Partnering with community volunteers to ensure sustainable development: A case presentation of Matabeleland AIDS Council, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

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Presentation Outline

- Definitions
- History of voluntarism in Zimbabwe
- MACâ€™s values in working with volunteers
- Functions of community volunteers
- Types of volunteers we work with
- Advantages of community volunteers
- Challenges in engaging community volunteers
- Using Most Significant Change to evaluate volunteer efforts
- Case study of STAR circles
Introduction - Who is MAC?

Matabeleland AIDS Council (MAC) is a vibrant membership based AIDS Service Organization that was established in 1988 and registered in 1989. MAC is based in the second largest city of Zimbabwe, Bulawayo. MAC as the name suggests covers the three provinces of Matabeleland namely Bulawayo metropolitan, Matabeleland South bordering South Africa and Botswana and Matabeleland North bordering Zambia.
MAC runs an array of HIV and AIDS related programmes focused on HIV prevention, treatment, mitigation, care and support.

- Under HIV Prevention we run Behaviour change, HIV testing and counselling, Information resource centres and Family Planning.
- Under Mitigation we run Gender Awareness, Social Protection, STAR circles and Paralegal support. Under Treatment we offer Home based kits and Treatment vouchers.
- Whilst for care and support we run HBC, Young People we Care and Psychosocial care and support. All the above programmes are run with the active participation of community volunteers.
What is volunteering?

Volunteering is the practice intended to promote good or improve human quality of life through working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services. For instance, burial societies and ward development committees.
Community volunteering refers to practice of people working to improve community enhancement efforts in the area in which they live e.g. neighbourhood watch teams, churches, and community groups play a key role in the development of their area.
What is sustainable development?

- Development is a continuing process of mediation between social, economic and environmental needs which results in positive socio-economic change that does not undermine the ecological and social systems upon which communities and society are dependent.

- Development entails considering community rights, capacities and potential. In essence volunteers are key drivers of the development process.
What is impact?

- Impact refers to resounding success and positive change.
History of voluntarism in Zimbabwe

- **1960s-1970s** - From pre-colonial era, volunteering is built in our African systems and traditional set ups. People did things for themselves.
- **1980s** - Post colonial regime changed Zimbabwe into a welfarist state.
- **1990s** - Poverty and economic downfall leading in economic crises
- **2000s** - Economic crises deepens, still largely welfarist Issues of sustainability in development questionable.
MAC’s theories of working with community volunteers

Since its inception; MAC uses the community development approach to programming. Community development involves changing the relationships between ordinary people and people in positions of power, so that everyone can take part in the issues that affect their lives. It starts from the principle that within any community there is a wealth of knowledge and experience which, if used in creative ways, can be channelled into collective action to achieve the communities' desired goals. It is from this basis that as an organization we believe in the partnership and engagement of community volunteers to ensure meaningful impact of our programmes.
MAC’s theories of working with community volunteers

- **Devolution** - transfer of power and authority to community structures. 'It is not what we can do for them but what they can do for themselves.'

- **Co-management of resources** - MAC manages donor resources, the community manages human resources, systems, practices, attitudes, beliefs, etc. The greatest resource in development is the human resource and if well managed can yield positive results.
MAC’s theories of working with community volunteers

- Building the self drive mindset and community visioning: Indigenous situations require indigenous solutions. Local people are presumably better placed to deliver solutions than external approaches. Good development partnerships are those that empower communities to self start, self drive, self assess and self correct.
MAC’s theories of working with community volunteers

- People oriented and rights based approach to programming - we believe in affirming and building the capacity and participation of communities in development activities. We did and continue to do this through
  - Support groups (1989)
  - Community home based care (1992)
  - Community based counsellors (2004)
MAC’s theories of working with community volunteers

- Traditional Birth Attendants (2006)
- Water and Sanitation clubs (2008)
- STAR circles (2008)

- Capacity building and mentorship

Volunteers require consistent capacity building to keep them up to date with information and relevant skills. To achieve excellence from their efforts, one needs to invest in mentoring them.
MAC works with over 3102 community volunteers

