



AVAC ADVOCACY FELLOWS PROGRAM

An Evaluation: 2009 - 2019

September 2020

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Front cover photo:

2012 Fellowship Graduates, AVAC Archive

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ACRONYMS

ACT	Advocacy Coalition Team
AGYW	Adolescent girls and young women
APHA	Advocacy for Prevention of HIV and AIDS
ART	Antiretroviral therapy
ARV	Antiretroviral drugs
CASPR	Coalition to Accelerate & Support Prevention Research
COMPASS	Coalition to build Momentum, Power, Activism, Strategy & Solidarity
COP	Country Operational Plans
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease identified in 2019
CRAG	Cure Advocacy Group
CSC	Community Score Card
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EDA	Exploratory Data Analysis
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FSW	Female sex workers
GBV	Gender based violence
GCM	Global Campaign for Microbicides
HEPS	Health Promotion and Social Development
HIV	Human immunodeficiency Virus
IDI	In-depth Interview
KII	Key Informant Interviews
KP	Key populations
LMIC	Low- and-Middle-Income Countries
LTFU	Lost to follow up
M&E/MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
MOH	Ministry of Health
MSM	Men who have sex with men
MSW	Male sex workers
NASCOP	National AIDS and STI Control Programme
OGAC	Office of the U.S. Global Aids Coordinator
PEP	Post-exposure prophylaxis
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief
PLHIV	People living with HIV
PMM-HIV	Prevention Market Manager
PrEP	Pre-exposure prophylaxes
SCM	Success Case Method
SIMS	PEPFAR Site Improvement Monitoring Systems
TAC	Treatment Action Campaign
TasP	Treatment as Prevention
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNAIDS	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
VMMC	Voluntary male medical circumcision
WHO	World Health Organisation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Background

The AVAC Advocacy Fellows Program was founded in 2009. In the subsequent decade, there have been ten cadres of Advocacy Fellows with a total of 77 Fellows from 14 countries, the vast majority of whom have been selected from East and Southern Africa.

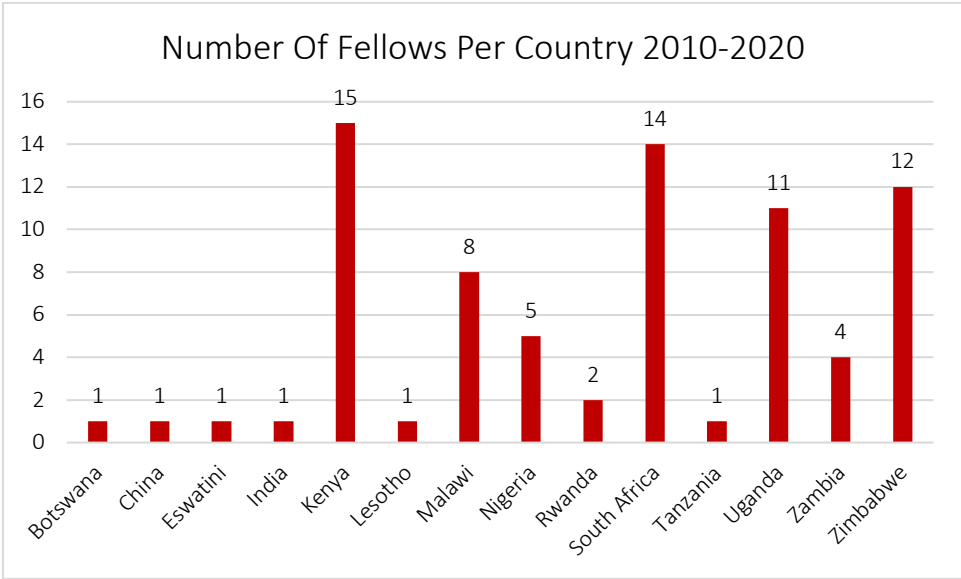


Chart 1: Number of Fellows per country 2010-2020: Data from AVAC n=77

AVAC’s goal with the Advocacy Fellowship is:
“To expand and strengthen the capacity of civil society advocates and organizations to monitor, support and help shape HIV prevention research and rapid rollout of new effective interventions in Low and Middle Income Countries (LMIC) with high HIV burdens.”

The objectives of the program are:

- To accelerate research to rollout of proven new HIV prevention options to policy and implementation so as to help people access options to reduce HIV infections
- To nurture and expand the pool of ‘fearless’ HIV prevention advocates willing to engage with the research, influence policy, watchdog, capitalize on funding, ensure community voices are heard
- To create synergies between advocates and communities nationally and internationally to ensure that the global HIV prevention reflects community and national priorities

This is done by identifying and strengthening emerging and mid-career ‘champions’ to help build the civil society capacity to shape the prevention research agenda and influence how fast new interventions move into policy and programs.

Evaluation Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the impact and contributions – both intended and unintended – that the AVAC Advocacy Fellows Program has had on HIV prevention in the Fellows’ countries and communities, in order to consider whether the Fellowship is achieving its objectives and provide recommendations that help guide decisions for the future of the Program.

Key Evaluation Questions

1. What was the Alumni and Host experience of the fellowship?
2. What have been the long-term impacts of the Fellows Program on its Alumni?
3. How has the program enabled Alumni to contribute to long-term impacts at the organizational and community levels (both at Host organizations and at organizations Alumni have worked at post-fellowship)?
4. What contributions to the HIV prevention landscape have Alumni made as a result of their Fellowship opportunity?
5. What is the future direction of the Fellowship Program?

Scope

The evaluation was undertaken between March and September 2020 and engaged the Alumni body and Host organizations in all 14 countries where they originate. It also targeted Fellowship decision-makers and implementers by engaging with AVAC staff, board members, advisors and donors.

In the four case study countries – Kenya, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe – evaluators spoke with Alumni, their Host organizations and key stakeholders (as identified by AVAC and evaluation participants).

DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND DATA**Design**

This is a beneficiary impact evaluation which seeks to review the effect that the Fellowship Program had on participants and stakeholders of the project, and the surrounding HIV prevention landscape. It measures the outcomes of the Fellowship, as perceived by beneficiaries and stakeholders, and the changes that resulted from those outcomes and presents recommendations arising from participants’ experiences.

Methodology

The Evaluators recognize that any single evaluation methodology struggles to capture all of the complexities of how programs operate in the real world. Accordingly, this evaluation used a mixed methods approach, in which all relevant stakeholders and data sources were consulted, through both qualitative and quantitative research, to arrive at a holistic understanding of the program’s impact by answering the evaluation questions.

Due to COVID-19, all evaluation activity took place virtually, through online and telephonic meetings, interviews and analysis. Additionally, data was collected in ‘waves’, creating opportunities to review the situation after each

wave was complete, and allowing for flexibility in the evaluation strategy should global events change or create barriers to participation.

The evaluation design itself took a participatory approach by inviting a selection (identified by AVAC) of Fellows, Alumni, AVAC management team members and AVAC board members to participate in the co-creation of the evaluation framework and tools during the inception phase and in the authentication of the evaluation findings. This was achieved through the use of an advisory group made up of the key stakeholders mentioned above, who reviewed the inception report, the data collection instruments and the final evaluation findings.

