

CRISIS CORPS VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION

Country:	Malawi
Project:	National Decentralization Project
Assignment Title:	HIV/AIDS Technical Assistant
Name of Organization:	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
Number Requested:	4
Start Date:	December 2007
Length:	12 months
Funding:	CC Appropriated

Project Background:

HIV/AIDS has affected all sectors of Malawian society, especially health and economic sectors. HIV/AIDS has put a tremendous burden on Malawi's weak health system and infrastructure and has created vast vacancies in the working age (15-39) populations that greatly affect the economy and its stability.

Currently, Malawi's HIV prevalence rate is 14% (National AIDS Commission 2005), but the rate varies from region and district, sex and age group. Women and children are especially vulnerable as cultural norms and practices promote gender inequality and low prioritization with children's needs and issues. In addition, recent statistics show that Malawi's youth HIV infection rate is steadily on the rise.

Due to the multifaceted nature of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, an effective institutional framework for the national HIV/AIDS response requires a multi-sectoral approach, which includes partnerships between government and all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, community based organizations (CBOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions, faith-based organizations (FBOs) and people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHAs). To be effective, there is a need for proper coordination, management and monitoring and evaluation of HIV/AIDS at all levels.

The government of Malawi created the position of Director of Planning and Development (DPD) for each of the 28 districts (who reside in the District Assemblies) to provide leadership in the implementation of planning and development services. Major duties of the DPD include:

- a) Ensures that an effective development strategy as well as monitoring and control systems for the Assembly are in place;
- b) Advises the Assembly on all planning and development matters;
- c) Initiates new Assembly development plans;
- d) Reviews existing Assembly plans and amends them to suit prevailing socio-economic needs;
- e) Develops new housing estates including their management;
- f) Reviews development standards in the district against national targets;
- g) Prepares project submissions and other documents to facilitate negotiations with essential donors;
- h) Ensures that all development projects are professionally executed

The Office of the DPD oversees offices in the District Assembly, including the Office of the District AIDS Coordinator (DAC) and the Office of the Director of Social Welfare (DSW). The major duty of the CCV will be to technically assist the DPD in those two offices. The DAC's function is to reach Malawi's HIV/AIDS infected and affected populations on a closer more appropriate level. The DAC's purpose is to coordinate the multi-sectoral response of HIV/AIDS at a district level and ensure that all stakeholders in the district work towards achieving government HIV/AIDS goals and objectives. Major duties include:

- a) To enhance knowledge and understanding of HIV/AIDS mainstreaming in a District;
- b) To prioritize activities for HIV/AIDS intervention in the District;
- c) To enlighten the Public Sector Institution on the guideline for the development of Proposal for submission to the National Aids Commission for funding;
- d) To assist Public Sector institutions in drafting Action Plans for HIV/AIDS activities at the district level.

The offices of the DAC and DSW compliment each other and frequently synergize. The major duties of the District Social Welfare Officer include:

- a) Initiate, plan and implement social welfare services at the district level;
- b) Source funding for implementing the planned activities;
- c) Conduct social research on social problems so as to enable either the department or member of the public to know prevalent issues/challenges for interventions;
- e) Coordinate and supervise social welfare activities undertaken by parastatals, NGOs, charitable organizations and other government departments at a district level;
- f) Refer clients as necessary;
- g) Make field visits, assessing and ascertaining needs of clients (i.e. orphans);
- h) Organize district commemoration of important events (i.e. Day of African Child).

Partner Background:

The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development is a government ministry that sits on Capitol Hill in Lilongwe (Malawi's capital). The Ministry's conception dates back to the creation of the government of Malawi and is primarily financially supported by the Government of Malawi. The Ministry's major goals and objectives include:

This is the second year of CCVs working with the Ministry of Local Government at District Assemblies throughout the country (6 six-month CCVs in FY06). These CCVs were based at the District Assembly offices in 6 districts assigned to the Office of the District AIDS Coordinator. With feedback and monitoring, the position was slightly changed. The CCV is now assigned for a one-year period to the Office of Planning and Development (DPD), assisting both the Office of the District AIDS Coordinator and the Office of Social Welfare that the DPD's office is responsible for.

Project Description:

Since 1994 the Government of Malawi has undertaken a number of reforms in the Civil Service in order to focus on its core activities in the Ministries and Department. One of the reforms among others is the Decentralization Program, which empowers the people at the grass-roots level to make decisions based on district needs.

In 1998 the Government adopted the decentralization policies and subsequently empowered the local Government through an act that created assemblies whose aim is to mobilize and to coordinate resources that will foster work as a *Local Government*. The Government's aim for creating assemblies was to empower the local people in making decisions that affect their District.

The two major challenges the assemblies are facing are:

1. Lack of resources (human, technical, financial, etc.); and
2. High prevalence rates of HIV and an ever-growing death rate due to AIDS.

