



Chapter 11

Communities

1. Introduction

The previous chapter on civil society examined organizations of varying degrees of complexity, ranging from highly organized NGOs to relatively informal CBOs. The civil society chapter focused on reaching communities primarily through intermediaries, such as NGOs, FBOs and CBOs. It described how NGOs and FBOs often work with downstream CBOs, providing funding and technical support to CBOs, which in turn provide services to communities. CSOs constitute one important channel to reach communities. This chapter focuses on approaches to provide funds directly to communities, particularly communities that are not served by NGOs, FBOs or CBOs.

2. Why are communities important?

Communities play a central role in HIV/AIDS programs for many reasons:

- **“AIDS competent” communities are central to national AIDS programs.** The overall aim of these programs is to develop HIV/AIDS-competent communities, which are able to assess the reality of the AIDS problem, analyze the specific factors that place them at risk and develop strategies to address these factors;
- **Empowering and mobilizing communities.** Empowerment theory emphasizes the importance of empowering and mobilizing communities with the responsibility and the resources to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS;
- **Changing community norms and values.** Evidence from Uganda and Zambia underscores the importance of changing community norms and values in order to protect communities from HIV/AIDS. This requires large scale community participation and leadership, of both organized and non-organized communities;
- **Communities provide key AIDS services.** Communities are already delivering many key HIV/AIDS services. For example, most individuals with AIDS receive care not from formal health services or even formal community-based home care programs, but from their immediate surroundings, primarily families and communities. Most orphans receive care not from the public sector or NGOs but from informal community initiatives. Formal responses seldom reach or provide appropriate support to community initiatives and communities are seldom able to access formal support. As a result, it is vital to establish direct access, so that communities can obtain support;
- **Communities are central to large-scale responses.** The scale of the HIV/AIDS crisis necessitates the widest possible national involvement. Only through the fullest possible community involvement can HIV/AIDS responses of sufficient intensity, scope and coverage be mounted.

3. What must be done to support communities?

To reach both organized and non-organized communities, the following principles have proven useful:

- **Establish multiple support channels.** Each community comprises a multiplicity of sub-communities, which can be reached in different ways. It is vital to establish as many support channels as possible. For example,

some segments of communities are organized into parent-teacher associations, which may be reached through the Ministry of Education. Other segments may be organized into CBOs, such as women's groups, youth clubs or PLWHA associations, which may be linked to NGOs. Other segments may be organized into a variety of small religious communities, which may be linked to larger faith-based organizations. Many segments of communities may not be formally organized and may need to be reached through mechanisms established specifically to reach non-registered groups. The key principle is, that multiple support channels are required to effectively mobilize and support communities.

- **Ensure mechanisms to reach non-organized communities.** Mechanisms to reach formally organized communities, such as NGOs and CBOs, are better developed than mechanisms to reach non-organized communities. National HIV/AIDS programs should include a component specifically for non-organized communities;
- **Situate support channels as close to communities as possible.** The closer support channels are to communities, the easier it will be for communities, both organized and non-organized, to access support directly without having to rely on intermediaries. Thus, community support mechanisms must be decentralized to district or even sub-district levels;
- **Publicize support channels.** Support mechanisms should be publicized widely through appropriate local channels, including local government structures, schools, churches and residents' associations. They should be publicized orally, as well as in writing, to promote access;
- **The first priority is mobilization.** At first, mobilizing communities is more important than determining specifically what should be done. For example, communities may want to focus first on community care or orphan support. It is initially more important to mobilize and support such initiatives than to impose a balance among prevention, care and treatment and mitigation. As communities become mobilized, programs may gradually encourage a more balanced AIDS response. However, the first priority is to mobilize and support community AIDS responses as they arise;
- **Simplify eligibility procedures.** To enable communities to directly access funds without intermediaries, eligibility procedures must be made as simple as possible. For example, the following eligibility criteria may be proposed;
 - A community bank account where such accounts are easily opened (optional)
 - A small committee to accept and be responsible for funds
 - A simple cash book
 - A simple receipts file
- **Simplify application procedures.** Similarly, simple application procedures are required to enable communities to directly access funds. Complex application procedures merely discourage community applications. Forms and narrative requirements should be in local languages and be simple. Provision should be made for literate staff to assist communities to prepare applications or for oral applications to be reviewed and approved;
- **Assist communities to articulate needs.** Communities often lack the capacity to identify and articulate their needs. There are well developed methods to assist communities to develop the awareness to organize and respond to issues, harnessing their own knowledge and insights. For example, participatory learning and action