Limitations

The Evaluators have identified a number of limitations pertinent to this evaluation including, as mentioned above, the imposition of COVID-19 restrictions which prevented the evaluation from taking place in-country. This has restricted the opportunity for organic ‘chance’ or opportunistic discussions with unplanned stakeholders. Other methodological limitations which readers should keep in mind included:

- The majority of perspectives are weighted towards Fellows’ perceptions
- The retrospective nature of the 10-year evaluation affects participants’ recall and experience
- There is a risk of bias by evaluation respondents’ who continue to have a relationship with AVAC
- There is no formal baseline data available which limits the effectiveness of an impact evaluation
- Attribution of Program impacts at personal, community or societal levels is problematic as it would require drawing causal links and explanatory conclusions between observed changes and specific interventions
- Attribution of the Fellowship Program to improve capacity or performance of the Fellow is also problematic as such change is usually based on multiple interventions

(See p105, Appendix B, for list of limitations and mitigating actions)

Participants and Data

Specific primary and secondary data collection methodologies and the tools used included:

- Desk Review of Existing Documents and Data: AVAC Website, Reports and Published Materials
- Interviews: Interview Guides
- Surveys: Survey Questionnaire distributed via Survey Monkey
- Focus Group Discussion (FGD): Focus Group Discussion Guide

(See p84, Appendix A, for data collection instruments)

Since the evaluation is exploratory, qualitative research that seeks to develop an understanding of the experience of a specific, small population; the entire participant body (Fellow, Alumni and Host) was targeted and sent the online survey. Interviews and FGD participants were drawn from purposive sampling, via input from AVAC or through an ‘opt in’ link on the survey. To ensure the evaluation’s independence, AVAC shared their contact database with Evaluators who sent out surveys and requested key informant interviews. Documents for the Desk review were selected by AVAC, due to the practical considerations of engaging with such a large volume of documentation. In this way, evaluators engaged with the following relevant stakeholders:

- Implementors – Program Director and Managers
- AVAC Decision-makers – AVAC Director and Board, Program Director and Managers
- Participants – Current Fellows, Alumni, Representatives of Host Organizations
- Partners – Funders and Partner CSOs

(See p16, for further details on respondents)

For the desk review, AVAC provided a large sample of documents that included some of the work plans, interim reports, and final reports for each of the Fellows from 2012 to 2019, advocacy materials and final deliverables, such as policy briefs, produced by the Fellows, Fellowship conference abstracts and presentations dating from 2010 to 2019, application forms and information packets, TORs and an Evaluation Tool used by the Independent Review Committees for Fellow selection and a survey on the application process. Secondary Data on the four focus countries was also sourced by the Evaluators through accessing publicly available information on country specific HIV landscapes.

(See p111, Appendix B, for key data sources and sampling methodology)

Data Analysis

Given the various sources of data, this evaluation employed a mixed methods approach to analysis which included:

1. Exploratory Data Analysis (EDA)
2. Thematic Analysis of qualitative data
3. Basic Statistical Analysis of numeric responses from the survey
4. Kirkpatrick Model assessment of the training element of the Fellowship Program

KEY FINDINGS

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The findings of the evaluation reflect a huge body of data with 100s of data points and interview notes taken during 30 hours of interviews. They reveal the views of the various stakeholders over the life of the program. The findings have been analysed and collated by evaluation question, to ensure that each question is fully answered.

Evaluation Question 1:

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What was the Alumni and Host experience of the fellowship?

Overall, the Fellowship experience meets Fellows' expectations, the Program is beneficial to both Hosts and Fellows and the mentoring from AVAC stands out as a highlight.

Through online surveys and interviews, Alumni and Host organisations reported their experience in regard to their expectation of and satisfaction with the Program, the challenges they faced, and the significant benefits they perceived, both personally and professionally and to the HIV landscape as a whole.

Evaluators employed basic statistical analysis of survey data, as well as thematic analysis, to conclude that participants viewed the Fellowship Program as beneficial. In particular, the biggest takeaways for Fellows when assessing the value of the Fellowship are the financial support they receive; the access they get to key meetings/decision makers and the technical support they receive from AVAC. Hosts and Fellows concur that the project the Fellow carries out during their Fellowship year influences both the Host organisation and the wider HIV environment in each country. However, there were widely differing experiences of the Fellowship and this was largely attributed to challenges in the relationship with the Host Organisation. This relationship was seen to make or break the Fellowship experience. The feedback provided also raised some considerations regarding the programmatic approach which outlined some questions for AVAC to consider.

Evaluation Question 2:

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What have been the long-term impacts of the Fellows Programme on its Alumni?

Valuable connections brought about by new or extended networks and increased networking and communication skills were identified as the most common and profitable long-term benefit for Alumni.

When evaluating the long-term impacts of the program, the assessment used surveys and interviews to measure those that endured into the Alumni's post-Fellowship career by considering participants' perceptions concerning:

- skills and knowledge that were built
- the effect the Fellowship continues to have on their current advocacy/work/career
- professional benefits that were accessed as a result of the experience
- personal and professional growth that has been ongoing post-Fellowship
- networks that were accessed and how these benefited professional careers
- relationships that have endured post-Fellowship

Evaluators used statistical and thematic analysis to determine that the majority of respondents have experienced ongoing professional successes in the field of advocacy which they attribute, in part, to the knowledge and skills they developed, the support they received from AVAC and Host organizations and networks they accessed through the Fellowship. There was a much wider disparity in experience and in satisfaction with ongoing relationships which points to AVAC needing to promote Alumni partnership in the Fellowship Program to a greater extent.

Evaluation Question 3:

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How has the program enabled alumni to contribute to long-term impacts at the organizational and community levels (both at host organizations and at organizations alumni have worked at post-fellowship)?

Based on the evidence provided Evaluators conclude that, in its current form, the approach the Fellowship program takes has enabled Fellows to influence outcomes at organizational and community levels.

Evaluators used surveys, interviews and focus group discussions to gauge whether Hosts and Alumni identified shifts at organizational and community levels (during and post-Fellowship) and furthermore recognized Fellows' contributions to these shifts. In particular, they sought to identify whether Fellows had affected their organizations and communities by shaping policy/agenda, increasing knowledge or skills, and/or influencing structural changes.

Again, statistical and thematic analysis was employed to conclude that impacts were enabled in three ways:

1. The foundational work that AVAC does through mentorship improves Fellows' confidence, ambition, scientific knowledge and technical abilities.
2. The Fellow's actual project activities shape organizational agendas which, in turn, affects communities and national priorities.
3. The link to AVAC provides recognition, legitimacy and access (specifically to AVAC networks) which allows Fellows to carry out their projects successfully.

Evaluation Question 4.

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What contributions to the HIV prevention landscape have alumni made as a result of their Fellowship opportunity?

