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NPI Perspectives

Organizational Capacity Building: The Voices of Change



New Partners Initiative Technical Assistance Project (NuPITA)

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The global impact of the HIV epidemic has challenged already overburdened developing-country health systems to meet the needs of those infected and affected by HIV. In many countries, faith- and community-based organizations provide up to 50% of care given to people living with HIV. Yet these organizations often lack the leadership skills and management systems to enable sustainable programs. The PEPFAR-funded New Partners Initiative (NPI) expanded the reach of HIV service delivery by channeling funds directly to organizations already working at the community level. To support the grantees, USAID funded the New Partner's Initiative Technical Assistance (NuPITA) Project.

Led by John Snow, Inc. and its partner, Initiatives Inc., NuPITA was charged with building the technical and management capacity of NPI partners to manage donor funds, establish effective organizational systems, implement high-quality HIV services and, over time, become sustainable contributors to national HIV and AIDS strategies. Understanding that organizations need to be drivers of their own development, NuPITA used a participatory assessment and technical assistance approach. Partners identified their organizational strengths and needs through Technical and Organizational Capacity Assessments (OCA/TOCA), which were guided self-assessment processes. The assessments resulted in action plans based on international best practices, and road maps to technical assistance (TA) needs. Annual use of the tools enabled a cycle of assessment and support tailored to the partners' needs.

This document highlights the voices of the 14 NPI partners who received technical assistance over their three-year grant period from NuPITA.

Was the NuPITA capacity building approach helpful?

The idea that NuPITA's role was to conduct assessments and provide technical assistance at no cost initially left some partners skeptical and slow to respond. **Goal:** 'Our one regret is that we did not start to avail of [the] technical assistance much sooner in the lifetime of the grant. I think we found it hard to reconcile the fact that the assistance on offer was for free. It all seemed nearly too good to be true. Yet the OCA and TOCA process forced us to make time and commit to addressing capacity building needs which we were aware of, but might never have addressed.' Like **Goal**, many partners have

incorporated the OCA-TOCA approach into their global programs.

The NuPITA approach was unique; bringing multiple organizational levels and departments together, some for the first time, to assess their management processes and technical programs against best practices and identify actions for improvement. The diversity of TA provided and the modalities used for delivery was appreciated and contributed to longer term gains. **FXB:** "The provision of resources, technical support, and facilitation to allow for organizational workshops and for staff to come together from different departments and offices to tackle specific issues had significant indirect benefit for

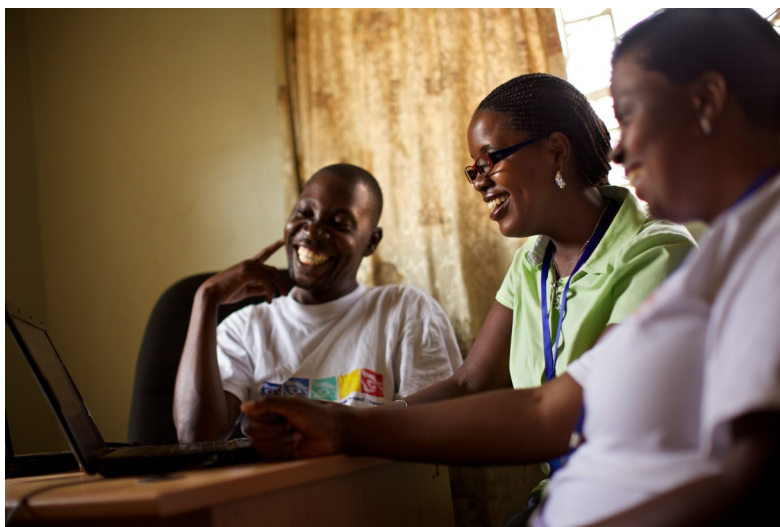
communication, morale, leadership, and program innovation.”

The action plans informed the partner’s strategy and NuPITA’s approach, the latter including group and tailored training, one-on-one support, and embedded advisors, depending on the circumstances and needs of the organization. Retrak: ‘on-site technical advisors allowed us to address the very specific, individualized needs of our organization, while the group trainings were targeted to the needs of growing NGOs and we really appreciated the input and the chance to share experiences with other NGOs and begin building networks.’

