The global response to HIV/AIDS has relied heavily on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to provide timely and responsive prevention, care, and support services. Because NGOs are close to the communities they serve, they are well placed to identify and respond appropriately to community needs and to implement effective interventions to change social norms and risk behavior. Thus NGOs have been critical in mobilizing and sustaining the community response to HIV/AIDS, often well ahead of governments. The importance of their role in successful longer-term responses has been recognized, with as much as 70 percent of USAID’s funding for HIV/AIDS directed through or involving NGOs, and over half of Horizons activities involving NGOs as local partners. Horizons is implementing four studies to increase knowledge about how to support and sustain a broader NGO response, increase the involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS in NGO activities, promote capacity building, and scale up successful NGO programs.

Facilitating Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA)
A four-country diagnostic study on the involvement of PLHA includes efforts to learn more about NGO strategies that facilitate PLHA involvement in decision-making and service delivery at the community level.1 The study is being implemented by Horizons and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance in collaboration with in-country partners. At a data analysis and interpretation workshop at the close of the study in Burkina Faso, NGO representatives agreed with research findings that the following conditions are necessary at the organizational level for the successful participation of PLHA:

- NGOs should encourage better integration of PLHA with the organization through sensitivity training for non-infected NGO members.
- NGOs need to do much more to inform PLHA who receive services about opportunities for involvement in activities and decision-making.
- PLHA should be encouraged to identify and undertake activities that utilize their skills, and NGOs can also do more to provide appropriate training for PLHA to facilitate their involvement.

As a result of the completed studies in Burkina Faso and Ecuador, NGO participants have decided to incorporate PLHA into decision-making bodies in the organization and to provide training for PLHA so they can offer services such as counseling.

Involving NGOs in Research Helps Build Capacity
Focused efforts to inform NGOs about proposed research and to explain the research methodologies to be used is a critical first step in engaging NGOs in operations research. Horizons has found in several studies that this can significantly enhance NGO involvement, ownership, and utilization of the research results, leading to the strategic enhancement of their capacity in specific areas including better monitoring and evaluation. To share lessons learned more widely, the International HIV/AIDS Alliance has developed a toolkit containing participatory activities about effective ways of involving local NGOs and other stakeholders in operations research based on the experiences of the Horizons diagnostic study on PLHA involvement.1
Community Development Approaches: More Effective and Affordable?
Many NGOs utilize community development strategies, but without evidence of their effectiveness, or that the costs and effort are justified. A comprehensive literature review on community development approaches among NGOs working with sex work populations found that a notable feature of innovative and successful projects is the inclusion of sex workers’ empowerment as a project goal from the outset, with project strategies and design oriented strongly toward attaining this goal. Working with the Sonagachi Sex Work Project in India, the Progama Integrada da Marginalidade in Brazil, and Medecins sans Frontieres in Cambodia, Horizons is assessing the impact of community development approaches being implemented by these NGOs as part of their strategy to prevent HIV/AIDS.

Scaling Up Programs that Work
In South India, Horizons is working with the NGO YRG Care to scale up its care and support program in Chennai in four new sites in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. This research seeks to identify the elements of the original care and support model that meet the needs of clients and contribute to 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 care and support model while seeking to incorporate the most successful elements of the original model. The natural variation between the sites will contribute to knowledge about the process and costs of scaling up care and support services in different settings.

Needs assessments have revealed that services for PLHA at the new sites are extremely limited, rarely coordinated, and not organized from a patient-centered perspective that is the hallmark of the YRG Care model. This information has helped to prioritize scale-up efforts designed to increase cooperation among local service providers to avoid duplication of new services and maximize opportunities for referral.

Scaling-up: A Neglected Area of Documentation and Analysis
A Horizons literature review on scaling up has revealed very little formal study into the issue of scaling up, either within or outside the field of HIV/AIDS. Horizons has therefore embarked on a new initiative to bring together existing knowledge and expertise, with a particular emphasis on the role of NGOs in scaling-up effective programs, to culminate in an international seminar that will consider new conceptual frameworks, definitions, and the articulation of a future research agenda. A key output of this activity will be a state-of-the-art paper synthesizing lessons learned, case studies, and contributions from leading academics and practitioners in the field.

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