

## Moving from Planning to Strategic Action: Strengthening Swaziland's Grant from the Global Fund



*Signing the Global Fund agreement*

Swaziland has the world's highest known rate of HIV infection—over 38% in the adult population. Average life expectancy has declined to just 39 years. Orphans are estimated to number almost 70,000, projected to increase to 120,000 by 2010. A vast number of this small country's households are headed by children living on their own or with a sick parent or relative, unable to provide for their basic needs. With so much at stake, the country is working hard to mobilize all resources.

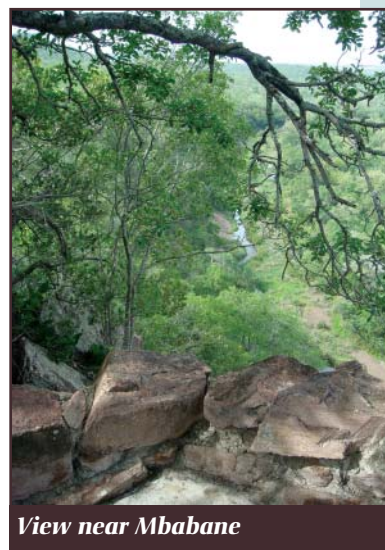
The National Emergency Response Council on HIV/AIDS (NERCHA) is mandated by the government of Swaziland to facilitate the multisectoral response. "NERCHA is in a pivotal position to coordinate a successful response to the pandemic," says the Capacity Project's Jawara Lumumba. Among its duties, the organization serves as the Principal Recipient for Swaziland's HIV grant from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

NERCHA has been intensifying its focus on being an effective Principal Recipient—that is, receiving the funds and providing oversight and management. By contrast, involvement in the implementation of the grant is the role of other agencies such as the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. At the same time, NERCHA bears responsibility for coordinating all of Swaziland's HIV-related efforts. Therefore, the Capacity Project is strengthening NERCHA's leadership and management capabilities and helping the organization to restructure itself as coordinator rather than implementer of the Global Fund grant.

Building on technical assistance offered throughout 2007, the Project conducted a three-day teambuilding and strategic planning workshop for 25 NERCHA staff in December. Held in the capital of Mbabane, the workshop advanced the teamwork and collaboration of the organization's Coordination Unit and Technical Support Unit. "The group explored and determined concrete strategies for using their diversity as a valuable resource to strengthen their internal and external collaborative teamwork," Lumumba explains. "In addition they developed concrete action plans, which will move them successfully from strategic planning to productive strategic action."

NERCHA staff members were enthusiastic about their progress. "Differences can actually be complementary factors toward success," realized one workshop participant. "We all have unique views, but if we all are working toward the same goal we can use our differences to come out with gold—a productive explosion coming from our creative use of the differences."

Another staff member reflected on this theme. "Within a team we have got different characters and need to appreciate the uniqueness because we complement one another. No matter how different your characteristics and personalities are, you can work together as a team and be as effective as ever, as long as we respect and listen to one another."

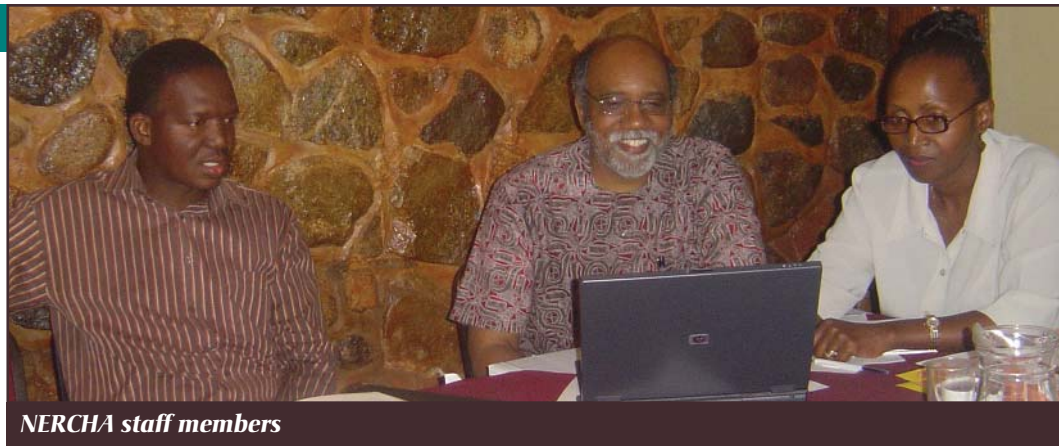


*View near Mbabane*

*"NERCHA is in a pivotal position to coordinate a successful response to the pandemic."*

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**NERCHA staff members**

Looking ahead, one participant felt “empowered to start the year with a clear plan, and I have energy to work hard to achieve the plan.” Another affirmed that “we have reached some form of consensus on what has to happen” and envisioned greater productivity as a result. One person was “hopeful about more collaboration from team members, more support from other teams and more serious work and results.”

“Unquestionably Swaziland faces the present worst-case HIV/AIDS scenario,” Lumumba acknowledges. “I have been impressed with NERCHA’s open-mindedness and diligence in clarifying its coordination role and developing a strategic management plan. In the end I project that the headline will be: *Swaziland wins its war against HIV/AIDS under NERCHA’s coordination.*”

In February 2008 the Capacity Project supported follow-up activities stemming from the workshop. As a NERCHA staff member put it, they are “very optimistic about the year ahead in terms of working together as a team.” Another added that they are “excited and full of hope that this will be a year in which we will make progress towards strengthening the ability of the office to do what is expected of it: coordinate the national response.”

In addition to Swaziland, the Capacity Project has assisted 13 other countries—Belize, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, El Salvador, Indonesia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Romania, Senegal, Tanzania and Togo—to improve the functioning of their Global Fund grants.



**Community organizing**

The Capacity Project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by IntraHealth International and partners, helps developing countries strengthen human resources for health to better respond to the challenges of implementing and sustaining quality health programs.

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