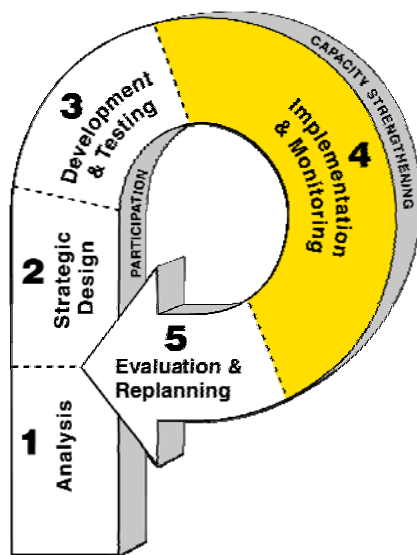


## 7.0 STEP 4: IMPLEMENTATION, & MONITORING

### Learning Objectives

By the end of chapter 7.0, the reader will be able to:

1. Select IPC agents.
2. Train and foster IPC skills
3. Implement a management structure
4. Hire other program staff



### Selecting/Hiring IPC Agents

The decision to use Interpersonal Communicators or Peer Educators should be based on the characteristics of the high risk group and on programmatic goals. Interpersonal communicators (IPCs) are individuals who organize and conduct IPC sessions with selected target populations. They are individuals whose opinions are respected among their peer target group members, and who are curious, self-confident, sociable and energetic. IPCs typically have a higher level of education than the target population, although ideally they should be the same age and gender of those people with whom they interact. Most IPCs are paid

employees, however, there are some circumstances in which IPCs may volunteer their services.

Peer Educators (PEs) are members of the target population in question, or have close associations to it. For example, if the IPC program is targeting sex workers, peer educators may be current or former sex workers. Youth are particularly receptive to peer educator interventions. Peer Educators usually work as volunteers or for financial incentives like transport money or profits from condoms sales. In some cases Peer Educators are paid.

Target group influencers can also be selected as IPCs for a given program. Target group influencers are not members of a given high risk group, but they may have close associations or regular contact with them in work or social settings. For example, brothel owners or managers may be target group influencers for commercial sex workers, while union executives or mechanics

might be target group influencers for truckers. They wield influence among target group members because of their close relationship with them and can, therefore, act as agents of change within this group. With proper training, target group influencers can work as IPCs for the target group in question.

IPC Agents are integral to program success. Their incorporation into IPC activities serves several fundamental programmatic functions.

1) *Breaking of Barriers*

In most Behavior Change Communication (BCC) programs, barriers to behavior change are identified. Barriers may include misconceptions or incorrect information about a subject (e.g. mosquitoes can transmit HIV). Other barriers might include lack of sufficient services in a given geographic area or the perception that such services do not welcome certain target group members. Appropriate barriers could be discussed with the IPCs and reasons for these beliefs identified and corrected with proper information and/or behavioral actions.

2) *Diffusion of Information and Knowledge*

IPCs can be ongoing agents of change, disseminating information to peer groups and modeling new behaviors. They are chosen for their leadership, ability to actively engage participants in discussion, and their likelihood for acceptance among target group members. Their ongoing involvement will better address barriers and is more likely to effect a lasting change in behavior than a one-time intervention.

Selecting the IPCs is a challenge since the job requires a variety of skills as well as credibility with peers. The IPCs must have good communication skills, be able to quickly absorb information about HIV and AIDS, and have a good rapport with the target population. Careful selection of IPCs can reduce turn-over and the costs associated with training replacements.

**Characteristics to look for in IPCs:**

- Established links with the target population
- Respected by the target population
- Literate
- Comfortable speaking in front of others
- Expresses interest in doing something about HIV
- Has the means and time to volunteer
- Motivated by concern for the health of others
- Energetic
- Available and accessible to the target population
- Has effective interpersonal communication skills
- Has facilitating and moderating skills
- Has natural leadership skills
- Accepted by their peers
- Self-confidence
- Possess good organizational skills
- Ability to listen to other without bias or assumptions
- Ability to speak local languages

### **What steps should be followed to select IPCs?**

1. *Establish clear selection criteria*

Determining the requirements and qualifications for IPCs in advance will help human resource personnel and program planners identify desirable candidates. It is important that all program staff, both in the field and in the office, agree on the selection criteria to ensure uniformity in the selection process.

2. *Determine the number of IPCs required*

This number should be large enough to sufficiently reach target populations, but small enough to be cost-effective. Suggested ratios vary from one IPC per six target group members for high density interventions to one IPC per 50 to 100 target group members in typical interventions.

