparation of a press release on sexuality and spirituality.

With AIDSFree support, NAC mobilized stakeholders to attend the 2018 World AIDS Day gathering, where they had the opportunity to showcase their contributions towards the national HIV response and share these with fellow stakeholders and the general public.

From Sex Worker to Lay Counselor

Through AIDSFree's support, Care for Basotho prepared a success story entitled, "from sex worker, to lay counselor." The narrative highlights the life of a sex worker who learned about HIV and health issues as a peer educator and is now a lay counsellor. The narrative gives an overview of an individual who resorted to sex work due to limited job opportunities. As a FSW, she didn't have information on sexual and reproductive health, nor on HIV prevention. She was one of the FSW recruited by Care for Basotho to be trained as peer educators, and through this training she learned about HIV prevention, negotiating condom use and other health issues. She was also motivated to test for HIV where she learned that she was HIV-positive. She has been adhering to her medication well due to the support received from Care for Basotho. She has been working with Care for Basotho to recruit other peer educators, and she has since been promoted to be a peer supervisor. The trainings have equipped her with relevant information to be responsible for her life. She gives health talks to other FSWs. She is assertive and able to give testimony on her life experiences. Recently, in 2018, she was trained as a lay counsellor. and has been able to support others FSWs to test and if found HIV positive to start their treatment.

2.2 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

AIDSFree facilitated three training sessions that served to refine monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes among CSOs. The first workshop, for a group of 12, took place in February 2017 – its major outcome being the development of performance monitoring plans (PMPs) and M&E plans. The M&E plans included indicators from the CSOs' community engagement and the advocacy plans. A subsequent workshop was held, in May 2017, for a group of 18 participants, among whom were M&E officers and managers, in addition to project officers from LENEPWHA and LENASO. The training provided participants with skills that pertained to data use plans and the role of data in decision-making. This session was particularly beneficial for non-M&E officers, who gained an appreciation for the value of data collection.

In November 2018, AIDSFree conducted a third training event on data analysis and review for 18 program staff from LENASO, LENEPWHA, Care for Basotho and Matrix. The aim was to describe ways in which CSOs can improve data collection, reporting and analysis.

In September 2018, USAID conducted a Site Improvement Monitoring System (SIMS) assessment for the CSOs supported by AIDSFree. The assessment was motivated by the need to determine CSOs' performance in the areas of: (1) HIV Planning & Management, (2) Human Resource for Health, (3) Guidelines and Policies for Key Populations and (4) Advocacy and Health Communication. The results indicated the following: Matrix scored 75%, Care for Basotho scored 83%, LENASO scored 100%, LENEPWHA scored 100%, and NAC scored 83%.

In terms of improvement, Matrix and Care for Basotho were advised to strengthening their data reviews (to support the finalization of National Guidelines for Key Populations and to augment their advocacy capacities). LENASO and LENEPWHA were advised to improve documentation for their supervision visits.

2.3 ADVOCACY

In November 2016, EGPAF's Communications and Advocacy Team led a five-day workshop for LENASO and LENEPWHA, which helped the CSOs finalize their advocacy strategies for 2017. CSOs have since been supported by AIDSFree to implement the activities detailed in their advocacy plans.

In April 2018, LENEPWHA collaborated with AIDSFree to plan and host an advocacy workshop that brought different organizations working with key populations together. This was a platform for organizations to share challenges their target groups face in accessing health services, particularly for people living with HIV. The Ex-Miners Association, Crime Prevention & Rehabilitation of Ex-Offenders Association (CROOA), Lesotho Correctional Services, mothers2mothers, Lesotho National Federation of People with Disabilities, Young Positive Generation of Lesotho, Boipusong Youth Association for HIV and AIDS (Bohaya), Care for Basotho, LENASO, NAC, Lesotho Planned Parenthood Association (LPPA), Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA), Phelisanang Bophelong, and the Ministry of Justice were actively engaged in the workshop.



LENASO & LENEPWHA Staff at Data Analysis Training, May 2017

A second workshop, held in December 2018, aimed to improve the advocacy capacities of Matrix, Care for Basotho, and NAC, as a follow up to recommendations made after the aforementioned SIMS assessment. CSO staff, NAC officers, representatives of key populations, and EGPAF youth ambassadors participated in this training. The workshop enabled the CSOs to identify their advocacy issues, establish evidence concerning these issues, and use this evidence to draft advocacy strategies. This output is valuable, in that it helps CSOs and NAC mobilize additional resources for continued advocacy work. Moreover, technical support will continue through the USAID funded PUSH project, to finalize the drafted strategies.