(PLA) or participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques are designed specifically to empower communities with the understanding and insights they require to develop their own responses to problems such as HIV/AIDS;

- **Encourage catalytic agents.** Even if support channels are as close to communities as possible and eligibility and application procedures have been simplified, catalytic agents can play an important role. Catalytic agents are community agencies such as local government departments, educational institutions, NGOs, FBOs or CBOs, which publicize local support mechanisms, assist communities to mobilize and to prepare and submit applications and help communities to undertake activities; the work of catalyts should be funded by national AIDS programs;
- **Promote community accountability.** Communities can provide simple financial and progress reports and random audits of community grants will be undertaken. It is vital to promote community accountability, by, for example, requiring communities to present their applications in public, publishing community grants on local bulletin boards and holding regular community meetings to update communities on progress and expenditure. Publicity and public disclosure constitute powerful and effective forms of accountability, as communities have the motivation and knowledge to ensure that funds are used as proposed and reported;
- **Develop simple performance indicators.** Performance indicators should be as simple as possible. Illustrative community indicators include but are not limited to the following:
 - Number of communities receiving MAP funding
 - Percentage of overall funding accessed directly by communities
 - Number of new communities introduced to HIV/AIDS activities
 - Number of community members mobilized through community programs

Box 11.1: A Community Case Study From Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, community grants are being decentralized to the lowest administrative level, equivalent to a ward. Communities are informed of the existence of community funds and are encouraged to submit simple applications, in which all that is required is a broadly defined community, members who will be accountable for funds and a broad proposal for the use of funds. Applicants are required to present their applications at community forums. Applications are approved at the district level and up to US\$1,000 may be readily approved. Communities are required to submit simple financial statements and to keep basic receipts. They are required to make regular, public updates at community forums. Through this simple mechanism, two thousand communities throughout Ethiopia were mobilized and received grants in the first 18 months of program implementation.

4. Financial management

Although a high degree of variation among community groups precludes across the board rules and procedures, some general financial management principles and working procedures apply. Rules and guidelines do apply to community projects but the application of these rules must be correspond to the community's capacity. Policy requires communities to maintain financial management systems and procedures which are adequate to ensure that they can provide NAC/NAS or their agent with accurate and timely information regarding project resources and expenditures. Detailed information on financial management systems (FMS), and disbursement is located in Chapter 19 and Chapter 20 respectively. A summary of key guidelines follows.

- Assess the capacity of community FMS capacity and provide training where necessary.
- Determine a safe location for storing cash advances if a bank account is not available.
- Install a simple record keeping system based on cash in and cash out, in the local language.
- Establish the type and regularity of financial reports and statements and provide examples.
- Ensure that communities understand who their contacts are and the reporting structure at community level.
- Communities should be subject to random internal and external audit.
- Disbursement procedures from the community account should be well established and understood. In areas outside of the banking system, disbursements can be made through a variety of institutions that already function but are not normally used by donors, including churches, relief organizations and formal and informal commercial organizations.
- A methodology should be put in place to measure and record community contributions.

5. Procurement Management

Generally, very simple procurement procedures are recommended for communities under the MAP approach. This essentially includes (a) local shopping, (b) local bidding procedures. These procedures are explained in Chapter 15. Following are the minimal procurement management requirements:

- A community committee that would collect quotations and/or invite bids for goods, minor civil-works and services, evaluate them and award a contract;
- They will adopt a clear and transparent process to acquire quotations/bids, opening of bids and the award of contracts to local suppliers/contractors;
- All community groups will maintain records and receipts of all items/services procured and submit to NAC/NAS (or its authorized entity) when requested.

6. Lessons learned

- **Not enough funds have reached communities directly.** Experience has shown that a remarkable low proportion of HIV/AIDS resources have directly reached communities in the first year of implementation.
- **Exceptional mechanisms are required to reach communities directly.** These mechanisms include the greatest possible decentralization, extensive local publicity for community grants, vastly simplified eligibility, application and reporting procedures and an acceptance of existing community accountability and disbursement mechanisms as an effective safeguard.
- **Value of catalytic agents. Facilitating agents add significant value and should be consciously promoted.** For example, NACs may encourage local authorities, NGOs, FBOs and CBOs to apply for funds specifically to catalyze communities, with the understanding that grant performance will be assessed by the extent to which they have successfully promoted and supported community applications.



See Annex 11 (CD-ROM) for further references