3. *Define the process for the identification of IPCs*

Determine the best locations for job or volunteer advertisements so that applicants will be the most likely to fit into the selection criteria. Potential candidates can also be identified by having discussions with target populations, observing target group interactions, or having discussions with stakeholders.

If IPCs get discouraged working on their own, their morale may be increased if they work in teams. When working in teams, IPCs can monitor each other, offer support when needed, and complement each others skills.

### **Characteristics of Effective IPC Facilitators**

A profound characteristic of IPC activities has to do with the role of the interpersonal communicator who should be a skilled facilitator rather than a didactic educator. The most effective facilitators inspire confidence and trust, they infuse the room with energy and passion for the process, are adaptable and authentic, are nonjudgmental and outcome driven, but are detached from the results. One of the most important characteristics of an IPC facilitator is his/her ability to move the audience members forward in their thinking. This helps to facilitate the behavior change process.

### **Characteristics of an Effective Facilitator**

- Fulfilling the role of a guide not a leader
- Establishing boundaries for participation and possible conflict
- Cultivating an atmosphere of respect
- Understanding personal learning styles and adult learning principles
- Understanding group dynamics
- Building group confidence
- Guiding and managing group interaction
- Understanding value differences
- Organizing content, properly structuring activities and processes
- Active listening, paraphrasing, observing, clarifying and elaborating
- Interpreting verbal and non-verbal behavior
- Promoting participation, inclusion
- Analyzing accurately and rapidly
- Organizing, summarizing and connecting data
- Thinking and speaking clearly
- Staying focused on the goal of each exercise and achieving its desired outcome
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Maintaining a good sense of humor – creating a light hearted atmosphere

### **IPC Agent to Participant Ratio**

An interactive conversation between an IPC agent and an individual member of a target population is undoubtedly the most effective form of communication.

Given cost constraints, working with small groups of six to ten is more cost-effective. With groups any larger, the participatory opportunities become diluted, and individuals are less likely to truly make their own personal risk assessments and risk reduction plans. Street theater performances may be the exception to this rule, however, audience members should be divided into small groups for post-performance discussions.

## **Deciding to work with Paid or Volunteer IPC Agents**

There are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches, and the decision should be based upon prior experience, the demands of the job, and the context of the work. Work outputs tend to be greater when incentives are provided. Paid, full-time IPC agents can be more motivated and easier to manage and supervise than those volunteering. Volunteers also tend to have a high turnover rate due to boredom and lack of income. Even if IPC agents are not paid, other incentives such as transport reimbursement, training certificates, letters of recognition, uniforms, and free meals or snacks can also provide motivation.

## **IPC Training**

Training for all IPC staff will orient them on the program goals, messages and activities, their roles and responsibilities, and the most up to date, accurate information on HIV/AIDS. Regardless of the previous experience of the IPC agents, a training will ensure that everyone is beginning with the same information and on the same page. Supplementing an initial one or two week training at the beginning of the intervention with several short trainings early on in the program can be an effective way to bring staff up to speed without bombarding them with too much information at one time. These staggered trainings should be focused on skills development, including knowing how to engage target populations, getting them to personalize issues, focus on personal risk assessments, and inspire behavior change. Shorter trainings can be focused on individual themes or messages, and would also provide time for IPCs to practice in the field.

## **Developing IPC Agent Skills**

It should not be assumed that IPC agents will automatically have the skills to work with various target groups. It is important to foster these skills in their initial participatory training sessions. Sending IPC staff to visit IPC field sites is a good means of motivation and inspiration. It is also a good way for IPC agents to see what might be expected of them, and provide them with real-life examples of IPC behavior to emulate.

## **IPC Facilitation Techniques**

The following include a variety of IPC facilitation techniques. Understanding and mastering these skills is fundamental to successfully facilitating an IPC program.

### *Welcoming*

People entering groups for the first time feel apprehensive and nervous. They are not sure what is going to happen and wonder what they are doing to be asked to do. The sooner the facilitator can help them to overcome their uncertainties and feel comfortable and relaxed, the better.

### *Reflection (Asking Reflecting Questions)*

A key to good IPC facilitation lies in the facilitator's ability to provide the space for people to contemplate what is happening to them, to stop and reflect upon past

events in a new way. The role of the facilitator is not to give advice or opinions, it is about allowing members to explore their own problems and realize what is stopping them from making the necessary changes to protect themselves and those around them. The facilitator should be armed with a series of general reflecting questions that will push the participants to reflect and come to their own conclusions. This process insures that the motivation for change comes from the participant and NOT the facilitator. Participants must know that the problem is theirs and that the facilitator is not there to solve it for them.

