



**CORE Group Country Collaboration Model:
Bundled Proposal for GFATM Funding in Haiti**

CORE Objective: Establish a CORE Group consortium for a common Global Fund To Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) project to support orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) programs in Haiti

Cost: \$ 12,500 (Phase 1: CORE Group staff preparation + support)
\$ 12,500 (Phase 2: CORE Group Consultant/Haiti)
\$ 11,000 (Phase 3: Haiti Consortium partners)

Timeframe: About 10 months, from initial CORE staff concept discussions with members through draft preparation to submission of final proposal to GFATM.

CORE Group Partners: Concern Worldwide, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), FOCAS, La Leche League International (LLLL), Save the Children US, and World Vision (WV)

Result: The consortium was established with seven of the original nine interested NGO country offices (six CORE Group members and one affiliate). Consortium members drafted a proposal that emphasized OVC support and home care (the main elements that all members had in common in their HIV/AIDS work), and three subprojects were joined to form one nationwide project.

GFATM Haiti incorporated the proposal into its national submission for Round 5, and funded it for two years for a total of \$3.6 million. Project implementation is expected to begin in July 2006. The project design focuses on detection of HIV/AIDS through voluntary counseling and testing, and identification and enrollment of OVC into health and social services. According to the proposal, the project expects to reach 60,000 OVC and 30,000 persons living with HIV/AIDS in 13 communes across Haiti.

Rationale

Each of the CORE Group members present in Haiti was interested in seeking Global Fund Round Five financing to begin or expand current HIV/AIDS work in country. Each organization already had some level of HIV/AIDS programming upon which they wanted to build larger interventions.

Haiti has the highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the Western Hemisphere, and is thus considered a priority country among major HIV/AIDS funders. A June 2004 USAID Country Profile for Haiti reported up to 276,000 HIV-positive persons living in country, and an estimated 200,000 Haitian children left parentless by HIV/AIDS.

CORE members identified several benefits of collaboration early in the process:

- Foster new and/or strengthened working relationships
- Cover larger areas of the country/population in a more thorough and/or coordinated manner
- Create an economy of scale by pooling resources
- Permit more extensive monitoring and evaluation of activities to more quickly determine which ones are the most effective and under what conditions
- Create a forum to share information, lessons learned, and ideas on approach, logistics, etc.
- Allow the members to seek funding more readily and/or in larger amounts

Collaboration Process

In the summer of 2004, Dick Taylor, CEO of CORE member FOCAS, met with the principal recipient of GFATM funds in Haiti, the Sogebank Foundation, about a possible PVO proposal for GFATM Round 5 funding. Sogebank staff indicated that they would consider a PVO proposal only if PVOs in Haiti agreed to work together; they felt that PVO health activities in country were disjointed at the time. Upon returning from Haiti, Mr. Taylor contacted CORE headquarters to initiate a discussion on how CORE could facilitate a discussion on a possible bundled proposal among its PVO members.

At the CORE 2004 Fall Meeting, Mr. Taylor led a discussion among several CORE members to assess the feasibility of and interest in a joint GFATM proposal in Haiti. CORE headquarters staff then worked with CORE Board member and FOCAS representative Judy Gillens to develop a questionnaire for CORE Group member offices in Haiti. Nine member organizations responded, and Dr. Gillens followed up with visits to each field office during a trip to Haiti, sponsored by CORE.

Nine CORE members agreed to consider membership in a consortium. Dr. Gillens also met with Sogebank staff members, who were strongly supportive of a potential CORE Group consortium. Sogebank provided specific recommendations for a CORE member bundled proposal, including:

- Establish a single office for centralized communication;
- Develop a clear consortium framework that details how communication will occur via e-mail, phone, meetings, etc.;
- Ensure that activities are realistic and sustainable;
- Ensure that activities are holistic (e.g., include OVC work with family/community support activities and/or support for persons living with HIV/AIDS);
- Provide a coordinated messaging strategy for information, education and communication activities; and
- Follow a common monitoring and evaluation system.

During her trip, Dr. Gillens also identified a Haiti-based consultant, Judith D'Amico, who could develop a concept paper and, supported by CORE, serve as a neutral facilitator among PVOs.

CORE subsequently sponsored a series of conference calls among members (at both headquarters and field offices) to move the process forward and resolve differences among PVOs related to various faith-based program approaches in Haiti. The initial PVO group consisted of Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Plan, Save the Children U.S., World Vision,

Concern Worldwide, World Relief, La Leche League International, FOCAS, and a local NGO, CDS (Centres pour la Developpment et la Sante), representing Project Hope.

