
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE CORE INITIATIVE

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The Communities Responding to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic (CORE) Initiative is a five-year, USAID-funded program, led by CARE USA in collaboration with the World Council of Churches (WCC), the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), the International HIV/AIDS Alliance and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Center for Communication Programs (CCP). The CORE Initiative provides technical, financial and organizational support to community- and faith-based organizations (CBOs/FBOs) and networks in order to build and strengthen broader community-based responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

THE INITIATIVE'S MISSION

The mission of the CORE Initiative is *to support an inspired, effective and inclusive response to the causes and consequences of HIV/AIDS by strengthening the capacity of community- and faith-based groups in Africa, Asia, Eurasia, Latin America and the Caribbean.*

GOAL

The CORE Initiative's overall goal is *to contribute to the mitigation of the impact of HIV and AIDS at the community level by expanding and strengthening community- and faith-based multi-sectoral HIV/AIDS programming, including prevention, stigma reduction, care and support.*

THE CORE INITIATIVE APPROACH

As part of its central strategy, the CORE Initiative promotes the integration of multiple approaches as the most effective means of addressing HIV/AIDS:

1. **Public Health approaches** primarily focus on reducing risk of becoming infected by promoting behavior change, as well as on improving access to counseling, treatment, care, and other medical and social support services for those who are infected and affected.
2. **Multi-sectoral approaches** explore the impact of HIV/AIDS on development efforts and household livelihood security, and address the epidemic's root causes through a range of sectoral interventions, including access to education, food security, health services, and income-generating activities. Vulnerability to contracting HIV is inextricably linked to socioeconomic, demographic and socio-cultural factors that combine to influence, both positively and negatively, decision-making and behavior. Poverty, livelihood insecurity, gender inequality, migration and conflict catalytically shape individual and community vulnerability to HIV.
3. **A human rights approach** considers the range of rights relating to HIV/AIDS, for example, starting with rights serving to reduce individual vulnerability to HIV, such as the right to sexual health, and culminating with rights ensuring access to healthcare and social services for those infected. Key to a human rights approach is the principle of accountability: while all people enjoy fundamental rights, at the same time, they are responsible for fulfilling their duty towards society.
4. **Compassion approaches** are primarily linked to faith communities and acknowledge that people may be moved to address HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support because of spiritual value and beliefs. Religion, in all of its diverse forms, is a powerful force in human history. Just as religion's

regressive impulses can have devastating consequences in society, its progressive impulses, such as those that promote hope and healing, have been a powerful force for justice and human rights.

Hope and Healing as expressed in Religious Texts

A gentle character is that which enables the rope of life to stay unbroken in one's hand. *African Traditional Religions. Yoruba Proverb (Nigeria).*

What sort of religion can it be without compassion? You need to show compassion to all living beings. Compassion is the root of all religious faiths. *Hinduism. Basavanna, Vachana 247.*

The believer who participates in human life, exposing himself to its torments and suffering, is worth more than the one who distances himself from its suffering. *Islam. Hadith of Ibn Majah.*

A human being should share in the distress of the community, for so we find that Moses, our teacher, shared in the distress of the community. *Judaism. Talmud, Taanit 11a*

Have benevolence towards all living beings, joy at the sight of the virtuous, compassion and sympathy for the afflicted... *Jainism. Tattvarthasutra 7.11.*

Those who do not abandon mercy will not be abandoned by me. *Shinto. Oracle of the Kami of Itsukushima.*

A new commandment I give to you: that you love one another as I have loved you. *Christianity. John 13:34.*

CORE INITIATIVE SUPPORTED PROGRAMMING

The CORE Initiative currently provides seed money and technical support to build capacity and expand community-led HIV and AIDS programs in select countries of sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeast Asia. The Initiative will soon extend its coverage to countries in Eurasia, Latin America and the Caribbean. The CORE Initiative's Small Grants program emphasizes opportunities for learning and promising practices and document results. As part of good programming practice, CORE Initiative emphasizes the following principles:

- Participation by key national and regional stakeholders in decision making;
- Access to resources for organizations that have traditionally lacked access to global grants programs;
- Gender equality by supporting programs that address fundamental issues of gender inequality;
- Meaningful involvement of persons living with HIV and AIDS beyond being beneficiaries of services; and,
- Support and active participation of communities that will benefit from project activities in project development, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation.

PROGRAMMATIC FOCUS AREAS

Care and Support

One of the focus areas of the CORE Initiative is increasing the capacity of households and communities to provide comprehensive care, support, and

CORE Initiative Focus Areas:

- Care and support, including orphans and vulnerable children;
- Stigma reduction; and,
- Prevention.

treatment since people infected with HIV continue to lack access to effective and appropriate care services in their homes and communities. Care and support also relates to orphans and other vulnerable children (OVC). Of particular concern is care for OVCs and long-term mechanisms that must be established in communities to support them, as well as provide support and encouragement to the women and elderly who are increasing fulfilling the role of caretakers. Children affected by AIDS (CABA) also face both short and long-term demands, which threaten their health, education, and development.

When my cousin was dying of AIDS, he found it easy to tell his family and friends about the disease. In his final days, we gathered the family to say goodbye. We asked him what he wanted to happen at the [funeral] service, and he said, 'I want you to tell them the truth that I died of AIDS.'

