

REVIEW OF
WESTERN CAPE NETWORKING HIV/AIDS
COMMUNITY OF SOUTH AFRICA
(WC-NACOSA)

January 2009

Compiled by



Presented to



Rockefeller
Brothers Fund

Philanthropy for an Interdependent World

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1. Introduction

Children in South Africa face a number of challenges including poverty, child abuse, violence, family disintegration and the loss of caregivers. These issues are exacerbated by the lack of appropriate child and youth-friendly services available in the country.

The Children's HIV/AIDS Network (CHAIN) is a subsidiary of the Western Cape Networking HIV/Aids Community of South Africa (WC-NACOSA) which builds the capacity of organizations working with children affected and infected by HIV and AIDS. Service providers in South Africa have seen the urgent need to develop a co-ordinated response geared towards the specific needs of children¹. The extent of the problem of orphans and vulnerable children means that partners in the HIV/AIDS-affected children's sector, including representatives from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), government departments, local communities and home-based carers amongst many others, are required to work together to find solutions.

1.1 Overview

WC-NACOSA was formed in 1993 to strengthen the ability of NGOs, CBOs, and the public and business sectors in the Western Cape to respond to the HIV/AIDS crisis.

The organization is a network for CBOs and NGOs in the HIV field, and in addition to the capacity-building they provide to them, they also mobilize organizations to advocate and lobby for joint issues as well as network with each other.

NACOSA seeks to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS through capacity-building, networking and strengthening the multi-sectoral response between Government and civil society. They aim to achieve this through:

- promoting capacity and providing technical resources to NGOs, CBOs and the public sector.
- acting as a conduit for small grants to promote the development of CBOs.
- mentoring and training HIV/AIDS NGOs and CBOs to enhance the effective implementation of HIV/AIDS programs.
- lobbying and mobilizing government, public, private and civil society sectors for a multi-sectoral approach to HIV/AIDS
- advocating for the effective implementation and development of policy and programs in relation to the changing and emerging challenges of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
- developing strong HIV/AIDS community forums in the Western Cape Province.

¹ www.nacosa.org.za

- promoting communication with other provincial, national and international initiatives that have similar objectives to their own.

CHAI*N* is a project which WC-NACOSA initiated in 2000 in response to the growing concern among service providers regarding the plight of HIV/AIDS infected and affected children.

1.1.2 Brief overview of the project/ the model/advocacy role

CHAI*N* has piloted a model which provides community-based organizations, working in the children's HIV/AIDS sector, with small grants as well as training and mentoring in organizational development and technical assistance in psychosocial programmatic support. Their model is unique because it includes the following three components which work together: Promoting dialogue (advocacy and lobbying); Capacity-building of CBOs through the mentoring and training; and Networking.

1. Advocacy and Lobbying-promoting dialogue: CHAI*N* has regional quarterly meetings in the metro and rural areas, where they examine government policies and strategy. They have CHAI*N* champions who are representatives from CHAI*N* who represent the children's sector per region by raising children's issues, which emerge through CHAI*N* at these quarterly meetings.
2. They encourage organizations who are involved in HIV work to share their best practice models at these quarterly meetings - including their own models for capacity.
3. Capacity-building for CBOs in the field of Children's HIV/AIDS work: CHAI*N* provides training in organizational development and orphans and vulnerable children (OVC)-specific training, including psychosocial support training. In addition to the training, they also mentor the organizations by providing technical assistance in their programs and in developing their organizations. They also offer small grants to the smaller emerging organizations as part of the capacity-building package.
4. Networking: Promoting Dialogue between Government and Civil society. CHAI*N* assists organizations to network with each other through the quarterly meetings, as well as through their cluster training sessions which they offer to the organizations.

The first three components work together, ensuring that CHAI*N* builds the capacity of the CBOs to offer their services, mobilize around and have a space to lobby and advocate for children's issues.

1.2 Grant summary

Both grants mentioned below were awarded under the category of Orphans and Vulnerable Children.

