The concept of “caring for the caregiver” in the health context is becoming commonly-known, acknowledging that people providing care to those with chronic or long-term illnesses, such as HIV, require support themselves to continue to function. The same applies for organizations: across Sub-Saharan Africa, community members have risen up to respond to the health challenges they face, many forming local organizations or support groups.

Recognizing the importance of their contribution, regional and national organizations are working with these smaller groups to deliver quality health services. In turn, the USAID-funded Building Local Capacity for Delivery of HIV Services in Southern Africa Project (BLC) is assisting some of these regional organizations to become more sustainable, to the extent that they are able to receive US Government funding. This system of support is important: as each level is strengthened, it is better able to build up the next level—ultimately leading to strong communities able to play a significant role within the health system.

BLC visited Zambia to better understand the programmatic activities of one of their regional partners, the Southern African AIDS Trust (SAT). In

Zambia, SAT strengthens organizations for effective delivery of HIV and AIDS interventions in their communities through skills and capacity building, as well as knowledge and experience sharing events.

To demonstrate their work, SAT and BLC met with the Pride Community Health Organization (Pride), based in Kafue. Pride began as a support group of people living with HIV ten years ago, and has been transitioned into a full-fledged non-governmental organization during the past three years with SAT and other partners’ assistance. This process involved supporting Pride to develop necessary systems and structures, such as monitoring and evaluation. “Change after capacity building interventions is one of Pride’s priorities,” commented the executive director, Kenan Ng’ambi, regarding the success of their transition.

BLC is implementing customized capacity building with 12 regional organizations, including the Southern African AIDS Trust (SAT), to support the delivery of quality HIV services and recommend them to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for direct US Government funding.

SAT is a regional non-profit organization. Formed in 1990, SAT works with 74 partners in six southern African countries and has a regional coordinating office in South Africa. SAT focuses on strengthening community systems for HIV as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights.

For more information about SAT, visit: www.satregional.org/
For more information about Pride, visit: www.pricho.webs.com/
According to SAT, 70% of women in Zambia have variable access to sexual and reproductive health services. Pride's focus is similar to SAT’s, addressing sexual and reproductive health and rights for youth and women. The organization also provides HIV prevention, care, and treatment services, including behavior change communication, HIV counseling and testing, and HIV and tuberculosis treatment adherence support.

Pride is making great strides in the six wards it serves in Zambia. Interventions are designed with the community, and the community is involved from the beginning to facilitate ownership and sustainability. Community mapping exercises, implemented with assistance from SAT, explore existing social and socioeconomic factors, enabling Pride and the communities it works with to identify challenges as well as solutions. One such challenge is the cultural practice of initiating young girls into adulthood. This includes teaching girls skills such as cooking and managing a home, and how to relate to their husbands. Pride acknowledges that this practice is beneficial in many ways. However, girls may also be taught to suffer in silence and not “air their dirty laundry” when physically abused by their partners. Pride states this may perpetuate gender-based violence by discouraging girls to report abuse, and it is working with communities to address these detrimental aspects of the practice.

Pride's integrated interventions have made communities realize that certain beliefs and practices need to be changed or adapted to prevent vulnerability to HIV, especially among women and girls. Community leaders are now involved in spearheading change. Youth-friendly areas in clinics have been established to support youth in accessing sexual and reproductive health services. This is an important change in communities which once viewed sex among the youth as taboo and centered all messages on abstinence. Community outreaches have facilitated open sharing platforms for people of all ages to together develop an understanding of sexually-related issues.

Pride is a flagship for many small organizations, proving that it is possible to develop the necessary mechanisms to become a sustainable and effective organization which addresses key factors contributing to the spread of HIV. Through the support of regional organizations such as SAT, Pride and other organizations will continue to provide relevant, community-based responses to health challenges.

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 organizational development, including leadership, management, and governance in three key program areas: 1) care and support for orphans and vulnerable children; 2) HIV prevention; and 3) community-based care.

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