

IDLO Evaluation Brief

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT “BUILDING SUSTAINABLE APPROACHES TO REDUCE DISCRIMINATION AND ADVANCE JUSTICE FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV AND OTHER KEY AFFECTED POPULATIONS (LAW SCHOOLS-HIV PROJECT)”

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1. Introduction and Background

Stigma and discrimination remain significant barriers to accessing effective HIV-related services for vulnerable populations. In this context, the International Development Law Organization (IDLO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have been collaborating, since 2009, to strengthen and expand legal services for “people living with HIV” (PLHIV). One of the main challenges in this regard is a limited number of knowledgeable and skilled lawyers to assist PLHIV. To address this issue, IDLO, in partnership with UNAIDS, implemented the “Law Schools-HIV (LS-HIV)” project to strengthen the legal environment for responding to HIV/AIDS¹. The countries selected for the intervention were Tanzania and Uganda.

The project was funded by the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, with a budget of US\$ 212.000², and its specific objective was to develop a cadre of committed lawyers, professors and students, equipped with the knowledge and skills to support human rights-based responses to HIV. In parallel, the intervention focused on raising communities’ readiness to actively seek support on HIV-related matters from legal professionals. Four law schools with legal clinics were the beneficiaries of the project activities.

This Evaluation Brief presents the summary of the independent “end-of-project” evaluation which covered the implementation period between December 2016 and May 2018.

2. Evaluation Purpose and Methodology

The main evaluation’s objective was to assess the changes triggered by the project, especially the results of the capacity building efforts within the four law schools. The evaluation was conducted using a ‘theory-based’ approach, where the reconstruction of the project’s theory of change allowed to present causal links among

activities, outputs, outcomes and impact. The reconstructed theory of change served as the key reference point to formulate a set of seven evaluation questions and their corresponding Objectively Verifiable Indicators generated to assess the results. The formulation of evaluation questions was guided by the five OECD/DAC-based evaluation criteria (Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability prospects) and a sixth IDLO-specific evaluation criterion (IDLO Value Added).

Following the desk phase document review, the evaluation consultant conducted field visits to Tanzania (Dar es Salaam and Dodoma) and Uganda (Kampala) to continue the data collection through individual interviews and focus group discussions with the four beneficiary universities’ deans, law school students/academics, legal clinics’ managers/staff, UNAIDS officials and PLHIV representatives.

3. Findings

Project’s Relevance and Quality of Design

The project’s design was coherent with IDLO’s and UNAIDS’ strategic objectives as well as the national development plans and government strategies of Tanzania and Uganda. The evaluation found the quality of the project design to be “sufficient” considering the limited project’s funding and scope.

The evaluation noted that, project activities would have benefitted from long-term training of trainers (ToT) sessions with “pre-” and “post-” training tests for participants. Instead, the project was implemented through small-scale workshops (one day and/or half-day long).

It also noted that the project could have benefitted from a sound Results Framework with robust Objectively Verifiable Indicators, to be utilized as a practical internal monitoring tool. Some of the expected project initiatives and results were found to be too ambitious for a project

¹ The project was implemented between December 2016 – June 2018.

² After the budget revision during the project extension.

of the LS-HIV's scope. This applies particularly for the activity *"providing financial support for lawyers' court actions related to HIV/AIDS cases"* and the result *"increased awareness for communities"*. The evaluation also pointed out an insufficient involvement of the beneficiary universities in the project's formulation phase, which would be desirable to ensure a "participatory approach".

Allocation and Use of Staff & Financial Resources

The project benefitted from good communication, active supervision, timely decision-making and systematic coordination among the key stakeholders, particularly between IDLO and UNAIDS. The management of the project's financial and human resources was generally well executed. Implementation was completed without major delays, except for the production of the Legal Clinic Handbooks which necessitated a no-cost project extension of six months.