In 2003 Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) supported CHAiN with a \$50 000 grant for its Network. The objectives included the following:

- To facilitate networking and build capacity among non-profit and community-based organizations, and provincial and district departments of social development, education and health that are working with children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS in the Western Cape
- To provide input into responses to the needs of children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS
- To monitor and provide input into implementing national, provincial and local strategies aimed at addressing the impact of HIV/AIDS on children.

The grant was given because CHAiN was the first province-wide networking effort focused on children affected by HIV/AIDS, and as such were a model for other provinces. It undertook to play a critical role in capacity-building and help to inform policy development. The proposed grant would also strengthen the work of the Children's Institute and the Alliance for Children's Entitlement to Social Security (ACCESS), two grantees of the Fund, by supporting their research and policy development efforts.

In 2005 RBF awarded a second grant of \$50 000 for the following:

- To conduct an audit of service for OVC and their caregivers in the Western Cape and a needs assessment of existing service providers
- Convene quarterly meetings to address issues of concern related to OVC
- To establish support working groups around key areas of concern for children and to provide support to agencies involved in advocacy efforts.

The grant was given so that CHAiN could continue its networking, information-sharing, capacity-building and advocacy work. They also proposed to add several new services such as providing regular information on budgetary allocations that relate to services for orphans and vulnerable children and compiling a database of monitoring and evaluation tools for psychosocial programs.

1.3 Purpose of study

The purpose of this review is three-fold:

- Firstly, it aims to explore in somewhat greater depth the results of 12 grantee partners' work in order to establish the outcomes and

impacts of their work within the education and vulnerable children sector.

- Secondly, these mini reviews will form one aspect of a meta-analysis which will explore the RBF grant making strategy.
- Finally, the 12 mini reviews also aim to provide the organizations with useful feedback from a peer organization, donor and government representative.

1.4 Methodology

For this qualitative review, the team relied heavily on the organization's reports and the director and program staff interviews. These were combined with findings drawn from in-depth interviews held with one representative of a peer organization, a government representative and a donor.

Questions for the in-depth interviews focused on the organizations' greatest achievements, challenges and lessons learnt. In addition, questions explored the results of institutional strengthening efforts and RBF's funding in specific.

1.4.1 Selection of organizations

The first selection criterion for organizations to be included in the review was the extent of the RBF support. Only those with a longer relationship or those who have received a relatively large grant with RBF were included. Secondly, an effort was made to select organizations from across three provinces, as well as across the two grant types (education and vulnerable children).

1.4.2 Limitations

One key limitation of this review is the high reliance on self-reporting (either through team interviews or progress reports) by the organization due to the time and budget constraints of the study itself. This was counter-balanced through the inclusion of the perspectives of a donor, a peer organization and a government representative. Program beneficiaries could not be included in the review. This would have allowed the team to verify some of the perceptions. However, where possible, the analysis includes findings from external evaluations. Overall, this has limited the team's ability to make concrete conclusions.

2. Findings

The findings are presented according to CHAIN's best practice model and advocacy work.

2.1 Key Achievements

- **Best Practice Model**

The following is an assessment of the extent to which the program's objectives have been met based on CHAiN reports and interviews with key respondents.

Objective: Acting as a conduit for small grants to promote the development of CBOs

Assessment: As an intermediary, CHAiN provides small grants to CBOs, which focus on their institutional strengthening. These include organizations such as Phakama and Yizani Sakhe in Gugulethu, Hope Community in Khayelitsha and Siyaphambili in Langa. A donor respondent verified that they use CHAiN as one of their conduits.

Objective: Promoting communication with other provincial, national and international initiatives that have similar objectives to our own

Assessment: CHAiN is actively involved in a variety of provincial and national structures which promotes its communication with other provincial and national initiatives. CHAiN represents the children's HIV and AIDS sector at the Child Rights Advisory Council provincially. They are part of the Provincial AIDS Council (governance structure) and the Children's HIV and AIDS sector on the provincial Child and Family Task Team. At a national level they are an executive member of the Children's Sector within the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC). Contact was also established with REPSSI².

