

Factors Affecting Success in Promoting AIDS Competence in Cambodia, Thailand, and the Philippines

Authors: Dusit Duangsa and Usa Duongsaa, *AIDS Education Programme, Chiangmai Univerity, Thailand, and the Constellation for AIDS Competence*

Issue:

HIV/AIDS is a serious problem in Cambodia, Thailand, and the Philippines. Local responses to it need to be promoted.

Project:

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Constellation for AIDS Competence supported coaching teams to mentor NGO facilitators in Cambodia, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, India, and Papua New Guinea, on the AIDS Competence Process (ACP) during 2007-2010. The facilitators learned and practiced the strengths-based approach and participatory tools to help communities become AIDS-competent.

Results:

In Cambodia, Thailand and the Philippines, the trained facilitators applied the ACP in their work, transferred the ACP to additional facilitators and scaled out to other partners, networks, and areas. Tools were translated into local languages and adapted for different communities including youth, people living with HIV/AIDS peer support groups, faith-based networks, and sexual diversity groups, who built their dream, did their self-assessment, developed their action plans, took action with locally-mobilized resources, and measured their progress. They organized into CambodiaCompetence, Thai ACP Network, and PinoyCompetence teams, to mainstream the ACP in their respective country.

Lessons Learned:

Factors affecting success in the initiative include:

- appreciating/strengthening the capacities of people and communities to respond and overcome challenges
- using a participatory approach to promote local ownership
- having coaching teams support the local facilitators throughout the process
- adapting to local contexts
- continued learning and sharing among the facilitators

PICTURES AND QUOTES FROM THE TEAMS

CAMBODIA



“During the peer assist a participant told his personal story. He said that since joining Mary Knoll’s self assessment he had changed his behaviour. He had participated in the self assessment and placed a high score in the boxes for most of the practices. Going home however, he continued to think about his own life and family and realized that he was not as high as he had scored. He was HIV+ but his wife was HIV-. They had never used condoms despite this, partly because his wife did not fully understand the risks. After the self assessment though, he decide to take his wife back for testing and tell her about the risks. She was still HIV negative. They now use condoms 100% of the time”.

“The approach brings us new knowledge on HIV/ AIDS, new tools and methods and the strategy is truly bottom-up”

“The SALT approach gives PLHIV a real opportunity to create their vision and dream for their community”

“When the facilitator asked to draw my dream, it was a small one, and then when joined together I realized that I need to learn more because the dream of the community is much bigger”.

“Facilitation is good for applying in the field, because the meaning of facilitator means we can solve a problem together – stimulate information through participation”

“I personally feel proud to be implementing SALT and ACP, I feel professional. It makes me proud.”

“Are the tools for communities to use or for the facilitators working with the community?”

“I’ve applied SALT with my outreach work with junior high school students in Battambang province. They have strengths and capacity in several aspects. They just need their chances to express those strengths.”

“I’ve applied SALT when I work with drug users and injection drug users. I could see that there is not much people supporting them and give them opportunities to express their strengths and to share their experience. We have shared and have learned from each other with appreciation.”

PHILIPPINES



“We have reached all kinds of people – they have responded actively”

“We integrate HIV/AIDS in our full responsibility”

“We support the interest of the community – we link and connect”

“It promotes local partnership. Community is ready to handle the issue on their own”

“We are integrating tools without extra resources – we look for the time to produce better results with some resources”

“ACP enhances our program and results. Facilitators give more options to use with community – we don’t need extra resources – it’s combination of tools to make it better”

“I appreciated the ACP after the kick-off event, after I looked inside rather than outside: what I was thinking and doing in my HIV/AIDS work. There’re people at risk for HIV. Before the ACP, most NGOs went to communities and told them they had HIV challenges. With the ACP, communities recognize their HIV challenge as well as their capacities to address them... the new thing introduced to us by the Constellation is the way of thinking and the way of working. The way we look at how we work with communities. At first we went to communities and told them they were at risk and they had to do this, do this, do this. With the new way of working, we went in to look for the positive side, look for strengths”.

“Let go. Trust the process. And trust the people”

“Our dream: AIDS COMPETENT Community – but we want a thousand flowers to bloom. We want communities to be competent responding to HIV. As a core group we have the main responsibility to spread ACP to other communities. We are represented by the hands that nurture the plant. The roots represent the outcomes and the outputs.”

THAILAND



“The ACP helps people see their own capacities. They no longer need anyone to tell them who should do what. It stimulates people to want to improve themselves. It helps build a new generation of leaders in the community as well as in organizations”

“Many communities succeeded in putting their action plans (which were developed after doing the self-assessment) in the local government’s plan and received the necessary budget to support their activities at the community level, with the local governments having better understanding and more commitment about the community response to HIV/AIDS”

“The way of thinking that focuses on looking for strengths helped draw more local organizations and community groups in to AIDS work and community work, and helps them feel a stronger sense of ownership of the work”

“The ACP tools enhance the team learning process. It enables us to have more friends in doing our work, and to have more skills in managing the learning process”

“The SALT principles helped create a new dialogue in our organization which used to be divided between different generations and groups of staff, and between staff and target groups which are women who work in the bars. The new dialogue and the new way of looking for strengths and appreciating each other have healed the division. Now we have more listening, understanding and accepting of each other.”

“When we talk with community people, with young people, or with whoever, if we talk about problems and we ask what their problems are, they usually resist and resent. Young people especially will be really upset that we adults look at them as ‘problems’. But if we talk about the situation, about hope, about concerns, it’s more open and it helps them want to talk with us more. It’s a matter of us having an open heart and a good way of thinking”

“The ACP concepts and tools helped change NGOs’ way of thinking and way of working so that they now see themselves more as facilitators of community action, not implementers of action themselves”

“The ACP process enhances people’s worth. It helps us recognize other people’s worth and they recognize our worth. It helps us recognize our own worth. It enables people to stand by themselves, for themselves, and feel good about themselves.”