Launched in 2010, the USAID-funded Building Local Capacity for Delivery of HIV Services in Southern Africa Project (BLC) strengthens government, parastatal, and civil society entities to effectively address the challenges of the HIV and AIDS epidemic.

Throughout the Southern Africa region and with specific activities in six countries, BLC provides technical assistance in leadership, management, and governance as well as organizational development in three key program areas: 1) care and support for orphans and vulnerable children; 2) HIV prevention; and 3) community-based care.

Strengthening HIV prevention

Despite recent progress in some countries documented in the 2012 UNAIDS Global Report, this region remains at the center of the global AIDS pandemic. BLC strengthens the quality, reach, and sustainability of effective HIV prevention interventions throughout the Southern Africa region.
This can be achieved by:

- improving HIV prevention services delivered by governments and civil society organizations (CSOs)
- expanding knowledge and awareness of HIV and AIDS in the general population and targeted subgroups, such as youth and migrants
- developing and testing new tools for the assessment of individual and organizational capacity in HIV prevention.

Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most severely affected by HIV, with nearly 1 in every 20 adults (4.9%) living with the disease and accounting for 69% of the people living with HIV worldwide. Nine of the ten countries with the world’s highest HIV prevalence and incidence rates are in Southern Africa.

**Expanding HIV Prevention Knowledge and Services**

BLC is expanding the body of knowledge of HIV prevention practices in the region in order to build the capacity of health workers and CSOs to provide quality services.

BLC supported the Southern African Development Community (SADC) by:

- conducting a comprehensive evidence-based literature review on the biomedical, behavioral, and structural determinants of HIV risk and protective factors relevant to the SADC region
- profiling contextually relevant combination HIV prevention good practices

The literature review, completed in November 2011, collected over 700 HIV prevention publications relevant to the region. To ensure their availability to policymakers, researchers, and implementers in the region, BLC partnered with the USAID-funded Knowledge for Health project and SADC to develop a web-based database to store the materials. The database will be available online through the Southern Africa HIV/AIDS Regional Exchange (SHARE) website (www.hivsharespace.net).

The literature review and database contributed to the development of five technical briefs on priority HIV prevention topics. Prepared in collaboration with SADC and with funding from USAID, BLC wrote the technical briefs for policymakers and program managers attending the first semi-annual SADC HIV Prevention and Research Meeting held in Johannesburg, South Africa, October 9–10, 2012.

The technical briefs provide concise, accessible information to facilitate technical discussions at the meeting and country level policy discussions after the meeting. Written by experts, the technical brief used insights gained from the 2011 HIV prevention literature review, scientific developments presented at the XIX International AIDS Conference in July 2012 as well as recent World Health Organization (WHO) and UNAIDS publications. They summarize the scientific information as well as good practices from across the Southern Africa region profiled in the literature review. The technical briefs will be updated when revised global policy guidance is issued by WHO/UNAIDS.

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1. SADC is a 15-country intergovernmental organization established in 1992 to enhance the development and economic growth of Southern Africa, alleviate poverty, and improve the standard and quality of life of the region’s people through regional integration.
Award-Winning Film Raises Awareness

With funding from USAID, BLC provided a grant and technical assistance to Discovery Channel Global Education Partnership, Inc. for the development of a docudrama about the basic science of HIV and AIDS. The feature-length film, Inside Story: The Science of HIV and AIDS, tells the story of a young Kenyan man named Kalu, an aggressive striker of the “Malindi Sharks,” who dreams of playing professional soccer. One day his life changes dramatically. Kalu gets an offer to play soccer in South Africa. On the same day he has unprotected sex with his sweetheart and, unknowingly, is exposed to HIV.

Created for African audiences, the film is an exciting new tool to counter HIV message fatigue, and explain the disease. It premiered on the 2011 World AIDS Day in Johannesburg to the first 500 of an eventual targeted 300 million African viewers. During the past year, Inside Story has received critical acclaim from thousands of viewers around the world. The film has been viewed at ten special screenings and four film festivals in eight cities in Africa and the United States. Viewers have included academics, researchers, policymakers, HIV program managers, CSOs, USAID and PEPFAR staff, film critics, and the media. The film was honored with the Special Jury Award in the Narrative Feature category at the 20th Annual Pan-African Film Festival in Los Angeles, and Best Film and Best Actor Awards at the 15th Annual Zanzibar Film Festival in Tanzania.