Objective: Promoting capacity and providing technical resources to NGOs, CBOs and the public.

Assessment: CHAiN was commended by various stakeholders for its ability to strengthen capacity and provide technical support both to the public and to civil society sectors.

Within the public sector, CHAiN is considered to be a reliable, accurate source of information on the CBOs and NGOs working with vulnerable children in the Western Cape. Specifically, their Network member database captures the areas they are trying to address, as well as their contact details. This was found to be useful by the departments that provide funding to the CBOs and NGOs both in terms of verifying the existence of the organization, as well as the scope of their work. Furthermore, CHAiN was able to update its Network members on the latest policy developments, such as the Children's Act and antiretroviral medication. This in turn assists

² REPSSI is a regional non-profit organization working to mitigate the psychosocial impact of HIV and AIDS, poverty and conflict among children and youth in 13 countries in East and southern Africa.

government departments by bridging the gap between the public and the civil society sectors.

With the aim of ensuring the development and implementation of appropriate HIV/AIDS plans and programs, CHAiN has developed regional capacity-building workshops. CHAiN has played a role in facilitating a more co-ordinated response in the Western Cape (for children affected by HIV/AIDS) by disseminating information and knowledge of best practice models, creating a platform for discussion and development of ideas, as well as by mobilizing children's service organizations to prioritize children's issues. This was believed to be as a result of CHAiN's networking and information-sharing opportunities. For example, CHAiN hosted bi-annual summit meetings with up to 300 participants, and quarterly meetings of members on issues such as schools as nodes of support for orphans and vulnerable children.

Objective: Mentoring and training HIV/AIDS NGOs and CBOs to enhance the effective implementation of HIV/AIDS programs

Assessment: This review did not have an opportunity to engage with beneficiaries of these capacity-building initiatives and is unable to comment on whether the intervention has enhanced the implementation of the CBOs' and NGOs' HIV and AIDS programs. However, it is clear that CHAiN has held many trainings with NGOs and CBOs and through strategic partnerships expanded its mentoring and training. One key partnership involved CHAiN, *Hope Worldwide South Africa* and the Department of Social Development. This partnership provided capacity-building workshops and mentoring in psychosocial support and organizational development in order to strengthen childcare forums in Vredendal and Khayelitsha. Another partnership was established with a donor, *Starfish*, in providing mentoring and training to ten organizations in Boland, Metro and Southern Cape in OVC support and care and organizational development. The resulting Firemaker project³ aimed to provide psychosocial support for children through creative arts. Psychosocial monitoring and evaluation discussion forums were conducted and discussion updates were distributed to membership.

CHAiN also offered training to CBOs and NGOs in financial management and reporting as a means of strengthening their accountability. CHAiN also ensures that financial management and reporting systems are put in place so that NGOs and CBOs are able to show progress. A donor organization commented on the value of this training by saying,

“It definitely has improved the CBOs organizational function particularly accountability to donors. Statistical reporting has improved.”

³ In partnership with Zakheni Arts Therapy Foundation

Objective: Developing strong HIV/AIDS community forums in the Western Cape Province

Assessment: Based on an interview with the CHAIN program manager and program staff it seems that CHAiN has developed strong networks and community forums in the Western Cape resulting in increased knowledge among CBOs and NGOs as well as encouraged collaboration efforts.

CHAiN has had a presence in rural regions at the rural Imbizos⁴ and rural Regional Forums by holding sessions that focus on strengthening Child Care Forums in the regions, as well as information-sharing sessions. Forums have been well attended and have achieved results in terms of increased knowledge and skills.