Alumni perceive that they had contributed to a variety of changes to the HIV prevention landscape in their home countries.

Surveys, interviews and focus group discussions again provided data to Evaluators with which they measured Fellows, Hosts, and AVAC's perceptions of:

- changes to the wider prevention landscape in each country
- Fellows influencing these outcomes through their Fellowship and ongoing work

Country changes were confirmed by referencing evidence provided by public sources, such as Avert.org.

Evaluators were able to conclude, through statistical and thematic analysis of the data provided and by cross-referencing publicly available records, that the HIV landscapes in each country considered have certainly undergone momentous changes during the decade of the Fellowship Program. Although it is problematic to attribute these significant changes directly to the Program, there are certainly clear cases of contribution, including the Ugandan and Kenyan case studies. Overall, the activities of the Fellowship can be seen to support an enabling environment for the development of HIV treatment, care and prevention.

Evaluation Question 5.

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What is the future direction of the Fellowship Program?

According to participants, the AVAC Advocacy Fellows Program remains relevant but could be improved by taking on various recommendations.

Through surveys, interviews and FGDs, Evaluators measured:

- respondents' perceptions of the program's success over time, collating answers with those provided in previous questions to determine whether its objectives are still valid
- respondents' recommendations based on their experiences

Using statistical and thematic analysis, the evaluation confirmed that whilst the Program remains relevant in every country, there are areas for consideration and a number of recommendations for future Program implementation, which were grouped by common theme. The strongest calls were for:

1. Increased Alumni engagement and support: Alumni represent an unrealized potential and could play an essential role in fulfilling program objectives by:
 - a) Formally including Alumni in the selection and support of new Fellows
 - b) Ensuring AVAC initiates and continues to engage with Alumni equally and transparently post-Fellowship
 - c) Assisting and supporting Alumni to formally work together in networks and coalitions
2. Improved Host engagement: Possible changes to the Host approach need to be considered, including how the Host is engaged by AVAC, how communication between all the partners takes place, and how the Fellow fits into the Host organization or the Host 'buys in' to the Fellowship.

There were several other recommendations concerning management of the Fellowship project itself, Fellow selection into the Program, strategy and coordination within the local context, the scope of the Fellowship, Host-related considerations, and issues brought out through the Case Studies. Evaluators have highlighted where AVAC should consider focusing its attention and have used some of the ideas when shaping their own recommendations.

CONCLUSIONS

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The AVAC Advocacy Fellows Program is beneficial to participants, and has durable impacts on the Fellow, both personally and professionally. By influencing the Fellow at a personal level, the Fellowship contributes to

changes in the HIV landscape at organizational, community and national levels. The Fellowship Program therefore remains relevant in all countries of operation but should take on certain recommendations in order to build on the significant gains already evidenced and increase its effectiveness in each context.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Evaluators concluded that the program had many reputable achievements in its first decade, but that there remained opportunities in all the countries AVAC currently works to continue or advance the program by updating the Program design in several ways:

1. Promoting Alumni partnership in the Fellowship Program: The Evaluators recommend that the future of the AVAC Fellowship program must include a mechanism to engage Alumni in the selection, management and support of Fellows. Additionally, there should be steps taken to build the Alumni network, particularly in countries where several Alumni exist. These developments should be driven by the Alumni themselves so as to create a genuine partnership.
2. Enhancing the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework: The evaluators recommend the use of monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) tools, like theory of change and log frame, in future programming. When done in a participatory and reflective manner, this would support ongoing analysis of the program and benefit AVAC and its Fellows in learning from their experiences. Evaluators recommended engaging MEL and Knowledge Management consultants to assist in this process.
3. Integrating the Fellowship into national agendas and frameworks: Evaluators question whether AVAC's goal with the Fellowship is developing leaders or influencing the wider HIV landscape, suggesting that there are gains to be made by consolidating some of the advocacy wins the Fellowship has already made to shape broader changes at national and regional levels, especially in countries with several Alumni. Practical ideas and questions are raised in this regard.
4. Promoting Host partnerships in the Fellowship Program: Evaluators suggest several ways of investing in Host organizations in order to level the playing field and ensure more equitable access to the Fellowship experience for Fellows, as well as, improving Host accountability and 'buy in' to the Program.
5. Supporting Post-Fellowship Development: Evaluators investigate ways in which the knowledge and skills participants gain during the Fellowship can be capitalized on by Alumni post-Fellowship.
6. Increasing Transparency: Evaluators recommend that a decade in, the time is ripe to increase the visibility of the Program in order to create a level of transparency that may have become hidden amidst all the complexities and improve the targeted reach of the Program.
7. Enhancing Project Management: Evaluators felt that the project process itself requires some consideration, specifically in regard to time/workload project management and suggest some ideas and questions to consider in order to mitigate the sense of frustration that was felt by respondents who had incomplete projects or faced difficulty with meeting timelines and budgets.

1. INTRODUCTION

a. Program Description

The AVAC Advocacy Fellows Program was founded in 2009. It was conceptualized and launched in collaboration with the Global Campaign for Microbicides (GCM) at a time when the majority of advocacy in LMIC was focused on HIV treatment. A year later, following a change in strategic direction at GCM, AVAC became the sole project manager.

The program was initially developed as the ‘HIV Prevention Research Advocacy Program’, specifically to fund research advocacy capacity in Africa. The intention was to respond to the need for local advocates who understood the context they were working in and to complement global advocacy; ensuring that it amplified the lived realities and advocacy priorities in these countries. At the time AVAC was a small, but growing, organization with a considerable reputation for its sector, leading HIV-research advocacy work. Rather than over-extending its capacity with satellite organization offices in African cities, AVAC chose to support local advocates in developing their own advocacy skills and driving the prevention agenda in their countries. Since 2009, there have been ten cadres of Advocacy Fellows with a total of 77 Fellows from 14 countries. The vast majority of Fellows have been selected from East and Southern Africa, alongside five Nigerians and one Fellow from India and China respectively.¹

The founding principle of AVAC’s approach is that, “the best science gets translated into policy and subsequently policy into implementation,” (Implementor stakeholder² in interview) However, this can be a very drawn out process, with delays frustrating advancements in prevention. AVAC’s goal with the Advocacy Fellowship therefore is, “to expand and strengthen the capacity of civil society advocates and organizations to monitor, support and help shape HIV prevention research and rapid rollout of new effective interventions in LMIC with high HIV burdens.”³ This is done by identifying and strengthening emerging and mid-career ‘champions’ to help build the civil society capacity to shape the prevention research agenda and influence how fast new interventions move into policy and programs.

Advocacy Fellows are housed by ‘Host Organizations’ in their home country who are the fiscal and administrative grant partners. Once Fellows are selected and have accepted the offer, each Fellow, the Host Supervisor and AVAC mentors are involved in an intensive work plan process to develop the Fellows’ one-year work plan and budget. Advocacy Fellows design and execute activities to affect specific changes along the HIV prevention research to rollout continuum in their chosen contexts at the community, national or regional level. Importantly, their projects are not research driven but rather focus on advocacy goals. Hosts provide daily supervision to Fellows, ensure their projects are aligned with the organization’s goals and that their activities and strategies are contextualized within the community/country. AVAC provides technical and financial support to Fellows—both salary and project budget—for the duration of the Fellow’s year. The Host receives an additional employee and a contribution towards their overheads (15% of grant award).

