

Improving HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services within Baptist Community of the Congo River's Health Network in D R Congo

Context

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has a large scale growing HIV epidemic with a general population prevalence of 1.1% and an ambitious National Multi-sectoral HIV/AIDS strategic plan with vision to have a generation free of HIV/AIDS. To implement successfully this strategic plan, the National HIV/AIDS control program relies on strong partners such as church related institutions playing a critical role in the health provision in DRC. As well it needs well motivated and trained human resources, targeted financial resources and a reliable monitoring and evaluation system.

With a national HIV prevalence of 4.1% among pregnant women, more than 15% for sex workers and 7.6% among displaced women from war (internal migrants), the country needs stronger and strengthened institutions to face the burden of HIV/AIDS - STIs and its impact on already vulnerable and affected families. The Baptist Community of the Congo River (CBFC) through its health network¹ is confronted by an important influx of the above highest risk groups, including orphans often thrown out from parental home and abandoned to their own when parents died from HIV. As a bottleneck or "bite the bullet", this alarming situation confronts increasingly the skills and capabilities of stakeholders (staffs), having found themselves in difficulties and encountered problems to finding appropriated professional tools in those circumstances. Thus, CBFC joins the Fondation Profa's expertise as a competence HIV-STIs prevention Center to improve its staffs' core competencies for a better sexual and reproductive health (SRH) delivery services through a partnership.



CBFC's area of intervention along the Congo River

Project description

At this Startup stage, Fondation Profa extended a financial support request to ESTHER Switzerland to organize an initial mission of needs Assessment and institutional capacity evaluation of CBFC to build up a realistic and sustainable partnership as in DRC people have confidence in church activity. This will be a participatory-based twinning approach bringing together the western expertise in migrant population of Fondation Profa and the willingness of the Baptist Community to serve around its catchment area.

For the first mission, Fondation Profa will recruit an Expert Consultant specialist in public health with HIV, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and organizational diagnosis skills. The consultant has an in-depth knowledge of the Congolese health system and will travel to Kinshasa (CBFC Headquarters, DR Congo). The Consultant main task will be to explore the

¹ Medical infrastructures (4 health zones, 4 General reference hospitals, 8 Reference community health centers, 98 Community health centers, 62 Health centers, 2 River Blindness/Onchocerciasis Projects, 2 National HIV/AIDS Prevention Projects, 5 Nursing Schools, 2 Medical Institutes, Co-founder member of Université Protestante au Congo); Medical staffs (21 Medical doctors, 248 Nurses, 159 others paramedical personnel's); Ecclesial structures (1839 local churches, 1826719 effective members, locate within 6 provinces in DR Congo, and also present at Libreville (Gabon) and Brazzaville (Republic of Congo)).

potential of this partnership. He will accomplish a desk review, conduct interviews with key informants and organize a workshop with CBFC staffs. Its final report with corrective approaches will boost the institutional partnership between Fondation Profa and CBFC. This partnership will materialize into a real and concrete engagement of CBFC in improved HIV prevention and SRH delivery services which are critical for slowing the spread of HIV.



CBFC's panoramic view of related SRH sector activities

Partnership

Both partners are accredited institutions from North and South with various settings: medical, community, education, academic and research valorization. In one side, CBFC is NGO/FBO with a rich multifunctional infrastructure heritage. Its main resources are in a perpetual renewal process. The development of institutional capacities is the key for an optimal sustainable access to services: That's a leitmotiv for partnership. And in the other side, training and research are cross-sectional activities and useful to entire Fondation Profa's prestations. The first one allows stakeholders to repel all *a priori* assumptions related to SRH² while the platform RDV³ promotes research improvement practices and sharing experiences, a space for knowledge transfer and exchange: That's all a dynamic hub, a must for concerted actions to developing local capacities. At last, aiming and willing to forge a partnership in three steps as follow:

Together
Exploring the opportunity for mutual learning, through assessment of needs and institutional capacity evaluation.

Together
Building up a project that emphasizes empowerment and strengthening internal capabilities and beyond.

Together
Promoting best solutions that fit to the context rather than adopting 'best practices' approach, because there is no universal solution.

Timeframe

From April 1st to July 1st, 2017.

² Profa - Formations <http://www.profa.ch/fr/fondation/formations-0-305>

³ RDV (Recherche, Développement et Valorisation) <http://www.profa.ch/fr/fondation/recherches-et-developpement-0-9>



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