CHAiN also initiated the formation of Child Care Forums within existing structures such as the Multi Sectoral Action Teams.⁵ Eight Regional Forum meetings were held with regional representatives including representatives from CHAiN. A CHAiN HOCC mini summit was held as well as a Masibambisane Summit. This included children and youth issues as well as membership involvement in the program. A peer organization applauded WC-NACOSA for organizing the networking opportunities which help organizations to identify and share local issues and problems. This is seen as being hugely beneficial to the Western Cape.

Collaboration has been strengthened on two levels through the quarterly meetings. Firstly, the CBOs themselves are aware of other CBOs working in their field in other areas, allowing them to refer clients and establishing a "network within the network". This, all respondents believe, is one of CHAiN's greatest strengths.

Secondly, government departments also have gained access to the CBOs and NGOs and are able to exchange information. For example, the Department of Social Development developed a concept paper on the HIV/AIDS program with input from NACOSA, which was based on the National Strategy Plan. A donor respondent felt that CHAiN was able to give the Department of Social feedback "from the ground" and was able to assist them in getting a sense of the challenges of organizations. The fact that government departments invited NACOSA to be involved in developing such a paper, suggests that they are willing to initiate a relationship with NACOSA. This provides the basis for the possible influence on policy and mobilization of government sectors for a multi-sectoral approach to HIV/AIDS.

Peer organizations believed the quarterly forums also contributed to the increase in the knowledge of CBOs, particularly within the fields of HIV and children. Between June 2006 and December 2007, children's issues were successfully integrated into sixteen of WC-NACOSA's rural regional and

⁴ A gathering of all NGOs and CBOs in the Western Cape (every two years) and Government.

⁵ A sub-district team focusing on TB and HIV, a flexible structure that acknowledges the way communities work and the structures already in place.

metro quarterly meetings with 50-100 participants per meeting. CHAIN has been successful in strengthening the leadership and governance of its member organizations.

Factors supporting the effectiveness of the model

The various respondents identified four key factors which were perceived to have supported WC-NACOSA in its achievements. These are listed below:

Firstly, respondents believed that CHAIN's use of regional meetings was a key factor which contributed to their achievements. A government representative commented that this approach is successful in bringing a large group of various stakeholders together, saying,:

“They have regional meetings, co-ordination that works on a bi-yearly basis. They have conferences (Masibambisane) and bring NGOs from all over the province, and from various departments like health, education and social. This gives a broad overview and people can comment. It's a platform for engaging government and organizations to spell out what they think and what works for them. Participatory engagement must be celebrated.”

A second supporting factor, according to a peer organization, is CHAIN's monitoring and evaluation work with CBOs. An impact assessment tool is used by CHAIN to track the organization's progress. CHAIN appears to keep careful track of their training and mentoring work through effective systems. For example, the Training Information Management System (TIMS) is used to track the number of trainings completed and the number of people per district or sub-district who take part. Individuals' progress is also tracked. In addition, an external review is conducted with the CBOs every quarter. With these monitoring and evaluation tools, CHAIN is able to identify the need early on in the mentoring process and respond appropriately by providing more support, ensuring the more effective results of its training and mentoring program.

A third supporting factor is CHAIN's communication strategy, which ensures that its members are well-informed and are able to share information effectively. The communication strategy includes the annual report, website, online database, monthly 'CHAIN mail', as well as providing opportunities for members to present and exhibit. This is possible due to CHAIN's dedicated editorial team, consultant and assistant. In addition, a partnership was established between WC-NACOSA and the *Informer* newspaper to distribute 3000 newsletters three times per year to the membership in the Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and Western Cape. Every newsletter included a children's component and articles related to the children's sector. News and contributions were also incorporated from the CHAIN membership in every edition.

The final factor relates to CHAIN's financial sustainability: If CHAIN is financially sustainable and able to accumulate and manage assets, funders

will be more likely to have confidence in their position as a conduit for small grants. With increased sustainability, CHAiN is also more likely to be able to promote capacity and provide technical resources to NGOs, CBOs and the public sector. At CHAiN, invoice-based trainings have been started to build up reserves. This means that CHAiN could continue without funding for a year if necessary. CHAiN is also in the process of accrediting its training and aligning all of the material to SETA standards, increasing the demand for their training, which should add to their sustainability. As program staff mentioned, the organization has multi-year funding and has secured many donors⁶.