The Fellow’s year-long project is implemented through a tripartite collaboration between the Advocacy Fellow, the Host Organization and AVAC. One of the key differences between the AVAC Fellowship Program and other similar programs is that it keeps Fellows in their home countries rather than taking them away and potentially contributing to a ‘brain drain’. This allows for the development of advocacy skills at the level of the individual and organization, and ultimately is intended to build national/country-specific capacity. An unintended effect of

¹ Data provided by AVAC, *Alumnifellows MAR2020.xlsx*

² For a full explanation of stakeholder groups including definitions and examples see Appendix B, p110

³ AVAC, *AVAC Advocacy Fellows Details*

this approach is that Fellows essentially become, “AVAC’s ears and eyes on the ground.”(Decision-maker stakeholder in interview) They do not formally represent AVAC but do allow the relatively small organization access to a variety of HIV forums and conversations across a wide geography.

By 2011, ‘Research’ as a specific aim was dropped from the title of the Fellowship Program, although not from the content, of the program. This change emerged as prevention technologies became more tangible and Fellows themselves proposed approaches to prevention in addition to biomedical intervention, allowing for a wider understanding of ‘advocacy’.

The overall goal of Advocacy Fellows Program is to expand and strengthen the capacity of civil society advocates and organisations to monitor, support and help shape HIV prevention research and rapid rollout of new effective interventions in low- and middle-income countries with high HIV burdens.

The program is guided by the belief that effective, sustainable advocacy grows out of work that reflects country level organisational and individual interests and priorities and is led by passionate advocates who are motivated to bring change.

The objectives of the program can be defined as:

- To accelerate research to rollout of proven new HIV prevention options to policy and implementation so as to help people access options to reduce HIV infections
- To nurture and expand the pool of ‘fearless’ HIV prevention advocates willing to engage with the research, influence policy, watchdog, capitalize on funding, ensure community voices are heard
- To create synergies between advocates and communities nationally and internationally to ensure that the global HIV prevention reflects community and national priorities

b. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the impact and contributions – both intended and unintended – that the AVAC Advocacy Fellows Program has had on HIV prevention in the Fellows’ countries and communities. In particular, the objective was to identify the longer-term outcomes of the program on the individual Fellows, their hosts, and the HIV prevention landscape. As well as highlighting the accomplishments in the last 10 years, the evaluation also sought to help guide decisions for the future of the Fellows Program. Finally, the evaluation considered the effectiveness, relevance, impact and sustainability of this Fellowship Program model in generally providing strategic gains for HIV prevention.

The evaluation was undertaken between March 2020 and August 2020 and covered the Alumni body in all 14 countries where they originate, making specific efforts to engage with Alumni, their Host organizations and key stakeholders (as identified by AVAC and evaluation participants) in the case study countries as well as with AVAC staff, board, advisors and donors. Four countries⁴ were selected by the AVAC team as focus countries utilizing the following purposive selection criteria. Countries where⁵:

- the team has expertise and access to HIV prevention related data

⁴ Initially, the countries that the AVAC team felt met these criteria best were Kenya, Malawi, Uganda and Zimbabwe. However, there was limited engagement by the Malawi cohort, and it was decided with AVAC to replace the case study with South Africa.

⁵ Criteria as defined in correspondence with AVAC, 31 March 2020

- the Fellows' work is relatively mature
- there is a critical mass of Fellows
- there are emerging or confirmed outcomes that enable evaluators to analyze the contribution of the Fellows to broader changes
- there are enabling environmental conditions to civil society advocacy

Utilizing these criteria, the evaluation includes case studies on Kenya, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

2. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

a. Evaluation Design

This is a beneficiary impact evaluation which seeks to review the effect that the Fellowship Program had on participants and stakeholders of the project. It measures the outcomes of the Fellowship, as perceived by beneficiaries and stakeholders, and the changes that resulted from those outcomes and presents recommendations arising from participants' experiences.

The evaluation included the perspectives of Alumni, Fellows, Host organizations, Donors, the AVAC team, and external stakeholders in the focus countries. All evaluation activity took place virtually, through online and telephonic meetings, interviews and analysis.

There were a number of risks and limitations to this approach, not the least of which was undertaking an evaluation during the global COVID-19 pandemic. (Risks, limitations and mitigating actions are described in detail in Appendix B, p105)

b. Evaluation Methodology

According to Michael Bamberger, "There is rarely a single evaluation methodology that can fully capture all of the complexities of how programs operate in the real world. Consequently, evaluators must find creative ways to combine different evaluation frameworks, tools and techniques."⁶ Accordingly, this evaluation used a mixed-methods approach in which a large proportion of relevant stakeholders and data sources were consulted, through both qualitative and quantitative research, to arrive at a holistic understanding of the Program's impact by answering the evaluation questions.

The evaluation not only employed various methods of data collection, but also diversified its conceptual framework by including a participatory approach and utilized several methods of data analysis.

Mixed Methods Approaches:

1. Triangulating participants' responses and experiences garnered in surveys, interviews and focus group discussions across key questions and issues, in order to focus on fellow and stakeholder perceptions about what the program has contributed to the prevention landscape in each target country.⁷
2. Highlighting the specific experiences in four countries where AVAC has Fellows; namely Kenya, Uganda, South Africa and Zimbabwe and investigating these 'case study' countries in detail.
3. Thirdly, the evaluation identified examples of how global HIV priorities influencing policy or strategy align with local landscapes via the work and advocacy of the Fellows. This was achieved by triangulating points of view with an independently sourced timeline of key events in the HIV landscape of 8 countries (including the case study countries) where respondents participated.
4. Finally, the evaluation design itself took a participatory approach by inviting Fellows, Alumni and key stakeholders to participate in the co-creation of the evaluation framework and tools during the inception phase and in the authentication of the evaluation findings. This was achieved through the use of a reference group made up of a selection of key stakeholders identified by AVAC who reviewed the inception report,

⁶Bamberger, *Introduction to Mixed Methods*, p: 3

⁷ Triangulation, in this case, means using more than one method to collect data on the same topic – the purpose is both to cross-validate data and, more importantly to capture different dimensions of the same phenomenon.

the data collection instruments and the final evaluation findings. (See Appendix B, p110 for further details on participatory processes)

Data Collection Methods:

- Desk Review of Existing Documents and Data: AVAC Website, Reports and Published Materials
- Interviews: Interview Guides/Protocol
- Surveys: Survey Questionnaire distributed via Survey Monkey
- Focus Group Discussion: Focus Group Discussion Guide
- Wave Approach: Data was collected in ‘waves’, creating opportunities to review the situation after each wave was complete, and allowing for flexibility in the evaluation strategy should the global pandemic evolve or create barriers to participation. (See Appendix B.1. for more information on the Wave Approach)