It is for this reason that the assembly through the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development is requesting technical assistance in the form of twelve (12) Crisis Corps Volunteers (CCVs) who would work within the Office of the Director of Planning and Development, focusing on two of its HIV/AIDS support offices: the Office of the District Aids Coordinators and the Office of Social Welfare.

The need for technical assistance and capacity building at the District Assembly (District governmental body that now has the tasks of making decisions, dispersing monies, etc. at the district level due to decentralization) cannot be over emphasized.

Each CCV will be assigned to a different region and will work under the Director of Planning and Development at the district level.

Project Goals:

1. To build the capacity of the district assemblies through the offices that support national and district HIV/AIDS priorities, plans, programs and activities.
2. To empower CBOs, local NGOs and government organizations to effectively and efficiently mitigate the HIV/AIDS crisis in their respective districts.

Duties and Responsibilities:

- Provide HIV technical support to DPD, focusing on HIV/AIDS-related offices under the DPD (i.e. Office of District AIDS Coordinator (DAC) and Office of Social Welfare (DSW):
 - Provide guidance and technical assistance in areas of system strengthening, networking, HIV/AIDS related trainings (home-based care, community mobilization, nutrition, orphan care, etc), etc. Most districts will require an assessment first before scale-up and training of current systems, trainings and programs.
- Community Based Organization (CBO) Support:
 - Assist DAC/DSW in development/modification of district CBO registration guidelines and data bank for CBO registration;
 - Assist DAC/DSW in advising/training CBO staff in above requirements;
 - Assist DAC/DSW to develop capacity of district CBOs via program management, training (HIV/AIDS education, M&E, simple finance systems, etc.);
 - Assist DAC/DSW in developing systems for communication and networking between district CBOs, NGOs and other organizations. Most, if not all, districts have no or inadequate networks. The CCV will be creating networks and a plan for constant communications between public and private sectors. *Note: Some CBOs will be equipped with training resources while others will not. Training resources and manuals are available via the PEPFAR Coordinator and various NGOs/Governmental Institutions (Ministry of Health, Office of the President – HIV/AIDS and Nutrition, National AIDS Commission (NAC), etc.).*
- Assist DPD office and assembly in HIV/AIDS-related capacity:

- Creating/modifying HIV/AIDS-related M&E tools and simple finance spreadsheets;
- Train staff in the above tools as well as in HIV/AIDS education and information and other related areas;
- Liaise with district stakeholders (private and public sectors, government offices, NGOs, TAs, etc.) to gather information, input, and assess and prioritize program needs.

Note: The Decentralization Workshop PC hosted for the first input of Decentralization volunteers proved extremely useful and provided a venue to share specific work and volunteer-related experiences, challenges and successes as well as appraisal of the program thus far. All twelve CCVs will be required to attend this same sort of workshop during their service to benefit from this valuable exercise.

Other duties of the CCV:

- Build linkages to other PCVs' HIV/AIDS-related activities within their district, regardless of sector. This will include, but not be limited to, district and village programs such as Candlelight Services, prevention campaigns, VCT (Volunteer Counseling and Testing) activities/National HTC (HIV/AIDS Testing and Counseling) Week and training opportunities.

Mandatory Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree in public health, social sciences, community development, or related field.
- Experience working in HIV/AIDS related programs
- Experience in training individuals and groups
- Experience in capacity building, organizational development, etc.
- Strong management and strategic planning/program development skills.
- Experience in monitoring and evaluation programs and report writing.
- Previous experience working in sub-Saharan Africa, preferably in Malawi.
- Strong communication skills and ability to work in multicultural setting.

Desired Qualifications:

- Masters in public health, organizational development, development, or related field.
- Strong monitoring and evaluation skills and experience.
- Experience in conducting training workshops related to HIV/AIDS
- RPCV Malawi.
- Knowledge of Chichewa/Chitumbuka (depending on district placement).

Working Conditions:

Each CCV will work under the DPD at an assembly (an office building in town) in one of 12 prioritized districts out of Malawi's 28 districts. Currently, fully functioning district assemblies have approximately twenty (20) paid staff members with different responsibilities. The CCVs will be the only volunteers working under the DPDs. All district assembly working hours are Monday-Friday 7:30 am – 4:30 pm.

Most paid staff members speak English and when the CCVs go to the field, a staff member will be able to interpret for them if necessary.

Each CCV will be stationed in the district's main town at the assembly office. Electricity, treated water, telephones and computers are available, though not always fully functional. Most of the Districts have no Internet access but *some* towns have Internet cafes available, though usually at a steep price. Public transport is easily accessible as the offices are based in the "capitol" of each district. When the CCVs perform work in the field, a vehicle should be available if the distance requires.

