

The Capacity Project in Kenya

Kenya's health care system suffers from a critical shortage of skilled health workers and managers. The country's public health sector and not-for-profit health organizations are overwhelmed by the strain of coping with HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care in addition to other priority health services. There are not enough doctors, nurses and other trained providers in place to run the basic health services, let alone HIV/AIDS-specific services. The country's rural districts are marked by especially high HIV prevalence, yet these areas bear the largest burden of the health worker shortage.

As Kenya's government takes forward its ambitious plans to provide HIV/AIDS treatment to all infected persons, the health sector needs to respond with short- and long-term solutions to ensure that there are sufficient human resources to provide key services for HIV/AIDS without losing ground in other essential areas.

The goal of the Capacity Project's work in Kenya is to increase the ability of the public health sector to rapidly mobilize additional qualified health workers and also to strengthen long-term human resources for health (HRH) planning and management. Through a range of targeted activities, the Project aims to help Kenya's Ministry of Health (MOH) expand access to HIV/AIDS services and deliver quality health programs in priority posts in selected geographic regions.

Activities in Brief

Mobilizing the Health Workforce

To address the country's urgent need for more health workers on the job, the Capacity Project provided assistance to the MOH and health-sector leaders to design, implement and evaluate an Emergency Hiring Plan (EHP). Designed to increase the number of qualified health professionals available to work in public health facilities, especially those in remote locations, the plan used an outsourcing mechanism through the local private sector to help the MOH to expand access to treatment and care through the rapid hiring, training and deployment of 830 workers at nearly 200 facilities.

The Project assisted the MOH to review its processes and policies and to adopt new, more transparent hiring and deployment approaches. These included development of a deployment plan identifying priority posts, advertisement of positions by location, public notice of both the short list of finalists and those actually hired, use of a database to track applicants and establishment of a merit-based hiring system with an interview guide and scoring sheet. These mechanisms ensured that a process that normally took more than one year was completed in less than six months.

A two-week training updated the new hires' skills in HIV/AIDS treatment, care and support and patient relations. The hires were given three-year contracts, which will expire in June 2009. The Project is currently implementing a transition and sustainability plan to ensure that workers hired under the EHP are effectively mainstreamed and absorbed into Kenya's regular workforce.

Additionally, in the wake of the violent aftermath of the 2007 national elections, the Project

assisted the MOH with the emergency hiring and deployment of 39 nurses to various Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in the Rift Valley, Western and Nyanza Provinces. The Project utilized the database generated from its EHP to recruit candidates. After completing three-month contracts, the nurses were reassigned to serve in regular health facilities.

This program has served as a model and others are already adopting these approaches and tools, including the Clinton Foundation, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and Public Service Commission. The available evidence suggests that the EHP had a positive impact on important aspects of governance in the conduct of public affairs in Kenya. The Project continues to assist the MOH in providing supportive supervision to the new hires.

Improving the Work Climate

The Project worked with the MOH to select and implement simple work climate improvement interventions in five pilot sites over a period of six months. A participatory workshop engaged site teams to assess their work climates, determine needs and generate an action plan to test low-cost approaches to work climate improvements and provide a foundation for understanding what determines performance. The Project also administered a questionnaire to establish baseline data on employee job satisfaction. Once the results from the pilot sites have been analyzed, the Project will expand the Work Climate Improvement Initiative to five new sites.

Strengthening HRH Systems, Policies and Practices

While it is essential to use emergency measures to mobilize additional health workers and help combat HIV/AIDS, it is vital to work toward building a sustainable system for addressing



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Kenya's national health needs. The Project is assisting the MOH and partners in implementing the national HRH strategic plan as well as strengthening the human resources information system (HRIS), management and leadership development.

In order to sustain a coordinated approach to HRH, a strategic plan is most important. The Project has assisted the MOH in drafting and finalizing a comprehensive HRH strategic plan covering the years 2007–2010, and will support the MOH in implementing and disseminating this plan.

A strong HRIS helps health care leaders answer the key planning, policy and management

questions affecting service delivery. The Project conducted an HRIS assessment and organized a technical working group led by the MOH's HR Directorate to coordinate activities.

Improving how health care providers are trained and managed is key to improving the services they deliver. Over the past four years, the Project has supported the MOH and its partners in the development of a comprehensive National Health Training Policy. Additionally, Project staff have assisted in a participatory assessment of HR management in the MOH to help develop an action plan for improvements within an HIV/AIDS environment.

Nurturing leadership skills can enable HRH practitioners to collaborate, take risks and gain confidence to raise issues and initiate changes. The Project adapted a successful leadership program, customized it for HRH and is planning to offer it to the HR Directorate in the central MOH.

Supporting Services for HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health

The Project has hired three resident technical advisors to support the Kenya government's responses to HIV/AIDS and reproductive health. These local advisors provide long-term assistance to strengthen the strategic role and functions of the host ministries in expanding access to HIV/AIDS and other health services.

The advisor assigned to the Ministry of Planning and National Development is strengthening the collaborative efforts required to sustain the presence of HIV/AIDS in planning and budgeting for national development. The advisor working in the Division of Reproductive Health is supporting the development of training on reproductive health and family planning and the rollout of a supportive supervision plan. The advisor to the National AIDS/STD Control Program (NAS COP) is assisting with the development and dissemination of critical policy and planning documents and training curricula for the rollout of the Antiretroviral Therapy Program and other HIV/AIDS services.

Improving Functioning of Global Fund Grant

The Project identified the challenges and issues that were hindering effectiveness of the Principal Recipient for Kenya's Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria grant and made recommendations for improvements. The Project also supported the first-ever nationwide election process to select Civil Society Organization representatives to Kenya's Country Coordinating Mechanism.

Based on the success of the Capacity Project, IntraHealth International has now been granted a five-year Associate Award to continue work in Kenya.



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The Capacity Project Partnership



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Additional Partners in Kenya

- Ministry of Health (MOH)
- Ministry of Labor
- Ministry of Public Affairs
- Office of the President - Public Sector Reform Secretariat
- African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF)
- Cliton Foundation

- Deloitte & Touche
- Kenya Institute of Administration (KIA)
- Kenya Medical Training Colleges (KMTC)
- National HIV/AIDS and STD Control Program (NAS COP)
- Christian Health Association of Kenya (CHAK)
- Kenya Episcopal Conference