To ease coordination and communication, CORE staff recommended that that one PVO serve as a facilitating agency. After careful consideration, the consortium identified two members who had the staff capacity to form the consortium and facilitate proposal writing: Save the Children US/ Haiti office and Plan Haiti. Eventually, Plan Haiti dropped out of the consortium in favor of writing its own proposal, so Save the Children accepted the role. Save the Children staff worked closely with the CORE consultant to develop and guide the operation through its three phases.

Since the nine NGOs had little experience working together and little to no experience with consortia, the consultant drafted a series of designs and key questions for them to consider before an initial workshop. The consultant and Save the Children staff believed that this would facilitate the discussion/decision process and permit more informed decision-making. The consultant visited eight of the nine NGOs before the initial workshop, presented the design and key issues information, and provided copies for all nine for further consideration before the workshop.

Save the Children hosted the workshop and all subsequent group meetings. The program director for Global Fund Haiti's HIV/AIDS projects presented an overview of the program and requested that the future consortium consider a joint program that would complement those already in process through Round 1 funding.

The consultant presented a large table of Global Fund Haiti's HIV/AIDS logic frame and asked participants to mark their present programs and those that they would like to do with Global Fund financing. No common themes emerged, so the group decided to focus on consortium design and return to the question of a common project once the design was developed. Participants opted for a mixed consortium model, i.e., one that permitted two or more projects, but that all activities (including funding, reporting, and monitoring and evaluation) would be under a single secretariat.

Two additional meetings were required before the participants arrived at a consensus on a consortium structure and specific interventions. Plan and CDS opted to submit their own grants based on previous work and relationships developed through GFATM Round Two funding. Nonetheless, the other members welcomed Plan's and CDS's continued collaboration within the consortium. The six remaining institutions agreed to focus their proposal on the continuum of care.

The consultant initiated a number of individual meetings and e-mail communications before the concept paper could be drafted, reviewed, and accepted by the members. Due to delays in returning key information, the paper was submitted without an estimated budget.

The concept paper was well received by Global Fund Haiti, and the consortium was invited to submit a formal proposal. Save the Children staff from the U.S. office came to assist during the first workshop and during the proposal stage. Dr. Gillens and a few FOCAS board members also took an active role in the process. Most members regularly attended meetings, though a few were extremely lax in submitting program information and budgets. Multiple meetings were held with the group as well as separately with the consultant to flesh out the program design. Finally, the group agreed to roll three separate projects into one national project.

A detailed workplan had been devised with a tentative submission date of 13 May 2005 (Global Fund Haiti had not yet given a date). Unfortunately, the Global Fund country coordinating mechanism published a notice 2 May 2005 stating that the proposals would be due 10 May. This led to an enormous effort on the part of Save the Children and the consultant to gather information from all the members (including very detailed budgets); write the proposal; have it approved by all the members and also the Save the Children U.S. office; combine all the budgets; and submit it by the deadline.

Unfortunately, much less money was available than originally anticipated, thus the consortium budget was finally negotiated for two rather than a full five years so that it could implement a reasonable level of programming in all of its catchment areas. Of the 20 projects approved for funding, the consortium received the second largest grant and overall the highest annual award. Plan and CDS also received funding. Plan opted for four instead of five years. Through a series of discussions, Plan and Save the Children resolved overlaps in catchment areas; and Plan and the consortium members met together to share their project proposals before submission. CDS's project is separate but entirely complementary to the other two.

Roles & Responsibilities

1. **CORE Secretariat.** Acting on a suggestion from CORE member organization FOCAS, CORE provided a venue for PVO members to discuss possible collaboration in Haiti as part of the Fall 2004 CORE Membership Meeting. CORE supported CORE Board member and FOCAS representative Judy Gillens to develop a questionnaire for PVOs working in Haiti, and to travel to Haiti to interview PVO staff in person. CORE also convened a series of conference calls to help PVO members move the collaboration forward and identify a lead organization to manage proposal writing and facilitate a PVO consortium.
2. **CORE members.** The Haiti country office for Save the Children, with the support of its headquarters, became the lead agency for Phases two and three. Headquarters staff, especially from FOCAS, LLLI, Save the Children, and World Vision, took an active role in the consortium formation and/or proposal writing. The country offices contributed staff and shouldered the cost of proposal submission.
3. **CORE consultant.** The consultant helped design the consortium structure using CORE materials and others that she created to explain possible models showing how the consortium could function in Haiti. After the initial agreement, she worked with members to: select a project (actually three subprojects rolled up into one); write the concept paper; and write the proposal for Global Fund Haiti. All aspects of the work were coordinated with lead agency Save the Children and were sent out to members for review and comment before submission.

Communication/Facilitation

Once roles were established, how did communication happen? The consultant corresponded almost daily with Save the Children and potential consortium members by e-mail and phone as well as kept the CORE Group office and Dr. Gillens informed. One member mentioned that its institution particularly appreciated the regular updating and face-to-face meetings with the consultant in addition to the group meetings.

