HIV/AIDS Policy Research

The policy environment in any country has a strong influence on the success or failure of HIV/AIDS prevention and care programs. Because country-level policies have sometimes been weak, ill conceived, poorly implemented, or even contradictory, the response to the epidemic has often remained ineffective. All Horizons research activities are designed to inform both national-level policies and more specific service delivery policies by providing new information that helps decision makers formulate effective program and policy responses to HIV/AIDS. In addition, Horizons is conducting several studies on issues that are particularly relevant to policymakers: making resource allocation decisions, adapting programs from other settings, scaling-up successful programs, and assessing the cost-effectiveness of different interventions.

Developing Resource Allocation Tools for Policymakers

Critical to achieving a sustainable global response to the pandemic will be the ability of policymakers to allocate scarce resources efficiently and equitably to achieve maximum cost-effectiveness. Unfortunately, there are very few decision-making tools available to help HIV/AIDS policymakers and programs managers allocate resources. Working with the Futures Group, Horizons is helping to develop and test new resource allocation tools. This large-scale policy study in Africa, Asia, and Latin America suggests that most policymakers don’t use decision-making tools and models because extensive data or advanced skills are required. This study seeks to develop resource allocation decision-making tools that match the abilities and needs of policymakers. Once these tools have been developed, policymakers will be trained in how to use them and their acceptability and usefulness will be assessed.

Adapting Effective Interventions

Well over a decade ago, Thailand implemented a 100 percent condom use policy in brothels, yet despite its success no similar policies have been adopted in other countries. Working with the Dominican National AIDS Control Program (PROCETS), COIN and CEPROSH (two active local NGOs), the Dermatologic Institute, and the Johns Hopkins University, Horizons is testing two approaches to 100 percent condom use. The first uses an education and community mobilization approach to create a sense of solidarity among the owners and staff of sex establishments to support consistent condom use between sex workers and their clients. In a second arm of the study, the same solidarity approach is reinforced by government sanctions and fines against sex establishments if the condom policy is not followed. The process and cost of implementing these two approaches in different geographic areas are being carefully documented. The study is also measuring the effect of each approach on condom use, sustainability, and STI incidence.
Taking Success to Scale

Although there is considerable discussion about the need to scale-up successful programs, there is relatively little research documenting the process of scaling-up such interventions. This type of analysis is essential for understanding whether local successes can be replicated within a larger context. In Chennai, India, Horizons is working with the NGO YRG Care to identify the key elements of its innovative care and support model and replicate them at four new sites. The study examines the NGO’s efforts to meet the needs of clients, address client satisfaction issues, and assess changes in the perceived quality of life of the clients served. Each of the four new scale-up sites has unique characteristics that will require adaptation of the Chennai model, and analyzing that experience for each will contribute to knowledge about the process and costs of scaling-up care and support services in different settings.

Horizons is also collaborating with the International HIV/AIDS Alliance in an initiative to draw together lessons learned from within and outside the field of HIV/AIDS about successful NGO scale-up experiences. Leading experts and NGO practitioners will come together at an international seminar to discuss lessons learned about scaling-up and articulate a research agenda for the future. This will be followed by a published state-of-the-art paper that synthesizes the seminar proceedings, provides background documentation, and outlines a set of practical guidelines for program managers on scaling-up.

Assessing Cost-Effectiveness

An important way of assisting policymakers is to provide data on the cost-effectiveness of HIV/AIDS interventions. Working with Family Health International, Horizons is conducting detailed cost-effectiveness studies of STI hybrid approaches, voluntary counselling and testing programs, school-based life skills programs, and interventions to prevent mother-to-child transmission.

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1 Assisting Program Managers in Allocating HIV/AIDS Resources
2 Establishing the Efficacy of a 100 Percent Condom Use Program for Sex Establishments (Dominican Republic)
3 Scaling Up Care and Support Services for People Living with HIV/AIDS (India)
4 Increasing Coverage of Successful NGO Responses to HIV/AIDS