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Corridor Economic Empowerment Innovation Fund (CEEIF): A Public-Private Partnership to economically empower HIV vulnerable populations along transport corridors in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is among the countries in sub-Saharan Africa worst affected by the HIV and AIDS epidemic. In 2012 the country had a prevalence of 14.72% among adults between 15 and 49 years of age. This percentage has fallen from an estimated peak of 27.6% in 1997, mainly as a result of successful prevention strategies - especially behavioural change, high condom use and a reduction in multiple concurrent sexual partners.

Nevertheless, prevalence remains high and new data around modes of transmission collected in 2010-11 highlighted a need to:

- Focus attention on priority populations, including sexually active young people and adults, and sex workers and their clients;
- Go beyond traditional prevention and address the underlying causes of risky behaviour or lack of access to HIV services, including the economic empowerment of HIV-vulnerable populations.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Partners:

Small Enterprise Development Corporation (SEDCO); Within the SEDCO/CEEIF arrangement includes a number of private sector partners such as the Post Office Savings Bank (POSB); Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of Zimbabwe; and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

Beneficiary Countries:

Zimbabwe

Timeframe:

2011 – 2014

Budget:

SEDCO: USD 120,000

THE RESPONSE

A partnership has been established between the ILO, the Small Enterprise Development Corporation of Zimbabwe (SEDCO), multiple private sector partners such as the Post Office Savings Bank, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of Zimbabwe, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) to address the challenge.

Since 2011, the ILO has established a programme along the transport corridors in Chirundu, Kotwa, Nyamapanda, Beitbridge and Ngundu that provides HIV prevention and care services for transport workers and populations operating along these corridors, and business-related services that enable vulnerable populations to start or improve their business, form cooperatives and access funds to improve their resilience to the impacts of HIV.

A Corridor Economic Empowerment Innovation Fund (CEEIF) has also been established to facilitate access to credit and related services from microfinance organizations to vulnerable groups, who normally lack collateral security.

The CEEIF also provides business-related services to vulnerable groups and nurtures a culture of self-reliance, entrepreneurship and enterprise development.

RESULTS

Members from 20 business support structures, cooperatives, business groups and savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs) were trained in business management, SACCO formation, business ideas development, and HIV/AIDS, and were able to access loans. Over 500 at risk or affected persons and their families were provided with applicable skills. The result is that already 195 businesses were started or improved – furthermore, due to the sustainable structure of the CEEIF and its scope to expand to new locations, this figure will continue to grow well beyond the projects end.

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"I am HIV positive. Through the support of the project my life, and those of our members, has changed. The project has opened doors for me and others in SACCO -who like me- were languishing with poverty, disease and hopelessness in life. We received very useful information, training and financial support. Old Mutual, the local Municipality has recognized us- the people living with HIV - and has given us a plot worth US\$ 50,000 at today's market value. We are now operating our general merchandise business. We no longer feel ashamed of our HIV status. All this would never have come without ILO's support."

Jerry Tozirapi – Chairperson of Lufuno SACCOs."



Outcomes are monitored biannually, with the latest survey conducted in 2013. Drawing on a representative sample of 53 beneficiaries, the following results were observed:

- Improvements in socio-economic status - beneficiaries and their families felt the economic impact of these innovations with 36 per cent reporting an improvement in their self-perceived socio-economic status;
 - A significant increase in the investments made by beneficiary families in children's education (average increase from 78 to USD162).
- Beyond economic impacts, changes were noted in beneficiaries' HIV related behaviors. Crucially, the number of women who stopped engaging in transactional sex (over prior three months) rose from 56 to 76 per cent. Other significant changes include:
- A decreased number of women beneficiaries who reported engaging in multiple concurrent sexual partnerships (over prior three months) from 14 to 0 per cent;

- 47 per cent of beneficiaries reported an increase in their self-efficacy to either negotiating condom use or refusing sex;
- An increase in beneficiaries awareness of local HIV services from 71 to 92 per cent;
- An increase in women beneficiaries knowledge of their own HIV status from 64 to 94 per cent.

In addition to these immediately reported improvements, the CEEIF reached more than 7,000 truckers, taxi drivers, clearing agents at border crossings, and community members with HIV prevention messages through peer educators, radio and televised media. Linked to these messages, 798 people are now accessing health related services including voluntary HIV counseling and testing, care and support, prevention of mother to child transmission, TB, and sexual and reproductive health services.

BENEFITS OF PARTNERING

People living with HIV in transport corridors have reduced their social and economic vulnerability. Additionally, a combination of effective preventative measures and innovative economic empowerment has lowered risks in the community of further infection. Following the close of the project, the CEEIF fund will continue to be managed by SEDCO, and thus continue to benefit further persons in the corridor communities.

The programme both provides the Government with technical support, and supports efforts to reduce HIV/AIDS and provides policy makers with evidence to advocate for changes that positively affect vulnerable populations.

The Post Office Savings Bank has an increased clientele among poor and vulnerable members of the population and in the long-term their market base will increase. When these clients graduate from running micro-businesses to running small and medium enterprises, they borrow from SEDCO, thus increasing SEDCO's clientele and market share. These clients are trained by the project in enterprise management, thus reducing their risk. In essence, the ILO supports SEDCO to reach out to the unreachable and transforms once risky clients into potentially fundable business and enterprise ventures.

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