USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

4th Sector Health

Partnering with Business Coalitions to Strengthen HIV Programs

The Alliance & Its Partners

National business coalitions for HIV are increasingly active in many countries throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. 4th Sector Health's alliance with the Mexican National Business Coalition for HIV (CONAES) evolved out of discussions with USAID and its partners to build upon previously supported private sector initiatives. With 26 multinational companies as members, CONAES's mission is to reduce stigma and discrimination related to HIV within the workplace. Previously, CONAES received significant technical support from USAID to assist companies to develop appropriate workplace policies related to HIV, stigma, and discrimination.

CONAES Consejo Nacional Empresarial sobre SIDA

CONAES's interest in partnering with 4th Sector Health stemmed from its desire to expand its mission and support its members in operationalizing their workplace policies into better, stronger HIV programs. As mentioned by CONAES's president, Mr. Luciano Zylberberg, "This alliance will help us to reposition CONAES to our membership and provide a broader range of benefits to our corporate members." For 4th Sector Health, partnering with a business coalition presented an opportunity to efficiently reach multiple private-sector partners with common interests. Additionally, this partnership model offered 4th Sector Health the opportunity to influence future programming and strategic interests of business organizations—an important objective given USAID's decreasing funding for health initiatives in Latin America. The partnership between 4th Sector Health and CONAES was designed to provide technical support to CONAES's members in HIV programming—with the expectation that individual companies would increase and/or expand their investments in HIV prevention strategies.

Alliance Activities

4th Sector Health and CONAES developed a call for proposals for Mexican organizations to provide technical support in HIV program development. Through a competitive selection process, Colectivo Sol, a local non-governmental organization (NGO) with experience in HIV stigma reduction was selected. The alliance scope of work included three activities to engage company support for improved HIV programming. In early 2010, Colectivo Sol conducted a baseline survey among key corporate decision makers to understand the overall contexts for members' HIV programs, profiles of their workforce, how policy influenced practice, how HIV programs were designed and managed, what funding HIV programs received, and how information was disseminated to employees. One-third of CONAES's members responded to the survey—representing over 41,000 employees. The results helped CONAES better understand its members' existing initiatives and identify companies interested in additional technical support for HIV programming. Prior to the 2010 survey, CONAES had little specific information on the nature and scope of its members' HIV programs and their investment levels. The survey revealed that companies interviewed focused the majority of their HIV activities on employees—only two companies extended their HIV awareness and prevention activities to the community as well. The survey also revealed that funding levels for HIV programs varied significantly among companies.

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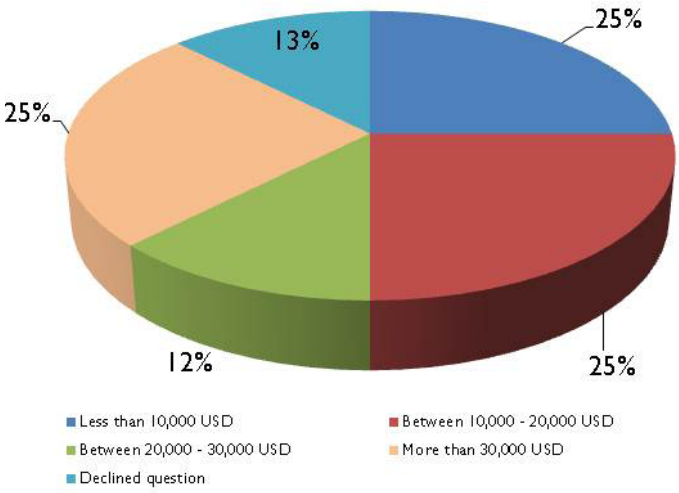
> Mr. Luciano Zylberber, President, CONAES

Colectivo Sol presented results from the survey to CONAES members at a meeting in May 2010 and discussed strategies for strengthening workplace programs related to HIV prevention, stigma, and discrimination. At the meeting, members Banamex, Unilever, and Bristol-Myers Squibb presented their HIV initiatives, program strengths and weaknesses, and areas for improvement and/or expansion.

Budget for HIV Activities among CONAES's Surveyed Companies



While the alliance concept was strategically aligned with CONAES's vision for the future, several unexpected situations inhibited progress. While Colectivo Sol successfully completed the first two phases of technical support to CONAES, they were unable to provide strong technical support in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of companies' existing HIV programs and identifying areas for further improvement. Meanwhile, CONAES suffered organizational capacity issues, losing its office space and part-time executive director. As a result, CONAES's capacity to convene its members was significantly reduced—and the organization's overall capacity was affected. In mid-2011, 4th Sector Health suspeneded its alliance activities with CONAES due to lack of response and effort from the organization as well as lack of a technical implementing partner to continue the implementation efforts.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

4th Sector Health's experience with the CONAES alliance reveals both the advantages and disadvantages of working with membership organizations. While business membership organizations can offer a credible entry-point to reach corporations, the organization itself must have strong leadership, institutional capacity, and sustainability. The organization must also demonstrate its ability to mobilize its members and be willing to advance new, strategic thinking on key issues. 4th Sector Health believes that the membership organization alliance model can be effective when these factors are addressed—and has pursued partnerships with other types of membership organizations. This partnership model represents a longer-term, strategic opportunity to align organizational mandates with key public health and development priorities.

4th Sector Health is a USAID-funded initiative to convene alliances and support exchanges in health in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is led by Abt Associates Inc., in collaboration with RTI International and Forum One Communications. For more information visit www.4thsectorhealth.com

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