Progress on the activities was regularly reported to IDLO Headquarters by the Project Implementation Unit and to UNAIDS by IDLO Headquarters. The reporting included qualitative analysis of the achievements and challenges related to the results. An efficient coordination with IDLO's DREAMS project, addressing HIV Services for Adolescent Girls and Young Women, implemented in parallel in Tanzania and Uganda, was ensured. This applied especially to the consolidation of the links and synergies between the "legal capacity building" and "community awareness" aspects of IDLO's efforts to improve human-rights based approaches to HIV.

An Increase in the Technical Capacity of the Universities

The conducted trainings were interactive, well-received and increased the academics' interest in legal subjects related to HIV/AIDS. The carefully selected themes and topics contributed to IDLO's efforts to improve legal environments for human rights-based responses to HIV/AIDS. The educational materials prepared for the workshops were of a high quality and appreciated by the participants. The academics stressed that they are extensively utilizing these documents within their health law courses.

However, the evaluation assessed that the scope of the workshops was not conducive to long-term impact as it lacked an in-depth technical knowledge transfer. Due to the limited budget, the intervention could not expand its coverage to other law schools in either country, to create a multiplier effect. Interviews with the legal clinics'

managers revealed their satisfaction with the intended content of the handbooks and their willingness to use them in the future.

Awareness Raising for the Academics

IDLO financed and facilitated the participation of legal academics engaged in the project at the International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa. This, in complementarity with other project activities, contributed to the academics' increased awareness of rule of law principles in the context of the HIV response. It also strengthened their commitment to include HIV-related legal issues in their own law courses. The conference also served as a useful networking platform as it fostered an international expert-level discussion. While it would be premature to assess the project's influence on the academics' actual engagement in HIV-related legal cases, it can be assumed that the conducted awareness raising activities will strengthen their willingness to engage on HIV/AIDS matters.

Awareness Raising for the Communities

The participation of communities, civil society organizations and PLHIV within the capacity building activities remained at a low level. This owes to the fact that the population which experiences the highest exposure to HIV-related discrimination include, inter alia, sex workers, injection drug users and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender individuals. Due to the political sensitivities, stressed by some of the beneficiary universities, these groups could not be sufficiently included in the workshops. Therefore, IDLO had to take this limitation into account to prevent the risks of a low ownership and involvement of the targeted universities. Despite not making a long-term community-level impact, the project indirectly contributed to the strengthening of the links between the communities and legal clinics as the clinics' capacities for community outreach improved.

Legal Environment for HIV/AIDS Response

HIV/AIDS-related subjects continue to be taboo for most of the society and cannot be openly discussed. Academics and students who attended the workshops confirmed their limited knowledge of topics related to HIV/AIDS, such as scientific advancements in the treatment, ways of transmission, and the social/legal challenges faced by PLHIV.

The projects' limited scope did not provide for significant changes in the legal environment within the targeted

countries. However, as a result of project's activities, the students' interests to specialize in health law, to conduct research on HIV/AIDS-related legal topics, and to join legal clinics increased. Potentially, this can lead to a surge in the number of committed, sensitive and knowledgeable advocates to litigate HIV/AIDS related cases.

An Outlook for Continuous Human Rights-Based Responses to HIV/AIDS

Involved universities appeared to be committed to the continuation of HIV/AIDS-related workshops utilizing the trained academics. The retention prospects for the trained legal clinics' staff at the universities are good, as these professionals are contracted full-time. However, to achieve broader-level results it would be useful to extend the support to a more extensive network of stakeholders at national/regional levels.

The establishment of the new IDLO Office in Kampala is expected to trigger a closer collaboration between IDLO and UNAIDS country offices. This has potential to increase a sustainable HIV/AIDS legal response in Uganda and its neighboring countries. In this context, the evaluation stressed the importance of further strengthening the established cooperation between IDLO, UNAIDS, national AIDS Commissions and the universities.