(Specific survey and interview protocols are found in Appendix A, p84 and further information on Data Sources is found in Appendix B, p111)

Data Analysis Methods:

- Thematic Analysis of qualitative data (interviews/focus groups/desk review material): The responses were reviewed to determine common themes and the frequency with which the themes appeared. These themes were then recorded against the evaluation question to which they best responded.
- Exploratory Data Analysis (EDA): This involved looking at the data files (survey) before all the data had been collected and entered to get an idea of what was there.
- Basic Statistical Analysis of numeric responses from the survey. This includes tabulation, cross-tabulation, mode and mean. There will only be few numeric responses to the survey, as the responses will mostly be qualitative and thus not appropriate for this type of analysis.
- Kirkpatrick Model Analysis: was used as a guide framework to consider the training element of the Fellowship Program. To explain, Kirkpatrick takes into account any style of training, both informal and formal, to determine aptitude based on four key areas:
 - Reaction – the participants’ impression of the program. This includes the participants’ level of satisfaction with their fellowship experience.
 - Learning – the acquisition of knowledge and skills from the intervention. Were the objectives of the program met? Did the participant indicate learning something from the intervention?
 - Behavioral change – application of the participants’ knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSAs) in their home organization or the ways in which behavior changes are applied in their actions.
 - Organizational performance – the participants’ behavior changes lead to impacts at the organizational and community levels

(Further information on Analysis Methods is found in Appendix B, p112)

c. Respondent Profile

Due to the nature of the program and in order to ensure anonymity, the characteristics of the respondents have not been cross tabulated but are presented disaggregated by question/data collection method.

Quantitative Survey Respondents

The 36 Alumni respondents can be categorized as follows:

- Age: The majority (54%) of Respondents to the Alumni Survey were aged between 35-44, 11% were between 45-54 and 34% were between 18 and 34 years of age
- Gender: Of the 35 respondents to the survey, 12 identified as male, 17 as female, and 6 skipped the question
- Location: 10 of the 14 countries in which AVAC has had fellows were represented in the survey with Uganda providing the largest response; Botswana (2%), India(2%), Kenya (17%), Malawi (11%), Nigeria (8%),South Africa (14%), Tanzania (2%), Uganda (22%), Zambia(2%) and Zimbabwe (14%)
- Year: Respondents from all years of the fellowship responded to the survey, excluding 2020 as their fellowship year is still in progress.

There were 25 Host Respondents to the Host survey and reflected:

- Location: organizations in Kenya (20%), Malawi (8%), Nigeria (12%), South Africa (12%), Uganda (25%) Zambia (8%) and, Zimbabwe (12%)
- Status: 34% of host respondents said their organisations were current hosts while 65% were not currently hosting fellows

Qualitative Interview Respondents

The 43 individual respondents to the in-depth interviews, Key informant interviews and Focus Group discussions can be categorized as follows

- Gender: Of the 43 respondents to the IDI, KII and FGD, 17 identified as male, 26 as female.
- Location: 6 of the 14 countries in which AVAC has had fellows were represented in the qualitative interviews with Uganda providing the largest response; 1 respondent from Nigeria, 3 from Malawi, 4 from South Africa, 6 from Kenya, 6 from Zimbabwe and 13 from Uganda.
- Stakeholder type: 4 Implementors, 3 AVAC Decision Makers, 7 Partners and 30 Participants (4 hosts and 26 Alumni)

(Additional analysis of respondents can be found in Annex C, p117)

d. Evaluation Questions

Evaluation Question 1

What was the Alumni and Host experience of the Fellowship?

Sub-questions

1. How satisfied were Fellows and host organizations with the Fellowship experience?
2. During the period of the Fellowship, what challenges did Fellows and organizations experience, were they addressed, and how?
3. What were the most significant benefits Fellows experienced?
4. What were the most significant benefits Host organizations experienced?
5. What was the contribution of the Fellows' project during and after the Fellowship?

Evaluation Question 2

What have been the long-term impacts of the Fellows Program on its Alumni?

Sub-questions

1. What were the most significant professional impacts of the fellowship on the fellow?

2. How durable have the benefits of the fellowship been? Which aspects of the fellowship continue to be beneficial after the fellowship year? Which have not?
3. What personal growth/change did alumni experience?
4. To what extent has the Fellows program enabled alumni to develop and access a network in the prevention field?
5. To what extent is there an ongoing relationship with your host and/or AVAC? If so, what kind of relationship is it and how has the relationship changed over time?

Evaluation Question 3

How has the program enabled Alumni to contribute to long-term impacts at the organizational and community levels (both at host organizations and at organizations alumni have worked at post-fellowship)?

Sub-questions

1. To what extent were there significant prevention-related changes or shifts in the organization/community where the Fellow worked?
2. To what extent did the alumni contribute to these changes, either during or following their Fellowship? If so, how and in what ways?
3. How did the fellowship prepare alumni to make these contributions?

Evaluation Question 4

What contributions to the HIV prevention landscape have Alumni made as a result of their Fellowship opportunity?

Sub-questions

1. How has the prevention landscape changed in the country since the fellowship? What have been the big moments/policy shifts in the HIV field in fellows' countries?
2. How have the fellows contributed to these changes both as individuals and groups? What kind of roles have they played? In collaboration with whom? Has their work post-fellowship continued to affect change?

Evaluation Question 5

What is the future direction of the Fellowship Program?

Sub-questions

1. To what extent are the objectives of the program still valid?
2. What are respondents' recommendations, based on their own experiences?
3. What are the evaluators' recommendations?

(The full table of Evaluation Questions including indicators for each question is found in Appendix B, p113)

3. FINDINGS

The findings of the evaluation reflect a huge body of data with 100s of data points and interview notes taken during 30 hours of interviews. They reflect the views of the various stakeholders over the life of the program. The findings have been analysed and collated by evaluation question, to ensure that each question is fully answered.

Evaluation Question 1: What was the Alumni and Host experience of the fellowship?

Introduction

In this question, Alumni and Host organisations report their experience in regard to their expectation of, and satisfaction with, the Program; the challenges they faced; and the significant benefits they perceived, both personally and professionally, and to the HIV landscape as a whole. Information was collected through online surveys and in-depth interviews, and the Case Study at the end of the section was additionally the result of a Focus Group Discussion with Ugandan Alumni.