How did NPI strengthen community relationships?

Linkages with the community create pathways for referrals, improved access to services and galvanize local support. **Retrak:** “Our involvement in the NPI program has built good will and participation and raised our visibility. The community appreciates and learns from our programs; we even get referrals from the local police and business people.”

Goal: “Introduced HIV programming to northern Uganda and saw tremendous change in our communities.” Community partnerships led to community ownership. “HIV testing and OVC care improved because of the links we made to improve access to services.” Most importantly, “the community should have the capacity to continue the services when our program ends.”



How did partners’ organizational cultures change?

In many cases, organizations were either led by founding directors or management was overly centralized. By addressing decision making and communication processes, many organizations experienced a ‘cultural shift.’ One of NuPITA’s goals was to help organizations learn how to find resources and transfer knowledge. For many organizations this was a critical contribution.

SJCC: “Technical assistance ... led to improvements in governance that has seen a new, highly qualified and committed board in place, a restructuring that created middle management. and a sound policy framework that is proving to be instrumental in bringing order to the organization.”

ARC: “Making processes transparent and communicating this to and involving staff, led to a shift in staff relations and staff performance. The work we did around policies and procedures forced ARC as an organization to

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engage more closely with staff. Prior to this, staff... didn't feel anyone cared. Now we focus on two-way support, tools, and mutual understanding. The NPI project experience brought ARC closer as an organization in terms of dialogue and engagement.”

One of NuPITA's goals was to help organizations learn how to find resources and transfer knowledge. **Woord en Daad:** “NuPITA helped people develop an awareness of what they are doing, instead of just assessing performance. Ultimately that leads to better performance. Woord en Daad is now more of a learning organization than we were. People are open and transparent and it's easy to start a discussion when things are going well.”



What impact did NuPITA have on human resource management (HRM)?

Many organizations found effective HRM led to recruitment of more appropriate staff, increased retention, better management, and greater

commitment and program performance.

Mfesane: “Program management challenges that the organization faced have been reduced mainly due to the emphasis on getting the right people with the right skills to do the job, reinforced by effective performance management systems that have ultimately led to better program performance.”

Clear recruitment procedures made hiring a more transparent process. **AMURT:** “Our HR recruitment system improved [based on NuPITA training] and thus staff quality. “Delegation of responsibilities to staff at various levels in line with succession planning has improved retention and built staff confidence in work performance.”

Sinomlando Center of UKZN: “Job descriptions were developed and staff time documented, although resisted at the beginning. Soon we realized that staff time management provides information for decisionmaking.”

How did compliance improve?

Emphasis on meeting US government standards, although challenging for some, resulted in effective, efficient and transparent systems. Partners also discovered strong compliance systems made them more attractive to donors.

Retrak: “The policies and procedures developed through NuPITA have brought fairness and consistency in how issues are handled. Whether the operations manager is in the office or not, the systems and procedures are known. Allocating time and resources to donors has become easier because of the timesheets and financial tools developed.”

ICOB: [Our financial systems]“were very inadequate and could not measure up to the expectations of USAID. Change took place with recruitment of a new skilled and experienced team and continuous technical assistance. This ... helped the organization earn recognition and eventually attracted other funding partners. We are confident of our financial controls, documentation, reporting to donors, audit preparedness and overall management.”

AMURT: “All the technical trainings were helpful in building organizational capacity; the pre-audit exercises were instrumental in developing better accounting practices; the on-site technical adviser provided excellent support in training and facilitation methods; and the OCA tool has now been used organization-wide to great effect”

How was service delivery impacted?

Programs planned with community support, adherence to technical guidelines, and consistent monitoring lead to improved outcomes.

WellShare International: “Project deliverables and strategies have been made SMARTer, enabling the project staff to achieve targets in a timely manner. We are satisfied with our improved M&E system, comprehensive referral networks, and integration of quality improvement activities, starting with a client satisfaction survey.”