How often did partners meet and/or share information? After an initial informational meeting with each potential member, a workshop and two subsequent meetings were held to decide

consortium structure and overall programming. Subsequent meetings were held with the consultant and then within the group to flush out the program design and budget.

How much did each partner invest in collaboration (time, money, in-kind donations)? As the facilitating agency, Save the Children provided a meeting place, helped with logistics, collaborated on design, paid for HQ staff to travel to Haiti to support pulling the information together (especially budgets), and offered critical support to the entire process. But all members financed the grant proposal (Phase 3).

Challenges

Challenges encountered during consortium planning were not so much due to conflict over roles and responsibilities as over global issues surrounding collaboration. When asked if a consortium was practical in Haiti, one member responded, "It is not practical in terms of being easy to create or to manage, or necessarily more effective...It is a good way to coordinate interventions and to obtain funds. But it demands a great deal of effort---personnel, time, finances...to implement and manage this type of set-up."

Challenges included the following:

1. **Little previous PVO collaboration in Haiti.** A Haitian participant from a CORE member PVO observed, "Unfortunately we do not have the culture of working together in Haiti." Expatriate staff from another CORE member PVO noted that they have worked in a number of countries and have not seen the lack of collaboration they find in Haiti.
2. **Difference in PVO mission and values.** One Haitian participant noted, "I am aware that the consortium has determined goals and objectives; but I doubt if the organizations have the same philosophy or if the attainment of the goals and objectives will have the same importance to each one. [I suggest] that the missions of the organizations be defined from the beginning, or during the partnership, and that there be common ground." This issue emerged during discussions between faith-based and non-faith based PVOs, and even between different faith-based PVOs, regarding distinct approaches to HIV/AIDS prevention and care and support, specifically over whether to talk about/supply condoms to youth. Fortunately, this did not become a major barrier because the consortium ultimately chose VCT sites and OVC care, instead of behavior change communication, as its emphasis.
3. **Limited timeframe.** Building a common mission and shared goals, and overcoming differences in PVO philosophies and capacity, was difficult to achieve within a short timeframe. Building social capital among organizations often takes years.
4. **Limited transparency.** Not all PVOs were willing to share program strategies, areas of intervention, budget needs, and other funding sources. The limited timeframe did not allow for an appropriate "comfort level" to develop among consortium members who were unfamiliar with one another. One member commented, "The type of organization is not important, rather it is having (or having the reputation of having) some basic principles in common: transparency, willingness to share experiences, respect for others...It is easier when the organizations have already worked together, and not just a little bit."

5. **Bureaucratic delays within PVOs.** For some PVOs managed centrally from US headquarters, field staff members were not able to make country-specific, country-sensitive decisions on a timely basis. Many hours were spent negotiating these decision points, and on-the-ground coordination was slower as a result. In other cases, however, PVO U.S. headquarters staff played a critical role in fostering collaboration with other PVOs, leveraging relationships built through CORE and other forums.

Lessons Learned: Joint Proposal Planning

- Look for a culture of collaboration and social capital among PVOs/NGOs before you begin. Some country situations are more amenable to a consortium structure than others, depending on cultural, physical, and administrative conditions. If social capital is weak, allow enough time for it to develop.
- Do not wait for funding opportunities to bring various players together, but rather foster information sharing and collaboration in times of programming.
- Seek out leadership from the CORE secretariat. CORE staff members were essential in mobilizing PVO/NGO members and providing a neutral forum for discussion in the initial stages of the process.
- Seek out partners who are stable, have adequate capacity for project implementation, and are willing to seek solutions. In Haiti, it is important to note many institutions experience high turnover, which impedes long-term collaboration.
- Seek out partners with a commitment to transparency, especially if common project funding is involved.
- Seek out partners with common goals and compatible “cultures.”
- Research realistic levels of funding available before designing a proposal that will be beyond the donor’s ability to fund.
- Design the proposal to ensure contributions from as many partners as possible. One member suggested the following program characteristics for a successful consortium proposal: 1) strong advocacy or research platform; 2) large geographic coverage area; 3) multiple facets or elements to which each organization brings in specific skills; and 4) shared resources or supplies that favor economy of scale. Consortium proposals should not necessarily be seen as only achieving scale but also combining experience to provide a holistic approach to the response to HIV/AIDS.
- Include a realistic monitoring and evaluation plan that is in line with the requirements of the funder. Partners should agree to a few key indicators that can be met by all the members.
- Establish clear guidelines and expectations for participation in proposal planning. Stipulate a penalty for non-participation.

Thanks to CORE consultant Judith D’Amico, who was the principal author of this paper. For more information, contact Karen LeBan/CORE Group at contact@coregroup.org. Or visit the CORE Group web site at: www.coregroup.org.

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