

- [James Ayodele](#) ^[1]

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The Association for Positive Youth Living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria (APYIN) promotes sexual and reproductive health rights of young people in eight Nigerian states. However, the project was experiencing some challenges with streamlining activities, recordkeeping, and assuring the quality of services. As a result, APYIN was underperforming and at risk of losing donor funding.

The [PEPFAR](#) ^[2]/[USAID](#) ^[3]-funded [Program to Build Leadership and Accountability in Nigeria's Health System](#) ^[4] (PLAN-Health), led by Management Sciences for Health (MSH) in Nigeria, is repositioning APYIN for better performance and continued donor support by providing organizational systems strengthening capacity building to address these challenges.

In January 2012, MSH conducted an organizational assessment of APYIN to determine gaps in organizational systems, and to agree on an action plan for strengthening priority areas.

Following the assessment, MSH conducted a series of systems strengthening interventions focused on planning, quality assurance, financial and human resources, monitoring and evaluation, and leadership and management. Through technical support and guidance by MSH, APYIN reviewed their sexual and reproductive health rights project to align it with national guidelines on Minimum Prevention Package Interventions, and the national behavioral change communication strategy; and apply the prevention package in community outreach activities with young people.

MSH assisted APYIN to create manuals and organizational policy documents to guide their operations, including manuals on governance, human resources, quality assurance, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E); as well as standard finance documents including a two-year operational plan with cost details outlined, and a finance policy. APYIN collects and analyzes data regularly using these monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools, and keeps the financial records up to date and readily accessible.

“Our accounting system was very poor and this made our donors query us. But now, I can clearly define our sources of funds. With QuickBooks I can quickly recall finance reports,” said Martha Iliya, APYIN accounting/finance officer. “Now all the records are well kept and they are easily accessible,” she added.

The technical support MSH provided for APYIN’s community outreach activities has made community dialogues more participatory and more effective. APYIN now knows how to identify and select groups so they can reach them with repeat interventions for maximum impact. “We used to group everyone together during our community dialogues, but MSH taught us to separate the groups. We now divide the groups by age and sex and this has helped us to get a better response, especially from the young people,” said Mr. Peter Obi, APYIN project director.

Communication among staff members has improved, too. “The way we talk to each other has changed. You can make suggestions to management and you’re sure to get a response,” said Hanatu Bawa, APYIN administrative/human resources officer. Staff members also report that they now work more effectively in teams and collectively plan project activities as a result of the capacity building. “MSH support has made the environment we work in more friendly,” said Iliya.

The governance system has also improved. Board members are more active and more responsive to organizational requirements, and in the words of the Project Director, “Due to MSH’s support, our organizing skills have improved. We hold quarterly meetings of the Management Board and an annual Board of Trustees meeting, which was not happening before. Disbursement of funds has been streamlined, and communication with our stakeholders has improved.”

“The system strengthening is evident in APYIN. We have seen a lot of changes and our donors are happy with this,” added Obi.

Source URL: <http://www.msh.org/news-events/stories/organizational-systems-strengthening-repositions-hiv-youth-program-for-continued>

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