Baptist Relief Agency Africa (BARAA)

BARAA is a faith-based consortium of 16 church groups in Kenya working to improve lives through health, education, and community development programs. Since 2002, BARAA has focused its efforts on alleviating the burdens of HIV. In 2007, BARAA officially established itself as a nongovernmental organization to scale-up HIV prevention education, counseling and testing services, referrals for treatment, and support for children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV (OVC).

BARAA supports more than 250 congregations in four regions and considers itself a national church response to HIV. Relying on a network of valuable partner institutions, community engagement, and committed members and staff, BARAA responds to the tremendous need that HIV has created in the most hard-to-reach areas of Kenya.

The importance of knowing one's HIV status has been integrated into BARAA member education programs. Counseling and testing services are provided via member clinics, door-to-door community outreach, and when not available, through partner institutions via an established service referral network. HIV prevention education has been developed for church congregations and specialized programs for married couples and youth are breaking down stereotypes about who is at risk and in need of services. BARAA has also established a much-needed support program for OVC. Using the community as an entry point, BARAA members seek out children who are the most vulnerable and connect them to psychosocial support, health care services, education and nutrition assistance, caregivers, and HIV prevention education.

In conjunction with the PEPFAR New Partners Initiative (NPI) grant in 2008, BARAA was given the opportunity to develop its technical and organizational capacities with support from the Technical Assistance to the New Partners Initiative (TA-NPI). This assistance has enabled BARAA and its members to strengthen its capacity and deliver HIV services more effectively to more people through its faith-based network.

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.

"Through TA-NPI I've built my capacity and my professional level I have grown both as anindividual and professionally and now know exactly what to do."

—Damaris Akoth,
Area Manager
Teso

JSI

John Snow, Inc.

A BARAA-supported church volunteer talks to a local women's group in Malindi about HIV.

WHAT THE TA-NPI SUPPORT MEANT FOR BARAA

Process

When BARAA first began, its members—the organizations that actually implement BARAA's programs and services—were functioning at a basic level to provide their communities with impactful HIV services. Human resources were limited, as were both operational and technical skills, and knowledge. In addition, there were no management systems or policies established to run BARAA's programs effectively.

"We were very weak," says Grace Gaitho, BARAA Area Manager for Meru South. "We didn't have systems, manuals, or policies, and we didn't realize we needed them until the TA-NPI trainings."

The TA-NPI approach, designed by JSI, tailors technical assistance to the specific needs of each grantee. Taking into consideration the external environment, mission, values, existing capacities and weaknesses, TA-NPI works closely with them to develop targeted trainings and tools to strengthen their capabilities.

For each grantee, this process begins with an organizational capacity assessment (OCA) and a technical capacity assessment (TCA), which are designed to engage staff to assess their own strengths and weaknesses that affect the organization and service delivery.

A baseline OCA enabled BARAA to identify its strengths and weaknesses in seven management areas (governance, administration, human resources, financial management, organizational processes, program management including M&E and project performance management). Using the OCA findings, TA-NPI and BARAA developed an action plan to improve all systems and procedures to ensure sustained, successful organizational capacity.

The TCA looked at various areas related to technical program delivery, including: leadership, service delivery methodology and quality management, program guidelines and procedures, community involvement, referral systems, supplies management and procurement, commodity use, data management and decision-making, and personnel training and development. Technical input from Kenya's AIDS authorities and CDC Kenya was included.

The results of these two assessments guided TA-NPI and BARAA in the design and roll-out of various trainings, focusing on areas needing the greatest improvement. Workshops were held on-site in Kenya by TA-NPI staff, and also in Uganda, where BARAA met other NPI grantees to learn and share experiences. These trainings were reinforced with follow-up workshops in the second and third years of the initiative, and e-mail guidance and telephone support were available to grantees at all times.

Results

During the second year of TA-NPI support, BARAA received follow-up OCA/TCA evaluations. Manuals and records indicated that BARAA has enhanced both technical and organizational systems, and is on track to strengthen all the internal capacities outlined in their original action plan.

Increased Member Capacity Improves Client Services & Ensures Program Sustainability

After nearly three years of technical assistance from TA-NPI, BARAA has developed and uses many organizational systems and tools to ensure effective program implementation and donor compliance. BARAA's members have brought on additional staff who have been trained in the same organizational and technical areas TA-NPI provided to BARAA itself. This enables the members to streamline and strengthen their own activities to reflect the support that TA-NPI has given to BARAA.

