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Civil Society Dialogues in the Context of the Transition and Sustainability of the Response to HIV and TB in Belize

RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES: FORGING A JOINT VISION

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THE CONTEXT

- With a prevalence rate of 1.5% among adults 15 – 49, Belize has the highest HIV prevalence rate in Latin America and the 3rd in the Caribbean.
- The Ministry of Health has declared a concentrated epidemic among men at risk in particular MSM and transgender females.
- The 2014 National AIDS Spending Accounts report indicated that external funding accounted for 65.8% of the total expenditure for HIV in Belize.
- The country has been approved three (3) Global Fund grants totaling 10.1 million US for HIV and 1.5 million for Tuberculosis. Belize is one of the countries preparing to transition from the Global Fund



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The Process

- Process started in Belize in December 2016 and culminated in February 2017.
- In accordance with the methodology it included a desk review of key relevant national documents on the situation and response to HIV/TB in particular as they relate to civil society
- With the support of a local NGO – CNET+ a two-day working session was held with representatives of 10 civil society organizations.
- An integral part of the process was the engagement of the Country Coordinating Mechanism from the onset



The Process

- As a result of the dialogue, CSOs were able to forge a joint vision and discuss risks and mitigating actions from which a plan of action was developed
- The findings of the process and the plan of action were shared with key stakeholders at the CCM level.
- This process and report will now serve as an important guide as the country implements its transition readiness and sustainability planning. This exercise has placed CS in a crucial and significant role in this process.



CIVIL SOCIETY : JOINT VISION

““Civil Society Organizations working in collaboration with all key stakeholders to address development and HIV/TB issues ensuring a successful transition to achieving justice for all and self-sustainability in the response to HIV and Tuberculosis” .



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CIVIL SOCIETY: JOINT MISSION

“Civil society will sustain its involvement in the HIV/TB response through a human rights based approach to access to justice, community research, resource mobilization and institutional representation to ensure legal reform, budget allocations and visible activities in policy and development processes in the achievement of the 2030 “Getting to Zero” goals and beyond” .



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4 Priority Areas

- Policy and Removal of Legal Barriers
- Programing: Prevention and Testing and treatment
- Governance and Sustainable Partnership
- Financial Sustainability



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Policy and Removal of Legal Barriers

RISKS TO SUSTAINABILITY:

- Extreme opposition by some right-winged churches
- Inadequate systems to advance legal research and government monitoring, reporting of violation of rights and litigation.
- Lack of anti-discrimination laws



Programing: Prevention and Testing & treatment

RISKS TO SUSTAINABILITY:

- Outdated prevention education materials and methodologies; lack of tailored approach for key populations that are human rights based
- Lack of evidence-based data on key populations such as MSM, TG and ambulatory sex workers
- Weakness in inventory control of essential HIV medications
- Limited uptake of HIV/TB services and adherence among key populations
- Lack of health care providers with the capacity to address specific health care needs of key populations such as MSM and transgender persons



Governance and Sustainable Partnership

RISKS TO SUSTAINABILITY:

- 1.) Lack of significant involvement of civil society organizations in the process of the Country Coordinating Mechanism
- 2.) Weak monitoring and evaluation system and dissemination of reports at the CCM and Civil Society organizations level
- 3.) Limited harmonization of CSO strategic plans especially key affected populations with the national strategic plan
- 4.) Lack of coordination among CSOs working with key populations resulting in duplication and competition for resources
- 5.) Limited capacity among key population organizations in organizational and project management issues



FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Risks to Sustainability:

- 1.) No Investment Case study has been conducted in Belize in particular for civil society organizations to support Sustainability Planning
- 2.) Civil Society Organization are not included in the national budget for HIV/TB National funds do not provide for interventions with key populations in particular men who have sex with men and transgender persons resulting in dependence on external funding
- 3.) Weak procurement systems with limited engagement of CSOs in this process
- 4.) Lack of funding for CSOs including key population organizations for the implementation of strategic plans



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MITIGATING ACTIONS

PRIORITY # 1: Policy and Removal of Legal Barriers

- ◆ The meaningful involvement of civil society organizations in the process of developing a national sustainability plan.
- ◆ The meaningful engagement of civil society organizations in the removal of legal or policy barriers to access to services for key populations.

Priority Area #2: Programming: Prevention and Testing & Treatment

- ◆ The contracting of civil society organizations for the planning and implementation of prevention programs with assigned budgets and other support.
- ◆ The contracting of civil society organizations for the provision of testing and treatment services as a part of the national testing and treatment program especially with key populations.



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MITIGATING ACTIONS

Priority Area #3: Governance and Sustainable Partnerships

- ◆ Significant involvement of civil society in the National AIDS Commission to ensure active participation and partnership in decision-making and implementation of programs
- ◆ Coordination of civil society organizations to maximize on resources and avoid duplication of objectives and activities .

Priority Area # 4: Financial Sustainability

- ◆ The involvement of civil society organizations in the exercise of an Investment Case which will address the sustainability of civil society organizations in the HIV response through domestic funding.
- ◆ The significant participation of civil society organizations in processes of procurement, resource mobilization and program budgeting to ensure equal opportunities for civil society organizations.



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Conclusion

- The methodology was successfully applied in Belize and the expected outcome was achieved.
- Civil society successfully engaged in a process that was participatory, informative and proactive resulting in a joint vision and plan of action.
- In so doing, civil society in Belize sets a precedent and can provide a model for the CCM in Belize and other civil society organizations in the LAC region.
- The NAC expressed great interest in using this report as a springboard and an important foundation for the transition planning which the country is about to embark on.





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