Fellows

Summary

- Overall, the Fellowship experience meets Fellows' expectations and the mentoring from AVAC stands out as a highlight which exceeds what they hoped for.
- The relationship with the Host organisation makes or breaks the Fellows' experience and is the main disappointment for many respondents.
- The biggest takeaways for Fellows when assessing the value of the Fellowship are the financial support they receive, the access they get to key meetings/decision makers and the technical support they receive from AVAC.
- The main challenges faced by Fellows are the relationship with the host organisation and personal issues.
- Meanwhile Hosts identified that the Fellows had difficulty integrating into the Host organization and managing their (the Fellows') large workloads.
- Everyone agreed that the Fellows gain a variety of advocacy skills and develop personally during the Fellowship period.
- Fellows were overwhelmingly satisfied with their Fellowship experience

Expectations

In order to gauge Alumni's expectations of the Fellowship, they were asked their reasons for applying. This closed-ended survey question received 31 responses and respondents overwhelmingly (88%) reported applying for the Fellowship in order to enhance their skills or knowledge as an advocate. Everyone then agreed that their expectations had been met at least "to some extent" with nearly half (42%) being satisfied "to a very great extent".

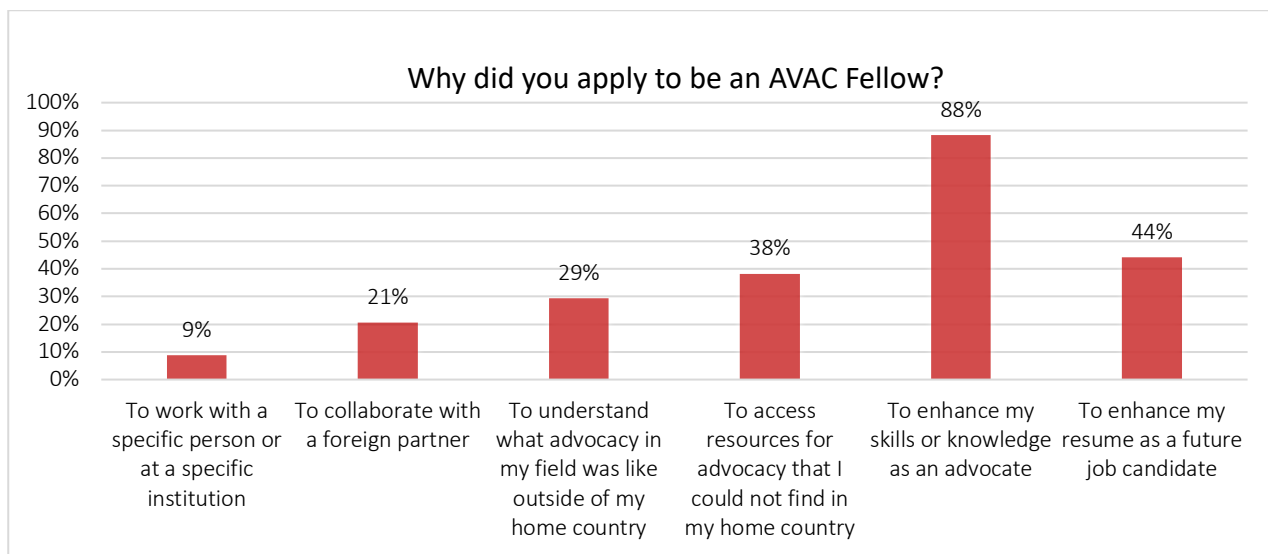


Chart 2: Reasons for applying to the Fellowship, closed-ended question, multiple selections possible (n=31)

When asked to provide more detail on specific expectations that were exceeded during the programme, respondents provided a variety of answers that have been categorised into themes in the following table:

Theme	Number of respondents	Percentage
Funding	1	3%
Mentor Support	17	60%
Networking opportunities	9	32%
Technical Capacity	1	3%

Table 1: Thematic analysis from responses to specific expectations of the Fellowship (n=28)

Examples from the responses include mentoring being described as “a launchpad”, with the AVAC team providing “an enabling environment” that was “consistently supportive” and “encouraging”. Alumni repeatedly refer to the experience as an “opportunity” to interface, connect, link, learn, be empowered and be exposed in a way that led them to achieve more than they expected.

It is perhaps not surprising therefore that when Alumni answered the question on how their expectations were not met, the reasons tended to be related to the local context, rather than issues directly under AVAC’s control, as can be seen below.

Theme	Number of respondents	Percentage
Covid 19	1	6%
Direct engagement with researchers	1	6%
Engagement with policy makers	1	6%
Financial support lacking	1	6%
Logistical challenges	1	6%
Specialist training	1	6%
Host organization challenges	10	62.5%

Table 2: Thematic analysis from responses to unmet expectations of the Fellowship (n=16)

By far the largest contributor to unmet expectations was “Host Organisation challenges”. In particular, engagement with the Host organization was described by some respondents as ‘limited’, with the repeated refrain that the Fellow and their work done for the Fellowship was not fully integrated into the work of the Host Organization leading to tensions, confusion and challenges. Host Organizations and the individual supervisor assigned to the Fellowship clearly had the ability to make or break the experience for the Alumni.

The local context was also highlighted by one respondent who mentioned disappointment in regard to finances, where he/she noted that the amount of resources needed are affected by the type of activity and the location of the project and that there was also a need for better linkages with researchers in country.

The final theme ‘Specialist Training’, refers to only one disappointed expectation that the Fellowship would have, “specialized trainings for fellows in areas that intersect with health and human rights”. The need for accredited training was raised by respondents in surveys (n=4), interviews (n=2) and also mentioned in the sample of project reports. However, AVAC’s Fellowship Information packet stipulates that the Program will only provide ‘technical assistance’ and ‘mentorship’ and does not frame the Fellowship as a training program. Evidently, most Fellows’ recognized it does build their knowledge, with 76% of Alumni (n=33) who answered the question reporting that their advocacy skills improved to some degree across the 11 ability areas mentioned. In regard to expectations of formal training, respondents’ views can be summarized as follows:

1. There was 1 disappointed, but inaccurate, expectation of formal training
2. Other respondents do agree that there should be formal training incorporated into the Program
3. Despite an absence of formal training there is evidence of capacity strengthening, which suggests (and is further supported by the following section) that the program contributes to capacity strengthening and does so through the Fellowship experience, the project/work with Host organization, and connections with others.

Professional and Personal Development

As seen previously, the majority of Alumni survey respondents had aspirations of increasing their advocacy knowledge and skills. Accordingly, Evaluators asked to what extent the Fellowship Program and the Fellows’ project increase their skills. A sizable percentage of those who were surveyed (n=33) noted that the following skills were increased “to a great or very great extent”:

- Ability to Network – 45%
- Communication Skills – 41%
- Building Evidence with Community Dialogues – 41%
- Presentation Skills 39%
- Project and Budget Management Skills – 39%
- Influencing Policy and Processes – 38%
- Writing Reports and Developing Materials – 35%
- Technology Skills – 27%

Hosts were in agreement with the above data, with a large percentage reporting (n=19) that they had seen the following skills’ development in the Fellows “to a great or very great extent”:

- Ability to Network – 100%
- Communication Skills – 78%
- Presentation Skills – 78%

A similar percentage (78%) of host respondents also saw the improved skills in analysing policy briefs, whilst 89% mentioned enhanced capabilities in regard to influencing policies or processes.

On the other end of the scale, only 18% of Fellow respondents' (n=33) felt their grant or proposal writing had increased 'to a great or very great extent' whilst 6% considered it to have not improved at all. 21% of Hosts (n=19) also identified this skill as lacking in any significant improvement.