### *Restating*

Restating differs from reflecting in that the facilitator is repeating and or paraphrasing what the participant has said in order to understand the facts, to be clear about what the participant is saying or asking, or to emphasize a point to the group.

### *Validation*

To create an atmosphere of inclusion for all group members, the facilitator should validate ideas and opinions of participants, whether or not he/she or other group members agree with those ideas. The facilitator can support the wishes, beliefs, ideas of the participant by restating what the person has said, proposing a reflecting question to the participant, or writing the item on the board (if part of a brainstorming session).

### *Self Disclosure*

In some cases, self disclosure can be helpful in building the relationship between the facilitator and the members. By including a few personal anecdotes or stories the facilitator can break silence and or generate discussion about a specific topic. The disclosure also creates connection between among group members.

One of the challenges of being a facilitator is to helping members focus on their own behavior such as changes they want to make or strategies they will use to make those changes. In all those situations, members are making decisions. The more determined they are in making these decisions, the more likely the changes made will be sustained. If the facilitator and not the participant becomes the problem solver, the sustainability of these changes decreases. For this reason, the facilitator should rely upon self disclosure of group members, but should not push any one group member to disclose before he/she is ready.

Consider incorporating a training module on each of the following staff skills.

- *Overcoming stigma towards high risk groups.*

Those who are working in direct contact with the selected target populations need to examine their personal attitudes and feelings toward the high risk groups and the risk behaviors they present. It is important that the IPC agents do not harbor any prejudice toward high risk groups, many of whom are accustomed and sensitive to such stigma. Incorporating a values assessment or other stigma related activities into IPC trainings can be helpful in overcoming any preconceived opinions.

- *Desensitize attitudes toward sexual issues.*  
Carrying out IPC activities will most certainly involve talking about sexual issues which can be embarrassing and uncomfortable for people, especially if there are cultural taboos against talking about such topics. In addition to sexual intercourse, IPC agents may also have to discuss transactional sex, youth sexuality, sexual violence, condom use, multiple partners, anal intercourse, and gender issues. It will take practice for IPCs to become comfortable talking openly and frankly about sex and high risk behaviors, especially with sexual values that are different than their own.
  
- *Sensitize attitudes toward gender issues*  
Because traditional gender roles and culturally constructed ideas of power dynamics for males and females can create barriers to the adoption of healthy and protective behaviors, it is important to sensitize attitudes toward gender issues. This can be one of the most difficult goals to accomplish because gender attitudes are often deeply, culturally ingrained. Defining gender and developing training activities that directly challenge stereotypes through discussion are essential to the successful development of IPC agent skills. Trainers should assist the participants through reflective questioning to help them become aware of how gender impacts behavior.
  
- **Listening Skills**  
In good communication, listening is every bit as important—if not more important—than speaking. Most people can hear without much effort, but active listening requires skill. Active listening requires our full attention and involves reflection and response to the information we receive, while hearing only engages our auditory sense, not necessarily our minds. A discussion of good communication skills and active listening is important in IPC trainings.
  
- *Flexible management structure*  
A responsive management structure that adjusts based on monitoring of field needs is important. This requires good two-way communication between the field and central managers. Flexibility also allows for alterations to be made in program implementation based on evidence that comes directly from the field.

## **Refresher trainings**

When follow up trainings supplement trainings held at the beginning of the program, drop out rates are decreased and staff feel revitalized and reoriented in their work. Training content should be based on input from IPCs. Consider these elements when planning refresher trainings:

1. Obstacles to effective IPC (based on IPCs' field experiences)
2. Reinforcement of previous learning

### 3. Fill gaps in knowledge and skills

## Supervision of IPCs

Supervisors support IPCs by providing feedback during regular meetings that can help overcome obstacles, fill in information gaps, increase motivation and help improve the quality of interventions. One full time supervisor for every 20 IPCs is a more common ratio.

#### 1. *Structure of Supervision*

In a pyramid management structure, the largest group of employees makes up the bottom block of the pyramid (e.g. 500 IPCs). These people would be in contact with 25 supervisors who make up the next block of the pyramid. These 25 supervisors might answer to 5 site managers who would be overseen by the core management team at the top of the pyramid. Identified obstacles would be brought up the chain, and new strategies and solutions would be sent from the top down.