Results ascribed to RBF

CHAiN felt that RBF engaged well with them and allowed the organization to pilot new things and to explore, which led to growth. NACOSA continued to grow in terms of their networking, information-sharing, capacity-building and advocacy work and RBF's grantmaking contributed to this progress. For example, the grants allowed for the addition of new services such as providing regular information on budgetary allocations that relate to services for OVC and compiling a database of monitoring and evaluation tools for psychosocial programs. The grants also enabled CHAiN to establish support working groups around key areas of concern for children, and provide support to agencies involved in advocacy efforts.

CHAiN benefited from the RBF-funded organizational development (OD) services. As an Organizational Development organization itself, the input from the OD consultants helped CHAiN to think more reflectively, rather than being action-oriented. This institutional strengthening allowed the CHAiN staff to be learners, who were then able to pass on the information that they have learnt to CBOs. In particular, the OD support strengthened their management team meetings and influenced their strategic planning. The individual coaching also assisted with day-to-day decision-making and the development of a leadership style.

- **Advocacy and policy change**

Objective: Advocating for the effective implementation and development of policy and programs in relation to the changing and emerging challenges of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Assessment: CHAiN has made progress in terms of achieving this objective. CHAiN has provided input, on a national level, into the Children's Bill and together with its other partners has ensured that there is an HIV and AIDS focus area in the Child Rights Advisory Council. In addition, CHAiN has provided input into the South African National Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS through the SANAC's children's sector network (supported by RBF through its grants to the Children's Rights Centre) and provided input into the

⁶ This is a somewhat different perception to that that of an interviewed donor organization who perceived that one of CHAiN's greatest challenges is funding.

strategic planning of the Departments of Health, Education and Social Development. A government representative felt that CHAIN has made an “impressive contribution” to the children’s sector... [playing] an influential, advisory role on SANAC’s strategic plan” .

Objective: Lobbying and mobilizing government, public, private and civil society sectors for a multi-sectoral approach to HIV/AIDS.

Assessment: Based on the feedback from various respondents, it is evident that CHAIN has made great progress towards achieving this objective. Its strong Western Cape and national civil society networks and linkages with the various government departments, allow the network to mobilize stakeholders quickly. For example, a government respondent was impressed by CHAIN’s ability to mobilize CBOs and NGOs around the issue of child trafficking, from grassroots to the national levels, without any difficulty.

Factors supporting the effectiveness of the advocacy work

Even though the factors supporting the success of CHAIN’s advocacy efforts are linked to those highlighted earlier, two additional factors need to be emphasized: the strength and extensive nature of CHAIN’s network and government’s respect and recognition of their expertise. A government representative found CHAIN’s staff to be very dedicated and knowledgeable around children’s issues, commenting, “We’ve always trusted their expertise.”

Results ascribed to RBF

RBF was CHAIN’s first funder. With RBF’s support, WC-NACOSA hired a full-time co-coordinator and a part-time administrator for CHAIN. This resulted in growth of the organization and impacted on their reach. For example, CHAIN was able to reach more CBOs and strengthen their institutions. As one staff member said,

“There was a shift [in the CBOs] from a casual, informal work-style to one that was professional, and more confident. They were able to report, have a vision, have plans and clear roles and responsibilities. Organizations were able to be more accountable to funders, to manage their funds and have become independent. Organizations are now also more likely to move to action, rather than complaining in the knowledge that they belong to a network. This has an impact on the way that organizations can help their communities and children who are affected by HIV/AIDS.”

2.2 Challenges

Regional Forum

Five challenges were identified relating to the development of the regional forum model.

