Ethiopian Interfaith Forum for Development, Dialogue and Action (EIFDDA)

E IFDDA is an alliance of ten faith-based organizations (FBOs) that strives to address the most pressing challenges of Ethiopian society. Established in 2002, EIFDDA trains and supports its members—which include a variety of religious groups—to enhance their ability to respond to the social, economic, and cultural needs of their communities.

Ethiopia is an immensely spiritual country where religious leaders have a wide-reaching impact on their constituencies and receive great respect from their congregations. With this influence, EIFDDA is in the unique position to bring desired behavioral change at the community level, and thus has a critical role in interfacing between the people and the government. As the only alliance of FBOs in Ethiopia and the voice of religious communities throughout the country, EIFDDA is a highly effective advocate for political, economic, and social change.

An established local organization, EIFDDA mobilizes religious leaders to open dialogue and work together on community-based programs and services. Key EIFDDA service areas include: Comprehensive care and support for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), social mobilization, income-generation activities, psychosocial support, and home-based care for people living with HIV (PLHIV). Through its member FBOs, EIFDDA has reached more than 500,000 people with its services and support.

Announced on World AIDS Day 2005, the New Partners Initiative (NPI) is part of a broader effort within the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) to work with established community- and faith-based organizations to become new partners to the national government and funding partners. This is done by enhancing their technical and organizational capacity and ensuring the quality and sustainability of HIV programs through community ownership.

In 2008, JSI and its partner, Initiatives Inc., were asked to form the Technical Assistance to the New Partners Initiative (TA-NPI) by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). TA-NPI's goal is to build the quality of program implementation and strengthen the capacity of indigenous organizations to serve the needs of their communities today and into the future, through collaboration with government and partnerships with other organizations. This support is provided to 12 established local nongovernmental organizations in sub-Saharan Africa and Haiti.

"This was a unique opportunity. We really needed technical assistance, for our whole organizational development. We haven't received this needs-based support and follow-up from any other donor or organization. Our capacity has really been enhanced."

—Yonas Dare,
EIFDDA Program
Department Head

JSI

John Snow, Inc.

RELIGIONS for PEACE

WHAT THE TA-NPI SUPPORT MEANT FOR EIFDDA

Process

Before TA-NPI technical assistance, EIFDDA didn't have the skills or capacity to successfully position itself to receive and manage funding from large international donors.

"We lacked systems and guidelines—our operations, human resources, procurement, and grant management manuals were weak and at an elementary level," says Yonas Dare, EIFDDA Program Department Head.

The TA-NPI team works in collaboration with grantees to identify organizational challenges and technical gaps, and then develops customized approaches to address them. Two tools are utilized to engage staff in assessing their own capacity in critical management and programmatic areas— the Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) and Technical Capacity Assessment (TCA).

A baseline OCA enabled EIFDDA staff to identify key strengths and weaknesses in seven organizational areas: Governance, administration, human resource management, financial management, organizational management, program management, and project performance management. Using the results from this assessment, TA-NPI worked with EIFDDA to create an action plan designed to strengthen organizational procedures, systems, and tools for improved support to its members and, ultimately, community-level beneficiaries.

"The OCA helped us to understand the standard, see where EIFDDA is…and where it deviates from the standard," says Alemtsehay Mamo, EIFDDA Administrative & Finance Grant Head.

The TCA examined EIFDDA's capacity across six technical areas: Leadership, service delivery and management, supplies management, data collection and monitoring and evaluation, human resource capacity, and laboratory capacity.

Results from the OCA and TCA assessments had significant impact on future EIFDDA program implementation. TA-NPI developed targeted trainings to strengthen areas identified, and tools and resources were adapted and rolled-out at an organizational level to improve both operational and technical efforts.

Results

In the second year of TA-NPI support, follow-up OCAs/TCAs were conducted and results showed significant improvement to EIFDDA organizational capacity and administration. Financial and human resource management policies and procedures were put in place and refined to comply with USG regulations. In addition, staff capacity in work planning, monitoring and supervision of project progress, financial and technical reporting, designing and using monitoring and evaluation systems, program standards, guidelines, and tools have greatly improved.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

Enhancing Sustainability

"*Sustainability is one of our main focus areas. EIFDDA itself provides limited services, so in order to enable our beneficiaries to get comprehensive services, we link them to other organizations, service providers, government entities, and local sponsors.*

We have received a lot of training from TA-NPI, including linkages and referrals. Those links will help ensure grantees continue to have these services, so they will not be stranded when TA-NPI support ends."

—Alemayehu Abebe, NPI Project Coordinator

"*Before, our referral system was not strong; it wasn't given enough focus. We didn't spend much time on it because we didn't realize its importance for sustainability and for program beneficiaries. TA-NPI's assistance has had great importance in ensuring sustainability. For example, children who have been getting support through the NPI funds, almost all of them will now have continued support as a result.*"

—Jihad Keno, EIFDDA Executive Director

"*We aspire to be successful in transferring responsibility to local systems and institutions. With TA-NPI assistance, training has become practice and has resulted in incredible output. Religious leaders and volunteers have received skills-building and trainings and have improved their work and service delivery.*

Communities can not really rely on external support for sustainability. The ideal is for those groups to raise their own funds. To mobilize resources at the local level, without channeling support from EIFDDA… would be a good example of sustainability. We hope to achieve this as a result of our improved capacity and that of local religious leaders."

—Yonas Dare, EIFDDA Program Department Head

Supporting the Needs of Partners

"*EIFDDA helped us with many things: Establishing our database system and training us in data management, reporting, providing follow-up supervision every quarter, technical and material support, and how to document best practices.*"
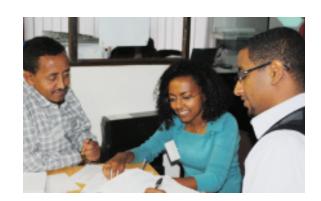
—Abdulaziz Ibrahim, Ethiopian Muslims Relief and Development Association (EMRDA) Project Officer & NPI Focal Person

JSI CASE STUDIES IN CAPACITY BUILDING

Strengthening Technical Capacity

"*EIFDDA is one of the key players we have—we expect a lot from them. The stronger they become, the more they play into the multi-sectorial HIV response.*"

—ALEMU ARARSO, HIV/AIDS PREVENTION & CONTROL OFFICE (HAPCO)

BEREKET TAREKEGN,
Monitoring & Evaluation
Department Head

"Sometimes you sit there and think systems are fine, but when you are engaged in assessment and reflection, you see that there are some issues. We were okay with our M&E systems, and thought, 'what can we really do different?' The technical assistance we received as part of the PEPFAR grant helped identify issues at both management and project levels and then provided trainings to strengthen organizational capacity.

TA-NPI went through each step and we saw gaps and room for improvement. For example, we experimented with M&E real-time scenarios. For every module of a session, we learned to communicate with our members in a language they are very familiar with at the grassroots level.

This assistance energizes us to do more. We have become more articulate in saying our needs and facilitating trainings, and now see things from different angles. We have better capacity to do this because of conversation and exposure with the TA-NPI team.

As a result, we improved our M&E plan and organized trainings on the importance of data and supervision for our FBO members. It's good to have someone come in and analyze activities. I don't think our NPI grant would have been as successful without the technical assistance given to us. All things are being addressed, and I like that they aren't only focused on the grant, but on building EIFDDA itself."

For more information on TA-NPI please visit:
http://tanpi.jsi.com

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