

Development of strategic information for the private sector

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Image: Posters at Musamba Clinic
Lusaka district



STARZ in context

The **Strengthening the AIDS Response Zambia (STARZ)** programme provided technical support to NAC Zambia from May 2004 until August 2009. This has included support for improved participation of civil society and the private sector in the national multisectoral response to HIV and AIDS. The STARZ programme was funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), with technical assistance supplied by HLSP in partnership with JHU-CCP, HDA and PMTC(Z) Ltd.

Introduction

The STARZ programme has worked with the National HIV/AIDS/STI/TB Council (NAC) and its partners to establish a multisectoral response to HIV and AIDS in Zambia. STARZ support has been at a strategic level. Rather than taking on implementation of this response, the STARZ programme focused on strengthening the capacity of Zambian individuals and institutions to respond to the threats of HIV and AIDS, fostering a fertile environment for them to work in.

A central objective has therefore been to provide the information necessary for each sector to organise its own response to the disease. This paper summarises the work that STARZ undertook to improve the supply of strategic information to the private sector: businesses large and small, and the network and service organisations that provide those enterprises with the support they need to address HIV and AIDS at work and in their communities.

Strategic information

A diverse set of publications and information channels has arisen from this initiative. The NAC Private Sector Specialist and STARZ Private Sector Adviser have:

- commissioned research studies;
- documented good practices from Zambian companies annually;
- produced tools and guidelines for companies to develop and evaluate their own workplace policies and programmes;
- published IEC materials in partnership with private sector network organisations;
- collected and reported routine data to contribute to NAC's national monitoring remit.

This information has been disseminated through NAC's website, the NAC Resource Centre and its partners.

Studies to inform and improve interventions

NAC is committed to supporting operational research studies to inform on the effectiveness and impact of HIV interventions in both the workplace and community. Implementers are strongly urged to utilise research findings to improve the content and effectiveness of their HIV initiatives.

The NAC Private Sector Specialist has responsibility for commissioning research studies related to the private sector, and for disseminating the findings to implementers. Decisions on how results should be presented and distributed are made in consultation with key stakeholders. Ultimately, each research report is posted on the NAC website and hard copies are made available in the NAC resource centre.

Workplace programmes

STARZ has supported the production and dissemination of strategic information for the private sector during the last five years. Good examples of such support to NAC's research activities exist. For example, in 2007, NAC provided Comprehensive HIV and AIDS Programme (CHAMP) with technical assistance to undertake a cost-benefit analysis of workplace programmes (WPPs) in selected Global Development Alliance (GDA) sites. A detailed research report is available¹, and a summary of these findings is contained in an advocacy leaflet designed for this purpose. In addition, the cost-benefit analysis assignment is presented as a case study in the Private Sector Strategy for HIV and AIDS in Zambia 2006-2010: Learning from the past – Planning for the future.

Mobile health units

NAC also supported CHAMP to undertake a study of its mobile health unit (MHU) programme, which had been running for one year. The aim of the evaluation was to review the performance of the MHU programme against its intended goals since inception, and use the findings to recommend adjustments to the current programme structure and systems where necessary. The findings that emerged provided empirical evidence that MHUs are increasing access to ART services in rural, underserved communities. Such information is useful to validate funding and future support for service expansion of this particular model. Furthermore, it is anticipated that this research report will be used later in the year to justify Zambia's Global Fund Round 9 submission, which will focus on treatment and include mobile ART services.

HIV-related research studies

NAC has also commissioned Afya Mzuri to conduct three HIV-related research studies on the following subjects:

- The effectiveness of private sector WPPs in changing HIV-related knowledge, attitudes, and practices;
- The effectiveness of providing mobile counselling and testing (CT) services as a strategy for workplace-based HIV prevention and wellness programmes;
- The extent of stigma and the effectiveness of anti-stigma interventions in private sector WPPs.

The full results of these studies will be made available in autumn 2009.

¹ The full report is available at <http://www.hlspinstitute.org/projects/?mode=type&id=232487>

Support information

For the last three years, the STARZ programme has supported ZWAP to publish 'Good practices in Zambian workplaces'.

The good practice collection can be used for multiple purposes as follows:

- Support advocacy efforts directed at initiating or strengthening workplace HIV and AIDS programmes;
- Inform planning and implementation, borrowing from the experiences of other companies;
- Minimise negative outcomes, again by learning from the challenges identified by others;
- Better monitor programme implementation, utilising key actions and indicators of progress or success.

