ENGAGING FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

OVERVIEW

Faith-based organizations (FBO) and their networks are key partners in the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief’s (PEPFAR) approach to achieving an AIDS-free generation. FBO’s extensive presence throughout sub-Saharan Africa, their involvement in community outreach, proximity to vulnerable populations, rights-based approaches and understanding of social disparities make them critical to achieving universal access to HIV services.

Faith-based organizations played a central role in the emergency roll-out of HIV services under PEPFAR. With a grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and day-to-day oversight from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the AIDSRelief program supported rapid scale-up of HIV care and treatment services around the globe.1

AIDSRelief also supported the transition of internationally managed HIV care and treatment programs to local country ownership. Implementing partners, including FBOs, demonstrated strong leadership and creativity in providing technical assistance needed to transition HIV care and treatment services to country-led and sustainable programs. Technical assistance also strengthened FBO’s ability to provide clinical oversight through reliable and compliant systems for administrative, financial, and grants management.

PEPFAR 3.0 calls for improved community engagement and civil society leadership and advocacy for effective, equitable programs with a rights-based agenda. As PEPFAR moves toward such approaches, CDC remains committed to engaging formally and strategically with diverse civil society organizations, including FBOs, to reduce barriers to accessing HIV services.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS / RESULTS

In partnership with CDC, FBOs have been able to achieve significant improvements and results. A few examples of how CDC and FBOs work together to improve health service delivery include:

- Serving more than 700,000 clients, including more than 390,000 who enrolled in antiretroviral treatment through 276 facilities, from 2004 and 2013 under AIDSRelief with support from HRSA and CDC2;
- Supporting the Coptic Orthodox Church in Kenya to provide HIV prevention, treatment, and support services each year to over 125,000 people living with HIV in two facilities-Nairobi and rural western Kenya3;
- Providing medical and social support services for children and extended family members, strengthening extended family networks so that orphans can live with their families, establishing holistic home-based programs for long-term care and support of orphans and vulnerable children, and running orphanages where sufficient family and community-based options are not available;
- Each year, providing HIV testing and counseling for more than 9.8 million pregnant women and providing prophylaxis medications to HIV-positive pregnant women;
- Supporting the Kenya Episcopal Conference and the Christian Health Association of Kenya to provide health services in over 17 referral hospitals, 59 mid-level hospitals, 133 health centers and 675 dispensaries;
- Supporting the Tanzania Christian Social Services Commission to provide more than 40 percent of health services in Tanzania; and
- Supporting the Uganda Catholic Medical Bureau to provide health services in over 27 hospitals and 235 health centers and the Uganda Protestant Medical Bureau of Uganda to provide health services in over 17 hospitals and 273 health centers4.


CDC’s ROLE

CDC partners with FBOs to:

- Develop strategies that leverage the faith-based community’s contributions at subnational and national levels to sustain their role in a coordinated response to HIV;
- Train HIV service providers (government, civil society organizations and FBOs) to apply quality improvement approaches to build effective linkages between community-based and clinical services;
- Strengthen the capacity of FBO platforms to use data to advocate for rights-based policies to ensure universal access; and
- Support multi-sector collaborations that align clinical and community-based resources to support improved service uptake and retention in care for people living with HIV.
CDC, with the support under PEPFAR, will continue to support FBOs' ability to develop and implement effective HIV care, treatment, and prevention programs, including effective systems for monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

Going forward, CDC will work with FBOs to continue to strengthen their systems and tools for gathering, sharing, and utilizing data for critical decision-making and holistic support at all levels. CDC will also work in partnership with FBOs to identify new strategies, as the HIV epidemic shifts by geography and population, to leverage their unique qualities to further close prevention and treatment gaps for vulnerable populations.