#### 2. *Help with monitoring*

As the connection between the field and the central planners, supervisors can help with collecting and interpreting monitoring data to ensure that it is accurate and in line with field expectations.

- *Provide basic management skills*  
The ability to manage others is an essential skill for supervisors. They need to be able to listen, provide constructive criticism, and seek advice from senior managers when necessary.
- *Spot checks*  
The most common supervision technique is carrying out weekly or monthly meetings with IPCs. Observing IPCs at work is a more useful strategy and can help supervisors assess target group participation and ensure that the IPCs are carrying out their responsibilities.
- *Peers help peers*  
Supervision can also be carried out by fellow IPCs. Working in teams allows IPCs to provide mutual support and constructive criticism. Linking new IPCs with veterans is a good way to provide orientation and supervision. By demonstrating the participatory techniques, supervisors can provide a positive model for IPCs.

#### **Organizing Supervision**

- Identify number of supervisors needed
- Select the supervisors (may be former IPCs)
- Determine supervisory methods
  - individual, small, or large group meetings
  - observations
  - spot checks
- Determine frequency of supervision
- Prepare a checklist or other tools for supervisors
- Train supervisors

## **Hiring Other Staff**

In addition to hiring quality IPCs and or PEs, additional staff members such as program managers or coordinators, researchers, and trainers may be crucial to the success of your program. The following outline the key skills to look for when hiring additional staff. Focusing on these skills will help ensure programmatic success.

### **Key Skills**

1. *Management skills*

It is important that those with strong management experience are engaged to ensure that all the component parts of the intervention are well structured, managed, supervised and budgets controlled.

2. *Research skills*

Because research provides the backbone for IPC program decision making, a strong and versatile research team is needed. A team should work quickly and creatively to interpret and utilize research findings and communicate these to decision makers to adjust program design.

3. *Training Skills*

Trainers who train IPC agents should be enthusiastic, dynamic, and comfortable working in a participatory format. Trainers should be highly skilled at moving groups forward in their learning process. Those with at least 2 years training experience are preferred.

### **Structuring a Research Team**

1. *Research Manager*

The chief researcher manages the entire team and provides the link to program management. This person is ultimately responsible for interpreting results and presenting to program planners. He/she should be of senior level.

2. *Interdisciplinary Research Team*

Employing several research staff with the abilities to: develop protocols, design, manage, and conduct both quantitative and qualitative research is necessary.

3. *Field Researcher at IPC sites*

Large-scale interventions with multiple program sites will necessitate the presence of a field researcher who could collect and monitor data relevant to a particular study site

### **Research Contractors**

When hiring research contractors, ensure they have a successful track record:

- Look for researchers with experience preparing socio-behavioral research
- Request documentation of prior work including written reports.
- Contact references
- Solicit proposals from more than one research group
- Look for researchers with previous experience with the selected target populations
- Establish that no external use can be made of the results
- Make sure the contracted facilitators have prior experience with the research methods

## **Evidence-based Decision Making**

As much as possible, IPC program planners should base their programmatic decisions on evidence elicited from research. Formative research allowed you to effectively design program content. As discussed earlier, developing a dashboard for your program monitoring and evaluation will allow you to accurately monitor and evaluate to determine which aspects of your program are going smoothly, and which components need improvement. M&E will also provide you with information about the impact of your intervention on the desired behavior.

### ***EXAMPLE: Research identifies barriers to behavior change***

In one Indian port town, HIV infection rates among men were 10 times the national rate, but few men went for VCT despite aggressive IPC promotion of services and accessibility of clinics. Monitoring research indicated that men did not consider themselves to be at risk and did not understand the benefits of VCT. The IPC messages were revised to improve risk perception and the advantages of early testing were promoted. As a result, male demand for testing increased.

## **What is monitoring?**

Monitoring tracks the progress of an intervention. Monitoring your IPC program may include continually measuring behaviors, behavioral determinants, and programmatic indicators. For example, it may take the form of a brief, monthly output tracking survey. Sample indicators potentially could include:

- Number of people contacted by IPCs
- Recall of messages
- Number of people accessing services (VCT, STI)
- Percentage who used a condom at last sex

Monitoring systems should be designed during the strategic planning phase of program development. Monitoring systems that provide regular feedback from the field to program planners, managers, or researchers will be able to continuously adjust program activities to better focus on and impact target populations.