Advocacy Training for LENASO and LENE PWHA, November 2016

2.4 GOVERNANCE

CSO governance documents, such as the board charter and organogram, were assessed to determine if they were aligned to the organizations' vision and mission. The CSOs received training and mentoring to make necessary revisions on their documents and subsequently brought the documents into alignment. AIDSFree also provided a workshop on methods and responsibilities of leadership and governance for board members. The initiative created an opportunity for the CSOs' representatives to share experiences and ideas about issues of oversight, leadership and resource mobilization.

2.5 FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT

Finance and procurement documents were reviewed across all supported CSOs. A general observation made was for all CSOs was that, in the finance policy, the policy statements were combined together with the procedures. A common recommendation to all was to separate policy from the procedures, and to improve information on segregation of duties and levels of authorization. All CSOs were guided on how to improve information on duties and levels of authorization. Out of 4 CSOs, only one had a standalone procurement policy.

CSOs program staff and finance teams were also trained on budgeting and on the roles of various teams across accounting, budgeting, and procurement. The training provided an opportunity for CSOs to increase collaboration between finance and program teams and to improve budget management and reporting within the organizations.

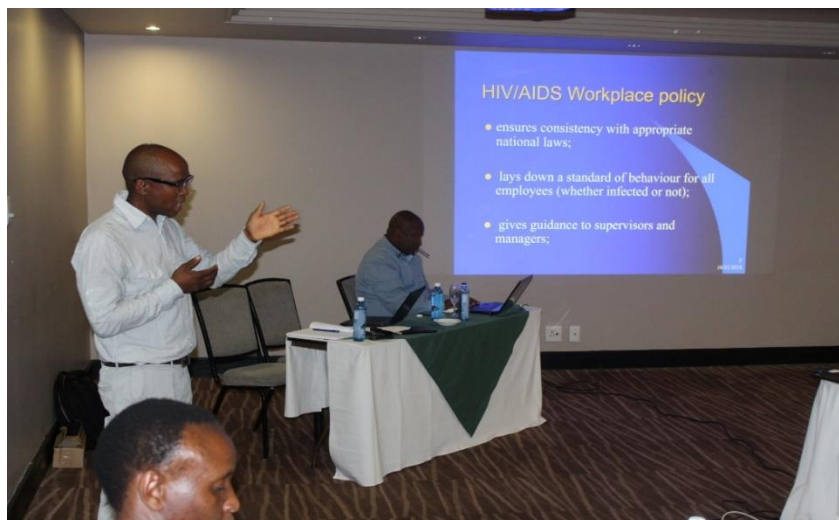
2.6 HUMAN RESOURCES

AIDSFree provided training and mentorship pertaining to the improvement of human resource policies and operations. The organizational capacity assessment revealed that the CSOs' human resource policies required refinement in the areas of recruitment, staff retention, management of volunteers, and performance management, among others. AIDSFree mentored CSOs on strengthening policies and addressing specific challenges within their organizations, including human resource policies and procedures. CSO program managers were also trained in conducting and managing performance appraisals.

3. CSO LED PLATFORMS FOR ADVOCACY

Starting in 2018, AIDSFree began working with NAC to coordinate and facilitate CSOs on advocacy issues specific to the CSO sector. AIDSFree deployed a CSO coordinator to NAC whose main responsibility was to support effective and efficient advocacy and communication amongst CSOs to have one voice on matters that affect their sector. Through AIDSFree support, NAC organized a two-day meeting for CSOs to bring together different stakeholders to share strategic and technical updates on HIV and AIDS. NAC updated the stakeholders on key strategic issues entailed in the recently developed National Strategic Plan (2018-2023) and updated them about the Lesotho HIV Prevention 2020 Roadmap, which helped the stakeholders understand the country's strategic focus. NAC highlighted the crucial role of CSOs in leading HIV prevention programs, especially at community level, and NAC's role in providing strategic leadership in coordination of a multi-sectoral response. One of the expected collaborations between NAC and the CSOs is for CSOs to report about their work to NAC, specifically as it aligns to the National HIV Strategic Plan (NSP). Starting January 2019, NAC will begin district-level training on Lesotho Output Monitoring System for HIV and AIDS (LOMSHA).

