

Recognizing the Role of Technical Facilitation as an Evidence-Based Catalyst for Improved Coordination in Research

Apera I.¹, Ogunbemi K.², Anenih J.², Balogun M.¹, Kanki P.³, Ogunsola F.³, Sagay S., Oguntoye S.¹, Apedzan JP.¹

¹ West African Infectious Diseases Institute (WAIDI)

² National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA)

³ WAIDI's West African Chapter of the Academic Alliance (WA AA)

Background

Following a phase one of operations research (OR) in 2013, the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) identified technical assistance to OR implementers as a priority and engaged the West African Infectious Diseases Institute (WAIDI) to provide technical facilitation of the second phase of the OR in 2015. The goal of this technical facilitation project was to inform the effective and efficient scale-up of comprehensive HIV/AIDS programming; and to strengthen the institutional capacity of NACA in conducting and managing outsourced research.

Methods

WAIDI appointed technical facilitators from its Academic Alliance (national and international experts), who provided expert guidance and critical international perspectives, to ensure high quality results. Utilizing this unique network of specialists, WAIDI, with a technical committee from NACA, developed 16 highly specific research questions to address specific gaps in knowledge within Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) and Most At Risk Populations (MARPs) programming.

WAIDI also implemented tailored capacity building sessions and developed tools and procedures to bolster NACA's capacity to conduct and manage outsourced research and ensure proper dissemination, publication and knowledge transfer globally.

Results

Drawing upon best practices from academia and the field, WAIDI simplified the management of OR topic selection, funding and implementation, providing technical assistance and effective oversight to ensure adherence to high standards for quality research implementation.

WAIDI engaged 5 implementing partners in HIV programming, leveraging its network of academia to implement 7 targeted, short-term research initiatives- 4 on PMTCT, and 3 on MARPS.

Conclusions

The technical facilitation and coordination provided for this OR ensured oversight of international standards, and allowed the studies to be of demonstrable value for NACA. This facilitation process addressed several fundamental issues regarding the administration, management and coordination of research project activities for effective implementation.