Personal Development was also measured in the survey by asking to what extent Fellows believed that the Fellowship helped them to develop personally with respondents (n=33) noting improvement "to a great or very great extent" in the following areas:

- Ambition (47%)
- Increased global perspective (47%)
- Motivation (45%)
- Self-confidence (44%)
- Independence (44%)
- Leadership (41%)
- Cultural tolerance/Multi-cultural view. (41%)

All respondents stated that the Fellowship had some degree of positive influence on the attributes listed above, as well as, on their sense of independence and motivation. In fact, the only personal attribute that was reportedly not affected in any way was 'Cultural Tolerance' (and this was only reported by one person). Similarly Hosts saw positive developments in the Fellows they supervised in all the areas mentioned above. The attributes that hosts identified as being the most strongly impacted were self-confidence (36% reported a significant improvement) and ambition (31%) (n=19).

Common challenges

40% of survey respondents (n=23) reported experiencing major challenges participating in the Fellowship Program. These were categorised as follows:

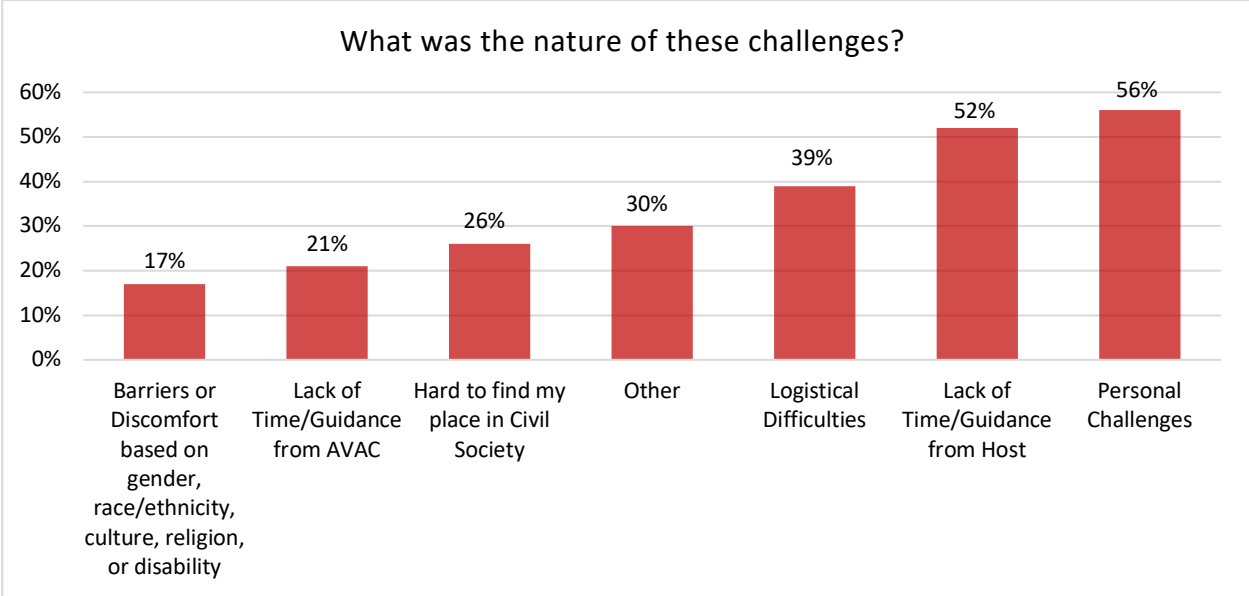


Chart 3: Challenges experienced by respondent, close-ended question, multiple selections possible (n=23)

In the Other category (n = 5) responses included Partner's schedule, Covid-19, Host issues (unspecified), and Politics of the advocacy space.

Echoing the reasons for unmet expectations, one of the key challenges reported by Alumni was Host Organisation 'buy in', engagement and support for their project.

In regard to this finding, AVAC management reported having undertaken a variety of approaches over the years to encourage the tripartite arrangement between themselves, Fellows and Hosts in order to try and counter some of the issues around 'buy in' and logistics. AVAC told the evaluators via email correspondence⁸, "Hosts are a very important component of the Fellowship. We emphasize that in the application materials and it's an essential element in the application review process." They described several ways in which the Hosts role is reinforced:

- Creation of a special document – Frequently asked questions(FAQ) for Hosts - to help answer questions specific to their role, which is updated every year based on feedback
- AVAC undertake a screening process of Hosts, which includes interviewing Host supervisors but also "create[s] an opportunity for them to query us too"
- Calls are arranged throughout the Fellowship to ensure that everyone is on the 'same page'
- AVAC "emphasize[s] that [Hosts'] feedback and support in shaping the work plan is critical"
- Hosts are invited to the Fellows orientation with all expenses paid. Orientation includes sessions specific to Hosts' role and often includes former supervisors sharing their experiences.
- During the orientation AVAC do a special presentation emphasising the 3 -way relationship that makes Fellowship successful
- AVAC leads by example including Hosts in all email correspondence with Fellows and encourage Fellows to do the same.
- AVAC strongly encourage Fellows to share all reports and publication and to meet regularly with their Host
- When conflict arises, AVAC encourage Fellows to try and resolve the issue with the Host independently before they get involved, "We are consistent in messaging that Fellows have to follow all Host policies and we won't ask them to change them for the Fellow."

Evaluators' note that it is positive to see that AVAC is already aware of, and has attempted to address, one of the major challenges identified by respondents. Whilst the feedback may not be unexpected, there are likely to be additional insights provided in the data which can assist in refining the response to the issue, and to the other common challenges, including:

- Financial support for projects (perceived as low compared to administration and salary costs)
- Workload/time management (difficult for Fellows to manage both their project and the work they had to undertake for the Host)
- Personal Challenges

Although personal challenges received the greatest number of indications, there were limited explanations provided. The corresponding text included the following illustrative responses:

- "It was hard to fit into a civil society organisation from a corporate working environment"
- "Limited skills in managing a programme, which is what I had to learn"
- "Personal challenges that I feel could have been handled and resolved better"

⁸ Information provided in correspondence with AVAC, 13 August 2020

- “Few personal challenges”
- “Bereavement and mental health issues”
- “I like things being done on time, delays in getting feedback from AVAC would sometimes make me get frustrated”
- “I was part of the international movement and prioritizing was a problem. I was helped by the program manager to do that.”

In interview none of the respondents reported personal challenges apart from one who mentioned a family bereavement and illness, but also believed it had been handled well by his/her Host and AVAC.

Interestingly, Hosts did not necessarily recognize these problems as 42% of respondents (n=19) reported ‘no challenges or no knowledge of challenges’ faced by their Fellows. Where they did note challenges, Hosts, like the Alumni, also identified issues with the Fellow integrating into the organization, leading one to admit, “Workload was a major problem but as a host organization we caused the problem.”