To facilitate the film’s use for prevention purposes, in partnership with USAID/Regional HIV/AIDS Program (RHAP), John Hopkins University, and the Centre for AIDS Development, Research and Evaluation (CADRE), BLC will distribute the film widely throughout the region and train CSOs in using the facilitator guide to target in- and out-of-school youth.

New Curriculum for the Southern Africa Region: Pilot Program in Swaziland

BLC is developing a comprehensive evidence-based HIV prevention training program and facilitation guide in close consultation with local stakeholders. BLC partnered with CADRE to adapt an existing training program piloted in South Africa (Eastern Cape), Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. The training will strengthen strategic thinking regarding HIV prevention and will include a critical review of the science of HIV. It will enable program managers to customize prevention and behavior change interventions for specific target groups. Mid- to senior-level managers from the Ministry of Health, National Emergency Response Council on HIV and AIDS (Swaziland’s HIV and AIDS Coordinating Authority), and national prevention partners responsible for the design and management of HIV prevention interventions will be trained in early 2013. The program will then be refined and adapted for training HIV program managers throughout the Southern Africa region.

Strengthening HIV Prevention Services at the Community Level in Angola

Building on a successful USAID-funded community-based health improvement program implemented by MSH in Peru (Healthy Communities and Municipalities Project), BLC has designed a strategy appropriate for the Angolan context to address HIV prevention challenges faced at the community level. The project will strengthen the capacity of local CSOs to work with communities to improve individual health practices.
Migration Corridor Project: An Innovative Approach to Reaching Mobile Populations in Southern Africa

One of the BLC project’s objectives is to develop an HIV prevention program addressing the specific needs of mobile populations and communities affected by internal and cross border migration in Southern Africa. To better understand the contextual challenges, BLC has:

- Built strong working relationships with several stakeholders, including USAID, International Organization for Migration, North Star Alliance, and other partners providing services to migrants and affected communities. BLC has gained a better understanding of the diverse needs and challenges of providing effective HIV prevention services to the region’s large and growing population of migrants, highly mobile populations, and communities affected by migration.

- Consulted key stakeholders and HIV prevention experts in the region to identify priorities for HIV prevention to migrant communities at selected sites along the Beitbridge to Pretoria transport corridor where cross border migrants reside or pass through.

- Collaborated with SADC’s HIV and AIDS Unit to review existing HIV prevention literature and known information about migrants, focusing particularly on patterns of increased vulnerability to HIV and best practices for providing HIV prevention services.

Through these consultations, BLC has identified CSO partners, such as Treatment Action Campaign and LoveLife, which are providing HIV prevention services in local communities affected by migration. BLC will partner with these CSOs to strengthen their HIV prevention programs, and expand access, improve quality, and increase the demand for HIV services. HIV prevention services to migrants will be expanded in the communities of Makopane, Tzaneen, and Giyani in Limpopo province, South Africa, and in Palepaye, Botswana, where cross border migrants reside or pass through.

Expanding Access to Effective PMTCT Treatment in Swaziland

mothers2mothers (m2m) is a non-profit organization providing support for prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) using a peer mentor approach. Counseling and guidance from mentor mothers increases adherence by pregnant HIV-positive women to PMTCT treatment. Swaziland is one of seven countries in Southern and Eastern Africa where m2m operates. BLC provides funding to m2m through a sub-award as well as capacity building technical assistance so that m2m may qualify for direct USAID funding.

- m2m recently increased its scope of operation from 55 to 60 sites throughout the country, exceeding BLC’s target.

- Data verification sites visits in 2012 confirmed that m2m is seen as a valuable resource in educating pregnant women and mothers on PMTCT, antiretroviral therapy adherence, breast feeding, and proper nutrition.

- Informed by an assessment of legal, financial, and operational systems, BLC recommended direct funding of m2m by USAID, thereby “graduating” the organization. USAID approved the recommendation; the direct award is expected to be effective in December 2012.

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