4. Conclusions

Relevance

LS-HIV is one of IDLO's first HIV/AIDS-related projects launched in East Africa. The intervention was coherent with the needs of the targeted law schools, and of the PLHIV. Due to the limited project scope the implementers adopted a rather "soft approach" to the training by organizing short sessions on HIV/AIDS for students and academics without extending the technical in-depth knowledge and skills through training of trainers (ToT) courses. Therefore, the evaluation noted that some of the project's expected results might not have been realistic, notably the "improved legal environment" and the "awareness raising for communities". In addition, the project would have benefitted from a "participatory approach" to design, involving all key stakeholders to enhance quality and ownership.

Efficiency

All planned activities were completed without major delays, except for the finalization of the Legal Clinic Handbooks which necessitated a six-month no-cost extension to the 12-month original project duration. The

project generally benefitted from good communication and systematic coordination between the project team and key stakeholders. Financial and human resources were managed well. The necessary reporting has been carried out professionally. Synergies with the other HIV/AIDS-focused IDLO project, DREAMS, were promoted, consolidating IDLO's efforts to improve human-rights based responses to HIV/AIDS in East Africa.

Effectiveness

The workshops and the IDLO-facilitated academics' participation to the International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa, have increased the beneficiaries' knowledge and interest in legal matters related to HIV/AIDS. As a result, the beneficiaries' confidence to handle legal cases of PLHIV has increased. At the outcome level, the LS-HIV's effects remained weak compared to the original plans, signaling an over-ambitious formulation of the expected results. This particularly applies to the objective of increasing the awareness for communities. This problem could be mitigated by a well-executed needs assessment, prior to the project's kick off, identifying the main implementation bottlenecks.

The evaluation stressed, nevertheless, that the project did contribute to the strengthening of the links between some communities and legal clinics through improving the clinics' capacities to design outreach activities. Also, IDLO efforts to strengthen the links between the communities and the state apparatus within the parallel DREAMS project complemented, if not partially compensated, the LS-HIV's limited results in community-level awareness raising.

Impact and Sustainability Prospects

The project's scope was too limited to create a visible impact (i.e. a long-term socio-economic change). However, it can be assumed that the improved technical capacities will lead to a certain increase in the willingness of the academics to engage in HIV-related legal cases. The project helped in establishing a basis for viable communication platforms where legal professionals, students, communities and PLHIV can come together and discuss critical legal issues related to HIV/AIDS.

However, the evaluation found that the increase in capacities is not enough to safeguard a broad and high-quality administration of PLHIV's legal cases in the targeted countries. The LS-HIV's scope was too narrow to achieve that and there are many more law schools and legal professionals in Tanzania and Uganda which

did not participate in the project. An inclusion of key populations/marginalized groups, as well as stronger partnership of governmental institutions and civil society organizations working in HIV/AIDS/human rights fields, are crucial to increase in legal awareness and decrease PLHIV's stigmatization.

IDLO value added

IDLO's substantial technical expertise in the field of HIV/AIDS law and strong relations with the beneficiary institutions, UNAIDS and national stakeholders provided a comparative advantage. The creation of synergies with the DREAMS project contributed to the achieved results.

5. Recommendations

Continue external support for legal capacity building by targeting more universities/academics and supporting broader awareness raising activities aiming at the PLHIV and communities.

Encourage and ensure active participation of the beneficiary/stakeholder institutions in the program design processes, to build consensus on the approach and to increase ownership.

Adopt a program design approach with formulation of project activities/expected results in a realistic manner.

Consider adopting a long(er)-term and in-depth technical training approach including ToT courses for the academics, and "pre-/post-" training tests for the participants.

Consider enlarging the geographical scope of the activities to include other law schools in both countries.

Consider focusing more on the "community outreach and awareness raising" aspect, with a view to ensure that key populations, marginalized groups and PLHIV have sufficient awareness of their own rights and are encouraged/confident to seek legal support for their stigma/discrimination-related problems.

Support the inclusion of HIV/AIDS law-related topics at universities under health law and other related law courses, utilizing the materials provided by the project.

Support dissemination of the knowledge gained, results of the project and best practices to other universities/legal clinics.

Support attempts ensuring that university in-service trainings are provided systematically, within a sound training plan.