Camfed: “We successfully modified our OVC package to accommodate special needs of OVC living with HIV and AIDS... mapped referral links to provide services to HIV affected children and improved our community capacity building

around identifying and providing psychosocial support to OVC living with HIV and AIDS.”



FXB International did not have an M&E system, but now ‘uses data to report on outcomes.’

AMURT has “established an M&E department for the first time with dedicated staff after attending NuPITA training.”

Managing subgrantees and improving project performance management also contributes to stronger outcomes. EUCORD: “Most change took place in our capacity to implement programs and manage partners.”

How did the approach strengthen knowledge management?

In addition to NuPITA’s assistance, NPI partners learned from each other, their programs, and communities. Mfesane: “Excellence in program performance has gained us the status of a role model for other partners and affiliates as a well-structured organization that they can learn from. Mfesane has responded to this recognition by sharing learning through training and mentoring and is exploring offering training for a fee as an income-generating activity.”

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WellShare International: “Many of the tools, practices, and procedures have been incorporated into programs. Trainings have helped encourage and empower staff to incorporate change into their own project’s work. Templates developed through the NPI program are being used across WellShare International.”

What could have been done better?

Overall partners were very satisfied with NuPITA’s capacity building approach and the support provided. However, just as there is always room for improvement in organizations, support programs can also improve. The partners expressed their opinions: some wished they had known enough to take advantage of the multiple avenues for growth earlier on. Other organizations felt that had NuPITA oriented them better to the three-year program inputs in advance, it would have aided their internal planning and given long-term insight into what was available. Partners suggested that technical assistance be designed to prioritize the most

critical activities, like resource mobilization and networking. Although partners found the TOCA very useful in improving program implementation and creating service delivery standards, it would have been advantageous to use it in year one. They also recommended that trainings be spread out and communicated farther in advance to allow organizations to incorporate learning and plan for multiple staff participation. Finally organizations said they wanted more field visits to further strengthen project implementation.

The participatory assessment and technical assistance approach used by NuPITA was enriching for NPI-partners, NuPITA staff, and even USAID. A tremendous amount was learned through the process, but, perhaps more importantly, enduring relationships were built, better organizational structures and systems were established, and a greater number of people benefited from the improved HIV and AIDS services the NPI partners were able to provide through their NPI-funding and NuPITA capacity-building support.



The **New Partners Initiative Technical Assistance (NuPITA) Project** is a USAID-funded initiative to increase the quality of program implementation and strengthen the institutional capacity of 14 nongovernmental organizations that provide HIV prevention and care services in eight sub-Saharan African countries. These 14 organizations are PEPFAR New Partners Initiative (NPI) Round 2 and Round 3 grantees.

Implemented by John Snow, Inc., and partner Initiatives Inc., with offices in Kampala, Uganda and Nairobi, Kenya, the project provides technical assistance (TA) to the NPI grantees in HIV prevention and care services, financial management and compliance with USG regulations, and organizational development (OD).

NuPITA provides technical assistance to:

Round 2 NPI Partners

American Refugee Committee International (ARC) – Minnesota, USA, working in Uganda
Camfed USA Foundation (Camfed) – California, USA, working in Tanzania
Children's Emergency Relief International (CERI) – Texas, USA, working in South Africa
Integrated Community-Based Initiatives (ICOB) – Bushenyi District, Uganda
Tearfund* – Teddington, United Kingdom, working in Kenya
Woord en Daad – Gorinchem, Netherlands, working in South Africa

Round 3 NPI Partners

Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team (AMURT) – Maryland, USA, working in Kenya
European Cooperative for Rural Development (EUCORD) – Brussels, Belgium, working in Nigeria
François-Xavier Bagnoud Foundation (FXB) – New York, USA, working in Rwanda and Uganda
GOAL – Dublin, Ireland, working in Uganda
Grassroots Alliance for Community Education (G.R.A.C.E.) – working in Kenya
Kindernothilfe (KNH) – Duisburg, Germany, working in Kenya
WellShare – Minnesota, USA, working in Uganda
Retrak – Manchester, United Kingdom, working in Uganda and Ethiopia
Tearfund* – Teddington, United Kingdom, working in Zambia

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Photos courtesy of Robin Hammond.