Supervision and Reporting Requirements:

At least a month before the arrival of the CCV, the DPD, in conjunction with the District Commissioner (DC) and other necessary staff (e.g. DAC and DSW), will have developed a work plan with a timeline that must be submitted to both the Ministry of Local Government and PEPFAR Office and Peace Corps. This one-year work plan should encompass expectations of the work of the Volunteer in the specific district assembly where the Volunteer will be placed. Because assemblies across the country are at different levels of functioning and organization, priorities and needs will be different. The work plan should reflect the needs of the individual assemblies while staying within the overall parameters of this document. Upon arrival of the Volunteer, the DC, DPD along with other necessary staff will sit down with the Volunteer and review the developed work plan. *Note: The Volunteer will not be placed at an assembly without a work plan and timeline developed and passed on to the Ministry and Peace Corps.*

The Director of Planning and Development will supervise the Volunteer. The CCVs will be reporting via monthly progress reports and meetings with the DPD, which will contribute to the monthly DPD reports for the Assembly. Also, the CCV and District Commissioner should also be meeting, at least on a quarterly basis, if not more frequently.

In addition, an end of service report should be provided for the DPD and the Ministry of Local Government, including activities he/she worked with, achievements and challenges in his/her work and an evaluation of the respective District Assembly.

The CCV will also report to the PEPFAR Crisis Corps Coordinator and will be expected to abide by Peace Corps rules and regulations while working as a CCV in association with your organization. The CCV will be required to write detailed quarterly reports (from report template provided by PEPFAR) for the PEPFAR Crisis Corps Coordinator and a final report at the end of his/her service.

Housing and Living Conditions:

Each CCV will be provided with a house that has electricity and running water. As for size, this will vary from assembly to assembly but basically each will have a bedroom, living room and toilet/bath. The CCVs will live within the City/District.

The towns have stores, banks, restaurants, market, police station, hospital, and some have Internet access. Population of the district "capitols" vary from district to district, large districts like Blantyre in the south has approximately 1,115,000 persons, while Chitipa District has a drastically lower population of approximately 175,000 persons.

Because each CCV is located in the main town of the district, public transport is easily accessible. Malawi has two seasons: dry (April to October) and rainy (November to March). District

temperatures vary and range from very hot to moderately hot during the dry season (all districts have a dry season (April-October) and a rainy season (November-March).

Orientation:

The CCVs will be provided with a 10-day orientation/training at the Peace Corps office upon arrival in Malawi. The orientation will include the following sessions: medical, administrative policies and procedures, introduction to Peace Corps staff, project specific information, a solid culture and language introduction, safety and security, including inclusion in the EAP, and swearing-in. *Note: The Peace Corps does provide an orientation for all volunteers but it cannot stand alone. The value of an orientation from the host assembly is priceless and necessary. This is crucial to the success of the volunteer and must be done well.*

The CCVs will also have a *required* 1-2 week-long orientation upon arrival at their assigned assembly. The district assembly DPD's office will be responsible for this orientation and it must include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Introductions to all key players at the district assembly and in the boma (the township or district), including district assembly staff, DHO, DEHO, TAs, NGOs, CBOs, etc;
- Provide the Volunteer with an organogram of the district assembly, with staff member's titles, names and phone numbers;
- Inform the Volunteer on how the specific district assembly functions, including current challenges, strategies, visions, etc;
- Provide the volunteer with necessary documents to review, such as District Socio-Economic Plan (SEP), Village Action Plan (VAP), District Development Plan (DDP), etc.

Safety and Security:

Malawi is predominantly a peaceful and non-violent country. Crimes against people, especially foreigners, are not common, although it is on the rise. Care must be taken to reduce your risk, such as keeping your money and valuables close to you when traveling and keeping a low profile; backpackers tend to stand out and are a target for pickpockets. Always keep your home locked when away (preferably, if away for a long time, have someone stay in the house) and at night. Living in any foreign country requires caution and common sense. For example, the CCV should not wander around at night, especially alone.

Living and Working in Communities Affected by HIV/AIDS:

The AIDS pandemic strikes across all social strata in many Peace Corps countries. The loss of teachers has crippled education systems while illness and disability drains family income and forces governments and donors to redirect limited resources from other priorities. The fear and uncertainty AIDS causes has led to increased domestic violence and stigmatizing of people living with HIV/AIDS, isolating them from friends and family and cutting them off from economic opportunities. As a Peace Corps Crisis Corps Volunteer, you will confront these issues on a very personal level. It is important to be aware of the high emotional toll that disease, death, and violence can have on Volunteers. As you strive to integrate into your community, you will develop relationships with local people who might die during your service. Because of the AIDS pandemic, some volunteers will be regularly meeting with HIV positive people and working with training staff, office staff and host family members living with AIDS. Volunteers need to prepare themselves to embrace these relationships in a sensitive and positive manner. Likewise, malaria and malnutrition, motor vehicle accidents and other unintentional injuries, domestic violence and corporal punishment are problems a Volunteer may confront. You will need to anticipate these situations

and utilize supportive resources available throughout your training and service to maintain your own emotional strength, so that you can continue to be of service to your community.

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