NAC organized a two-day workshop on coordination, communication, and advocacy. NAC supported the stakeholders to develop Operational Plan of CSOs on Advocacy and Communication, discuss reporting of CSOs through LOMSHA, and train CSOs on codes of conduct. The meeting also provided a platform for the CSOs to learn more about cancer and HIV and AIDS, which is an emerging national priority.



LENEPWHA Program Manager Presenting at the CSO Communication, Coordination, and Advocacy forum hosted by NAC

NAC also hosted a one-day National HIV and AIDS meeting attended by CSOs and 13 representatives from the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship. The meeting provided an opportunity for district representatives to learn about various HIV and TB program initiatives implemented by the CSOs. Topics covered included index testing, self-testing, development of an eRegister to improve HIV-related data, interventions on TB among miners, results of the Lesotho Population-based HIV Impact Assessment (LePHIA), interventions for key populations (FSW and MSM) and challenges experienced amongst these groups such as violence and limited acceptance of PrEP as a prevention strategy.

4. AIDSFREE CLOSEOUT AND TRANSITION

Although the AIDSFree Lesotho project concluded technical assistance in December 2018, EGPAF's engagement with CSOs will continue into 2019, under the PUSH project EGPAF has partnered with LENASO

since 2010 and with LENEPWHA since 2016. In 2018, USAID Lesotho requested that EGPAF enter into a formal relationship with Care for Basotho and Matrix, to support the CSOs' focus on key populations. With the increased capacity resulting from AIDSFree technical assistance, the CSOs are better equipped to play a key role in the scale-up of combination prevention, care, and treatment interventions in targeted populations and geographical locations. Furthermore, the knowledge gained by CSOs through AIDSFree technical assistance, in the areas of communications / media, advocacy, M&E, CEM, community asset mapping, governance, finance, and HR will carry over into new programs.

The CSOs have developed advocacy strategies, communications / media strategies and products, performance monitoring plans, governance documents, finance and procurement policies, and HR policies and procedures. Four positions hired under AIDSFree were also transitioned to the PUSH project, as of January 2019 – a CSO Advisor (based at EGPAF), two key populations officers (at Care for Basotho and Matrix), and a CSO Coordinator (based at NAC).

CSOs have increased capacity to execute mobilization and peer education within communities and key populations. The organizations have also benefited through access to, and improvement of, tangible resources, such as the community message guide. It should also be noted that these materials can be utilized widely – across their networks and by other projects. Furthermore, AIDSFree developed training packages for CEM and community asset mapping that are available for future trainings and capacity strengthening efforts. CSOs and youth received technical assistance to mobilize adolescents using picture cards developed under AIDSFree. Adolescent engagement with picture cards will continue through EGPAF Youth Ambassadors, YPGOL, and others.

Under PUSH, EGPAF will continue implementing activities with LGBTI and FSW populations, with the addition of the dedicated officer at Care for Basotho and Matrix, who was brought on under the AIDSFree project. Maintaining a CSO Coordinator, positioned at NAC and now under PUSH, extends the platform for CSOs to unify around advocacy issues. To fulfil NACs reporting mandate, the CSO Coordinator will continue to report and represent the efforts of CSOs: compiling information from various organizations and presenting the progress of activities under the NSP at NAC quarterly review meetings. Working alongside EGPAF's Communications and Advocacy Manager, the CSO Advisor will continue engaging with CSOs on strengthening the advocacy capacity of the organizations.

PEPFAR and the Government of Lesotho recognize the crucial role of CSOs in attaining 95-95-95 targets and emphasize the need to meaningfully engage CSOs in the HIV response. EGPAF has longstanding experience collaborating with CSOs and will continue to engage with them across its projects. Benefiting from the extensive capacity strengthening provided through AIDSFree technical assistance, LENASO, LENEPWHA, Care for Basotho, Matrix, and NAC are better equipped to create demand and bridge the gap between facility and community-based HIV services in Lesotho, towards the 95-95-95 targets.

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