

LET'S TALK! CAPACITATING MULTI-SECTORAL AIDS COMMITTEES TO GIVE VOICE TO MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV IN TANZANIA

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BACKGROUND

In 2003, the Government of Tanzania (GOT) developed guidelines to establish multi-sectoral AIDS committees (MACs) to facilitate coordination of and community participation in the HIV and AIDS response. People living with HIV (PLHIV) and most vulnerable children (MVC) are encouraged to participate in MACs, which provide a forum to discuss their needs and advocate for higher quality and improved access to services. Although the purpose of MACs was clearly articulated in the GOT guidelines, in September 2016, most MACs were not functional or lacked adequate guidance to improve HIV and AIDS services. This resulted in the continued exclusion of PLHIV and MVC in efforts to reach the GOT and PEPFAR 90-90-90 goals. In October 2016, the USAID-funded Community Health and Social Welfare System Strengthening Program (CHSSP), implemented by JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc., began helping the GOT to establish (or revitalize) MACs.

METHODS

Between October 2016 and May 2017, CHSSP conducted two-day orientation meetings in 52 councils in Tanzania to revitalize, strengthen, and streamline coordination and functionality of the MACs. MAC members were oriented to their roles and responsibilities and sensitized to the rights of PLHIV and other rights including gender equality and equity. Members were given clear guidelines on how they could better serve MVC and PLHIV in their communities.

BETWEEN OCTOBER 2016 AND MAY 2017, CHSSP CONDUCTED TWO-DAY ORIENTATION MEETINGS IN 52 COUNCILS



RESULTS

By June 2017, a total of 38 (73%) MACs were found to be active and meeting quarterly. 682 MAC members (387 male: 295 female) have been oriented to their roles and responsibilities. Fourteen (26%) of the MACs that participated in the orientation meetings were not functional due to a high turnover of key decision makers on those councils



38

MACS (EQUIVALENT TO 73%) WERE FOUND TO BE ACTIVE AND MEETING QUARTERLY BY JUNE 2017.

682

MAC MEMBERS (387 MALE: 295 FEMALE) HAVE BEEN ORIENTED TO THEIR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Functional and capacitated MACs are a key conduit for PLHIV and MVC access to the health and social welfare system in Tanzania. Realization of the GOT vision of capacitated MACs at-scale will ensure that HIV and social services reach every community in Tanzania and that PLHIV, MVC, and other vulnerable people have a voice in designing programs and interventions that are inclusive and effective.