Through application of their strengthened project management skills and considering the breadth of client service needs, BARAA has greater appreciation of the challenges facing OVC and their households. In the eastern Kenya area of Malindi, the specific needs of clients can be more accurately expressed by BARAA and its partners to local government and set out in workplans for future funding partners. Better data recording ensures that evidence-based needs are accurately determined and national priorities are being supported.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

Strengthening Organizational Capacity

"*Since 2009, I have received training in curriculum development, client engagement, close-out training, and monitoring and evaluation. Unlike other trainings I have attended, the technical assistance we received under NPI was practical and customized. Together we identified gaps and quickly used what we learned on-the-ground to implement our own programs. I also now know the importance of having an action plan to push you.*

The trainings helped build my confidence because I now know what works and what doesn't. I am more focused on targets and I know I need to deliver those. Through the trainings and exposure that I get from TA-NPI, I was taught that what is more relevant is the outcome, the change. For example, we had a very challenging youth behavior change program. We were unsure how best to initiate change, but after sharing our experiences with other NPI grantees doing similar projects, we had more examples of what really works. This support enabled us to develop a practical approach to programs. We have also improved service delivery to subpartners, and as a result, the quality of services to beneficiaries."

—GRACE GAITHO, AREA MANAGER, MERU SOUTH

Developing Effective Members

"*The support has been fantastic, and we have really seen the benefits of the trainings. We use the resource mobilization knowledge and skills to write proposals, and have managed to win funding from the Constituency AIDS Council for behavior change communication. We now know what is required of us in terms of donor reporting. When we started it was not easy and we didn't have enough knowledge in this area. But through the trainings, we now know what is required and are using it every day.*"

—SANITA KITOLE, BOOKKEEPER AT BARAA MEMBER BAPTIST CHURCH

"*The subgrantees aren't just given money, they are taught and strengthened. Initially we looked at them as needing us more than we needed them. But now, it's different. I want them to come to us more and recommend others.*"

—DAMARIS AKOTH, AREA MANAGER, TESO

BAPTIST RELIEF AGENCY AFRICA (BARAA)

JSI CASE STUDIES IN CAPACITY BUILDING

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

Developing Effective Members

"Through the TA-NPI trainings in grant management, BARAA members are able to respond and do timely and accurate reporting. After the proposal writing training, they are writing proposals and winning funding. When you talk about sustainability, you think 'Are our members able to stand on their own?' I think they are now ready to compete like any other organization in the field."

—Martin Mudambo, BARAA NPI Advisor
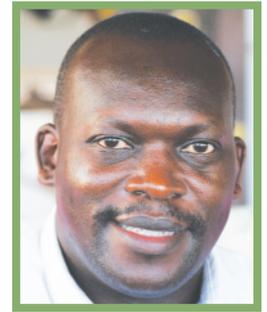
Interview with Gladys Muiti, Area Manager, Malindi

As a consortium, having strong members is essential. What did TA-NPI teach you about building their capacity?
TA-NPI showed us what our members need to learn, and now, training them for me has become easier because I am able to assess where they are and where they can improve.

What areas have been developed as a result of TA-NPI's support to BARAA?
The churches didn't know a lot about project management issues, so it was a bit hectic for them. Initially they didn't have policies in place on how to recruit staff and other general management areas. We worked with them to hire bookkeepers and project coordinators, and there were no volunteer trainings, so now we train school and community volunteers. They now have a board and work together to develop policies on accounting, financial management, and accountability —they have really grown.

Has TA-NPI support strengthened collaboration among BARAA's members?
Coordinating with partners has really improved. They came together through this program.

Our six partners meet every month to discuss project issues, such as their progress, things they need to improve, how they need to network at the regional level, and how can they address issues on their own. Even recruitment, sometimes they do this together and will help each other find the right people.

They have strengthened their voice because they have put their voices together. For example, many children are being sexually exploited at school, so our members said they need to do something about it. Together they went to the district offices and convinced them to fire one of the teachers. They now promote and organize their own events and advocate together.

What has been most successful about TA-NPI support to BARAA?
Our members are now able to do things on their own. The biggest success has been to see them develop in terms of skills and knowledge in managing health programs. They now have the relationships to work with health programs from other institutions in areas like TB, STIs, etc. Relationships and networks have developed so they can refer community members to things besides HIV.

Our members now participate in health, education, and district development forums as representatives of faith-based organizations. Now they are known and people know what they are doing. They influence decisionmaking and create change.

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

John Snow, Inc. | 44 Farnsworth Street · Boston, Massachusetts 02210 · www.jsi.com