

Health Education Section Capacity Strengthening Initiative



Overview

SSDI-Communication partnered with District Health Offices and other stakeholders in its 15 implementation districts (Lilongwe, Dowa, Kasungu, Karonga, Chitipa, Nkhonkhotakota, Salima, Mangochi, Balaka, Machinga, Zomba, Nsanje, Chikhwawa, Phalombe, and Mulanje) to implement district health promotion campaigns as a part of the Moyo ndi Mpamba (Life is precious) campaign platform. The district health campaigns, commonly referred to as roadshows, used an interactive approach to promote positive health behaviours and the utilization of health services to prevent and manage malaria, ensure maternal and child survival, promote good hygiene and nutrition, and the uptake of family planning and HIV prevention. The campaigns also supported the dissemination of health messages to community members on these six Essential Health Package (EHP) topics.

Former Deputy Minister for Health of Malawi, Mr. Chikumbutso Hiwa, M.P., and Former USAID Health Team Leader Mirriam Lutz, open the refurbished Health Education Section of the Ministry of Health in March of 2014.

Activities

SSDI-Communication conducted a capacity mapping and assessment exercise to identify capacity gaps and needs. Based on this assessment, SSDI-Communication carried out a comprehensive series of capacity strengthening activities in partnership with the HES.

SSDI-Communication supported the HES in the development of two national policy documents to support strategic and coordinated health promotion and SBCC: The Health Promotion Policy (launched in 2014), and the National Health Communication Strategy (launched in 2016). These two documents articulate and clarify HES guidance on health promotion and health-focused SBCC in Malawi.

The HES also received significant support from SSDI-Communication to strengthen its knowledge management activities. SSDI-Communication supported HES in refurbishing its physical resource center, provided new equipment such as computers and a scanner for cataloguing and accessing health promotion and education materials electronically, and provided training for staff on the use of new resource center equipment. The project also supported the HES in the creation of an online hub for health promotion: www.healthpromotion.gov.mw.

SSDI-Communication also supported the HES to strengthen its monitoring and coordination activities. After identifying a gap in district activity reporting, the project supported the creation of a new reporting form for District Health Promotion Officers, designed to ensure the capture of health promotion activities. SSDI-Communication also supported the refurbishment of HES's conference facilities and facilitated quarterly Essential Health Package Health Promotion Technical Working Group meetings, as well as monthly coordination meetings for HES staff.

Finally, SSDI-Communication provided an opportunity for training through the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs' Leadership in Strategic Health Communication workshop. A total of 17 District Health Promotion Officers and 5 HES officers were trained.



Launching the HES Audio Studio, Lilongwe.

Achievements

With the support of SSDI-Communication, the HES has made significant strides to increase its capacity in SBCC during the past five years:

- 23 HES staff trained in Leadership in Strategic Health Communication.
- HES conference facilities, physical resource center, and recording studio refurbished.
- Online hub for health promotion in Malawi launched and maintained by HES.
- Health Promotion Policy created and launched.
- Inaugural National Health Communication Strategy launched.

Lessons Learned

The HES has shown strong and responsive leadership in health communication and has greatly grown its capacity to lead Malawi in the area of social and behavior change communication and health promotion.

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