- Program staff felt that the commitment to meetings from various government departments was sometimes a challenge. They felt that government officials did not always use the opportunity to network with CBOs and seemed to hijack the meetings to meet their own agendas.
- Being unable to afford transport expenses and the changing contact details of members prevented some NGO and CBO members from attending all the forum meetings and events.
- A donor respondent claimed that the low competency levels of some of the CBOs presented a challenge. According to a peer organization it was a challenge to get organizations to take responsibility for their actions.
- Program staff found it challenging to work with CBO members who were reluctant to change. Founding members at these CBOs sometimes saw CHAiN as “outsiders” who should not be allowed to tell them what to do.
- A peer organization identified the perceived gap of support for CBOs who have moved beyond the entry level support that CHAiN offers as a challenge. CHAiN may need to consider how these strengthened CBOs can be supported.

Advocacy

The following advocacy-related challenges were noted. Firstly, CHAiN’s linkages with national government departments are not as strong as those with provincial departments. This limits CHAiN’s communication and therefore its advocacy efforts. The high staff turnover within government is believed to contribute to this challenge, since it results in the need to communicate repeatedly and rebuild relationships. In addition, program staff believed that access to departments is a challenge. For example, when findings emerge at the quarterly meetings, it is difficult to get hold of relevant officials to inform them on the issues.

A last general challenge which affects all aspects of CHAiN’s work is the need for greater staff capacity, and the related difficulty of raising funds for staff salaries. Program staff spoke about the challenge of working on six to seven projects (per staff member) per year. As a peer organization commented,

“They should keep doing what they doing but expand ten-fold. There is so much more that they could be doing if they had manpower.”

2.3 Lessons learnt

The following key lessons were noted from reports and interviews:

- *Capacity-building - mentoring and training and technical skills*
Small grants management, mentoring and training in organizational development and OVC support and care is more effective when the emphasis is on community transformation and development (with the focus on the difference that organizations can make to the impact of HIV/AIDS) rather than only on technical skills, in isolation of a greater goal.
- *Co-ordinating a Network and networking:*
Forum meetings should not only take place in the metro but also need to reach the rural areas. It is better for CHAiN to go to the rural areas, rather than expect members to come to the organization.

It is important that members feel that they are a part of a community, have a sense of belonging in the Network and find the information useful and relevant. Membership participation is improved through joint action projects, common training needs and issues of concern.

- *Integrating a children's focus within existing structures:*
To ensure that children's issues are integrated, there is a need for a designated person/s to continually integrate children's issues into the programs as they expand.
- *Communication:*
The interview with the program manager of CHAiN revealed that it has been important to find the space for the dissemination of best practice models. It is best to use those who have experienced the benefits of the best practice model to share the experience and learning with others at the meetings.

The Network's activities are diverse because the points of interest and interventions are varied among the members. To ensure effective communication across members, CHAiN uses a variety of ways to allow organizations to engage at different levels: for example, newsletters and email updates, CHAiN quarterly meetings, smaller discussion forums on issues of interest, sharing of best practice models, smaller trainings, interest and focus groups.

Lessons learnt: Advocacy and influencing policy

- *Relationship with government:*
It is important to promote dialogue rather than be antagonistic when working with government. Being firm but respectful has been the best way to deal with officials. In addition, using platforms, such as the Imbizos, to work together with departments proved useful. When meeting at district level, it is necessary to invite district level officials, and not only provincial ones. Finally, CHAiN has learnt to be clear about advocacy objectives. What has worked best has been a clear focus and clear leadership.
- *Promoting dialogue around children's issues:*
CHAiN has learnt that it is important to ensure that the membership is able to participate in decision-making. CHAiN also ensures that members are informed of messages and decisions made.

3. Conclusion

Based on the available evidence it seems that CHAiN has created many opportunities and support structures to strengthen community-based organizations working in the children's HIV AIDS sector. It has provided training and mentoring in organizational development, technical assistance in psychosocial programmatic support and has been able to provide small grants to needy organizations. The Rockefeller Brothers Fund has been able to assist CHAiN to use opportunities to influence policy in the field of children and HIV/AIDS.

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