ZWAP - Good practices in Zambian workplaces

- **Series I: *Bridging Divides***: produced in 2006, consists of 11 case studies from companies that have shown ingenuity and initiative in tackling HIV in their workplaces.
- **Series II: *Counselling and Testing – an entry point for care and support***: serves to sensitise and inform management in various workplaces of the need to address the impact of HIV and AIDS. The mechanism for this is through implementing initiatives to increase the uptake of CT, as well as to facilitate access to treatment, care and support for employees and their family members.
- **Series III: *Beyond the Workplace - reaching the household and community***: shares experiences of what companies are doing about HIV and AIDS beyond the borders of their workplaces; and the benefits that ensue as a result, for their employees' households and communities. This theme is also an expression of the fact that workplaces cannot operate in isolation from the communities in which they are based, from the clients and customers they serve, and from the partners (like contractors, suppliers and service providers) with which they work.

Strategic information also includes policy guidelines and codes of practice, as well as HIV and AIDS updates in the form of IEC materials and training tools. Examples include the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work, and the government's publication of the National HIV and AIDS Workplace Policy in 2005. This latter was followed by production of the ZWAP Workplace HIV and AIDS Policy Manual, which was funded by the STARZ programme. This manual has been well utilised by ZWAP trainers to develop workplace policies in companies and in line ministries. A key objective of the NAC is to ensure that implementers are kept abreast of new information and technologies as they emerge.

A pressing task featured in the 2008 action plan was the compilation of up-to-date HIV-related information for use of company managers and implementers, and their beneficiaries. To address this, NAC (through STARZ funding mechanism), supported ZWAP partners to produce the following:

- A set of three A1 full colour posters designed to generate demand for CT among employees and their families;
- An A4 folder containing ten A4 inserts designed to provide a comprehensive briefing pack for programme implementers such as focal persons and peer educators, covering all relevant issues around CT e.g. what happens during the test, PMTCT, where to access follow-on services such as ART, positive living, what an employee may experience after testing positive, legal and human rights issues, etc;

- An A5 guidebook for managers in the private sector, which includes high level information, such as data from relevant studies relating to the impact and effectiveness of CT as a strategy in the workplace, the role of the company in providing support to employees, post-test services for employees, etc.
- A three-gate folded A4 leaflet specifically for those that have tested on post-test issues.

The NAC also commissioned the design of advocacy papers targeting company managers. Specifically, an A5 booklet to promote HIV mainstreaming in the private sector, and an A5 booklet highlighting the findings from the cost-benefit analysis study to promote the benefits of WPPs. These booklets have been printed and disseminated, and are accessible on the website in PDF format. Hard copies are available in the NAC resource centre.

Resource data

The absence of regular data from the private sector at decentralised levels, as well as for monitoring purposes during joint annual programme reviews, led to the development of instruments to undertake annual surveys. The first survey was undertaken in early 2006. The main product of the survey is the private sector directory of workplace programmes, titled 'Combating HIV and AIDS in the Private Sector'. Directory editions exist for years 2006, 2007, and 2008, and hard copies of each are available in the NAC resource centre. Soft copies can be downloaded from the NAC website in PDF format.

The data from the 2006 survey was used to populate the new private sector database, which was deployed on the NAC server in Access format, and is updated every year. Thus, the 2006 directory serves as a baseline for the National AIDS Strategic Framework (NASF). The 2007 directory and subsequent editions provide follow up data on companies, private medical clinics and private insurance companies. The directory does not only show progress in the uptake of HIV-related services within the private sector over time; but serves as an information resource for companies, Provincial AIDS Coordination Advisers (PACAs) and District AIDS Coordination Advisers (DACAs) to identify partners, and to share information and best practices between companies.

Conclusion

The range and quality of strategic information available with respect to the private sector's contribution to the HIV and AIDS response in Zambia is set out in detail in the Private Sector Strategy 2009. The Strategy demonstrates the centrality of strategic information services to the private sector's activities in this field.

Companies now have forums and publications in which best practice is shared; ground-breaking research has been conducted into the costs, benefits and efficacy of workplace programmes; the extent of the private sector response has been monitored using an annual survey approach; new materials have been produced to help tailor company responses to each unique context; and NAC has an improved capacity to coordinate and disseminate the results flowing from private sector networks and partners.

These processes and outcomes have been valued by those involved in their production, as well as those who have learned from and utilised their content. Although the STARZ programme has come to an end, one of its lasting legacies will be the capacity of NAC, private sector partners and Zambian companies to anticipate and address their strategic information needs, to help prevent the spread of HIV and to mitigate the impact of AIDS in Zambian companies and communities.