At his funeral, my grandmother walked to the front of the church and laid her hand on her grandson's coffin, and said, 'My grandson no longer has to suffer with AIDS.' Then, with her hand still on the coffin, she turned to the pulpit and said to the preacher, 'Now talk to them freely about this disease. To us, it is not a shame.'

The Reverend Professor Maake Masango

WCC Global Consultation on HIV and AIDS, Nairobi, November 2001

Stigma reduction

Stigma and discrimination are two key barriers to effective community action against HIV/AIDS. The CORE Initiative addresses both the primary stigma (against people living with HIV/AIDS) and the secondary stigma (against those affected by

the disease, including orphaned children, women caregivers, and the elderly).

Focused anti-stigma programming including encouraging the involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS across program implementation is critical since recent evidence suggest that the Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GIPA) Guidelines are not fully practiced by many organizations.

Types of activities undertaken by CBOs and FBOs include:

- ✓ Supporting community dialogue and mobilization around issues of stigma and discrimination;
- ✓ Conducting research examining the causes and manifestations of HIV-related stigma;
- ✓ Designing of stigma reduction interventions.

Prevention

Prevention continues to be the mainstay of an effective community response to HIV/AIDS, this means both reducing transmission of the virus through appropriate protection methods

Types of activities undertaken by CBOs and FBOs:

- ✓ Ensuring the use of universal precautions;
- ✓ Prevention of parent-to-child transmission;
- ✓ Abstinence/delayed sexual debut;
- ✓ Partner reduction/promoting faithfulness;
- ✓ Promotion of condom use and education.

(e.g. abstinence/delayed sexual debut,

faithfulness/partner reduction, correct and consistent condom use, risk reduction for IDU and prevention of PMTCT) and addressing the social factors that leave communities vulnerable to risky behavior, such as lack of information and education, gender inequality and poverty. The CORE Initiative is addressing individual and community behaviors and norms for risk reduction and social change, and helping people to address barriers to change through comprehensive and multisectoral approaches as well as advocacy addressing the political and economic context.

THE CORE INITIATIVE SUPPORT FOR NETWORKING AND EXCHANGE ONLINE TECHNICAL RESOURCES

The CORE Initiative Clearinghouse is the main mechanism to facilitate the virtual networking and exchange of CBOs and FBOs in order to increase community level application of better practice programming in HIV/AIDS prevention, care and stigma reduction. In its efforts to increase and strengthen networking, access to and exchange of HIV/AIDS-related information and better programming practice among CBOs and FBOs , the CORE Initiative has developed the following electronic resources:

CORE Initiative Email Forum: The CORE Initiative provides a unique forum for members to share news and views on HIV/AIDS specifically as they pertain to community and faith-based organizations globally. Members are encouraged to exchange information about grant opportunities, information resources, projects and programs, as well as upcoming conferences and events. Members are also invited to post information about their work and interests and pose questions to other forum members. To subscribe to the email forum, please visit the link below and follow the instructions:

http://www.coreinitiative.org/core.php?sp=forum_subscribe

CORE Initiative Selected Tools List: The Selected Tools List is a collection of online resources that have been chosen by the CORE Initiative staff and partners for use in the field. Arranged by subject for easy access, the list includes various training manuals, curricula, tool kits, guidelines, and bibliographies that can be downloaded, and used for state-of-the-art HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support, and stigma reduction activities. To browse the Selected Tools List go to:

<http://www.coreinitiative.org/Resources/SelectedTools/SelectedTools.php>

Health Communication Materials Database: The Media/Materials Clearinghouse (M/MC), at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's Center for Communication Programs, Health Communication Materials Database gives access to the world's largest, most comprehensive and rapidly growing collection of HIV/AIDS health communication materials. Easily searched by subject, country, medium, language, or producer, the database includes posters, pamphlets, training materials, videos, audiotapes, flipcharts, and novelty items. The Health Communication Material Database can be found at the following link:

http://www.coreinitiative.org/core.php?sp=CORE_HCM_search&ref_crmb=Resources&ref_id=resources_core

List of Electronic Periodicals: The CORE Initiative has created this list of free online peer-reviewed biomedical journals and newsletters for those interested in the many aspects of HIV/AIDS education, prevention, treatment and policy. The peer-reviewed journals offer free online content in the form of abstracts, tables of contents and select full text articles. The available free online materials offered by each journal are listed. The newsletters are from a variety of governmental, non-governmental, community and faith-based organizations. They require that the user have an e-mail address to subscribe. The list of free online journals can be found at:

http://www.coreinitiative.org/core.php?sp=core_eperiodicals&ref_crmb=Resources&ref_id=resources_core

List of Web links: The CORE Initiative provides links to Web sites of a variety of organizations working in the area of HIV/AIDS. Links are sorted into related topics such as: general information, databases, people affected and infected, community responses, faith-based response, advocacy, prevention, care, support & treatment, stigma reduction, research, monitoring & evaluation and training. Links can also be searched by Organization Name, Country, and All Fields. To access the links list, go to:

http://www.coreinitiative.org/core.php?sp=core_links&ref_crmb=Resources&ref_id=resources_core

Links to all of these resources are also available on the CORE Initiative website: <http://www.coreinitiative.org>