- 600 Community HBC
- 625 STAR volunteers
- 250 Young people we care volunteers
- 350 Behaviour change volunteers
- 200 Community based counsellors
- 4 Information resource centre volunteers
- 150 cholera volunteers
Types of community volunteers we work with

- 287 ISAL groups
- 100 Peer Educators
- 195 Traditional Birth Attendants
- 20 Community based organization leaders
- 36 Support group volunteers
- 210 Low input garden volunteers
Functions of community volunteers

- Initiate, implement and manage development projects
- Monitor and evaluate programmes
- Be informants to project officers
- Generate project reports
- Knitting society together at the grass roots
- Create opportunities for the community to learn new skills
Functions of community volunteers

- Enabling people to act together
- Foster social inclusion and equality
- Community engagement primarily deals with the practice of moving said communities towards change, usually from a stalled or otherwise similarly suspended position.
Advantages of working with and through community volunteers

- Community-buy in, ownership and participation of projects is enhanced. Community volunteers empower local people to own their development process.
- Continuity and sustainability of projects is ensured as community volunteers reside within communities. There is no permanence in donor or externally driven interventions.
Advantages of working with and through community volunteers

- **Socio-cultural intelligence**-Community volunteers understand the socio-cultural dynamics and context of operation. They are better placed to handle community and forge ahead in face of conflicts or challenges. Challenges could be related to community mapping, distances, existing structures, cultural and religious norms and values etc.
Advantages of working with and through community volunteers

- **Cost effectiveness** - Community volunteers are not given any financial allowances and support. They need no accommodation, transport and field allowances.
Challenges in working with community volunteers

- Lack of standardization in policy and incentives - the big question is should we or not standardize?
- Take up more than they can manage e.g. age, tasks etc
Most Significant Change methodology to evaluate volunteer impact

**Here/Now**
- Situational analysis
- Needs Assessment
- Community visioning
- Mindset change

**There/Then**
- What has changed?
- How are things different?
- Why is this change most significant
Change pathway to consider in using MSC

- What has changed? - people, relationships, processes etc
- When did the change happen? - timeline of activities
- Where did the change happen?
- Why is the change significant? - key learning points
- Is the change sustainable? - is sustainable change possible? What makes it complex?
Using the MSC you need to consider

- **Vision**-the bigger picture e.g. “Kenya free of domestic violence.” This is the dream or accountability free zone. Volunteers need to share the same vision with you as an organization if they are to make a meaningful contribution.

- **Mission**-is the bite into the bigger picture. Your contribution to the bigger picture. Volunteers need to account for their contribution.
Using the MSC you need to consider

- **Boundary partners**—involves stakeholders or sphere of influence. Volunteers need to know whom they work with, how, why, directly or indirectly? Recognize the limits to the influence they have. Be strategic in engaging partners and stakeholders.
Using the MSC you need to consider:

- **Outcome challenges**—also known as the ambitious outcome. It is the partners' contribution to the mission. Volunteers achieve more when they are able to influence other partners to share their mission. This they do through stakeholder meetings at ward and village level.
Using the MSC you need to consider:

- **Strategy map**-spells out how to achieve change at individual and environment levels. Volunteers need to understand the causal, persuasive and supportive strategies to realise sustained change. For instance, volunteers working on cholera prevention may point out the cause and effect of poor refuse and waste management as a way of persuading the community to promote clean environmental practices.
Using the MSC you need to consider:

- **Organizational practices**—sometimes the MSC may happen in organizational systems and practices. Volunteers may influence change within an organization. For instance, whilst for long we claimed to employ a rights based approach in the way we work, volunteers made us more conscious of how we needed to adhere to time and be more efficient in our service delivery. HBC facilitators/volunteers would dismiss if we delayed by more than thirty minutes.
Picture gallery of community volunteer activities
Young people we care volunteers at an in-school HIV awareness campaign
STAR circle volunteers in a discussion
Community home based care volunteers at a field day with vulnerable children
Behaviour change facilitators/volunteers (out of picture) conducting female condom sessions to women
Young people we care volunteers manning information desk at community event
Income savings and projects  volunteer conducting training session
Thank you