However, the primary challenges observed by Hosts were issues related to the Fellows’ projects. This was reflected in the diverse data provided in the ‘Other’ category, where Hosts listed examples such as Fellow’s struggling to get policy makers to listen to their ideas, needing more time to complete projects and dealing with administrative and accountability issues.

In spite of such a large percentage of Hosts being unaware of the problems their Fellows were facing, 85% of Hosts who did report challenges claimed that they were resolved adequately and 84% stated that their organization was involved in the resolution (n=14). It appears from this data (substantiated with information from the interviews) that those Hosts who managed to engage successfully with the Fellow, were involved in all aspects of their project whereas Hosts who struggled with the AVAC/Fellow relationship were disengaged from the entire process.

Satisfaction

In the evaluation of the Fellowship, participants’ satisfaction was rated against different aspects of the Program. These included:

- Overall Design of the Program
- Mentorship & Engagement with AVAC
- Engagement with Host Organization
- Financial Support
- Opportunity to Connect with Other Fellows/Alumni and Other Advocates
- Linkages with Researchers
- Linkages with Policymakers and Implementors
- Training and Skills Building

The surveyed Fellows’ responses (n=33) indicated that they were ‘very satisfied’ with the Overall Design of the Program (78%) and the Opportunities to Connect with Other Fellows/Alumni and Other Advocates (73%).

As indicated by other results, whilst 78% of respondents were also highly satisfied with the Mentorship and Engagement with AVAC, only 48% had a similar feeling about their Engagement with the Host Organization and 6% went so far as to report being ‘very dissatisfied’ with this relationship.

Respondents to both the survey and interview provided several examples of challenging Host environments including the following specific examples:

- “My supervisor had many draws on his time he insisted that he be compensated for his efforts and so I had to split salary with him as he was not being paid for his work otherwise”
- “I struggled to access my project budget from my host, many times I used my own money, even my supervisor he was sympathetic and he used his money”
- “My host was not engaged I didn’t get much support”
- “I was isolated, not part of the organization, the other people had no connection to the work and my supervisor was busy.”

In a similar way, although connections with other Fellows and Advocates fared well, satisfaction with linkages to researchers and policymakers/implementors was not as common (55% and 45% of respondents’ answers respectively).

Overall, there appears to be three themes that emerge in regard to Alumni expectations and experience in assessing the ‘value of the fellowship’:

1. The financial support the Fellowship provides – pays for Fellows’ time, which enables them to do the work
2. The access Fellows get to key meetings, decision-makers, researchers etc. through AVAC and the Host Organization
3. The technical support Fellows get from AVAC to manage all aspects of their project

Satisfaction was determined by how far these three needs were met through the different aspects of the program, with one Fellow describing how it enabled her to “gain access to the right people and finances to move [his/her] agenda,” and another stating, “[the] AVAC fellowship according to me is more than a program - it is a family to most of us, [creating] lasting partnerships and allies.”

Hosts

Summary

- Hosts⁹ identified the main benefits to hosting the Fellows as increased organisational capacity, increased profile, and increased network
- Alumni reported the largest benefit to Host organisations as being increased visibility and profile.
- Hosts outlined a variety of challenges in regard to hosting a Fellow with the main ones being integration into the Host organisation, time constraints, and financial shortfalls.

Benefits

Two-thirds of the hosts surveyed (n=21) reported that hosting an AVAC Fellow was beneficial “to a great or very great extent” to their organisation. When asked to rank the relative importance of certain benefits to the organisations, the survey respondents indicated the following order:

1. Interaction/collaboration with AVAC
2. Contribution of Fellow to my organization’s work
3. Organizational exposure to HIV prevention research & advocacy
4. Financial support for Fellowship project
5. Networking opportunities with other Fellows

⁹ Throughout the evaluation, ‘Host’ refers to the Host Supervisor respondents who spoke on behalf of their organizations

6. Duration of Fellowship
7. Networking with Advocates and other Host organizations

Below are some specific comments made in relation to a variety of perceived organisational benefits:

- Relationship with AVAC: “it connected us to AVAC in a deeper way which has led to ongoing engagements.”
- Advocacy Skills: “Hosting a fellow...has tremendously improved the skills of the organization in HIV Prevention Research Advocacy...The organization is now sitting on a number of HIV Prevention national technical working groups.”
- Visibility: “Hosting an AVAC fellow enhanced our advocacy visibility at both a national and global level.”
- Exposure: “We get exposed to what is happening at international, regional and national level. We become well positioned at country level to influence decisions regarding biomedical HIV prevention because we are supported with most recent evidence.”
- Networking: “We...benefited in terms of being linked to a broader network of organizations and networks working to accelerate development of HIV prevention products.” / “It buil[t] a pool of young advocates that we continued to engage with beyond the fellows programme.”

Overall, the main takeaways for Hosts can be classified as:

1. Increased organizational capacity
2. Increased advocacy profile
3. Increased network

In the survey, Alumni were also asked what they perceived the benefits to the Host organization were by participating in the Fellowship Program. Respondents described a range of benefits that are detailed in the table below. As can be seen, the single largest benefit to the Host organization reported by Alumni was the increased profile the Host received:

- “Through the Fellowship, the host organization was further profiled...because I represent[ed] my organization in many platforms organized by AVAC such as partner meetings.”
- “I believe my host organization benefited from visibility to their work which was brought by my project as it involved working with many different civil society organizations and advocates.”

Theme	Number of responses	Percentage
Access to Information	2	5%
Funding Opportunities (Future)	2	5%
Networking	2	5%
Broadened Scope of Work	5	12%
Financial (Immediate)	5	12%
Partnerships	6	15%
Technical Capacity Improved	6	15%
Raised Profile	10	25%

Table 3: Reported Benefits of Fellowship to Host Organization, open-ended survey question n=38

Common Challenges:

Of the 21 responses received in the Host survey to the question “Please describe any challenges that you experienced as a host organization”, 38 % reported no challenges, the remaining responses could be grouped into the following themes.

Theme	Number of responses	Percentage
Logistics	1	5%
Approach	1	5%
Financial Support to projects	2	10%
COVID-19	2	10%
Time	3	14%
Organisational Integration	4	19%
None	8	38%

Table 4: Reported challenges to Host Organizations, open-ended survey question

To further explain how the Evaluators interrogated these challenges, listed below are a selection of illustrative comments that determined the themes and a corresponding analysis:

- **Logistics:** “Delays in contracting and funding” – This issue is also mentioned in program reports that formed part of the desk review and relates to Host organisations suffering delays in receiving contract documentation or payments from AVAC. Due to the limited responses, it is considered relatively minor, but is certainly something AVAC should consider safeguarding against as it has such a potentially overwhelming impact on the progress of a Fellowship.
- **Approach:** “I also think this type of model of capacity building model should be rooted in global south rather than from the global north. It's now outdated” – This comment about power dynamics speaks more to the Programmatic Approach than to the Host’s particular experience. Only one host mentioned it in the survey, though it is brought out in the South African case study which highlights the need for more “African leadership” in the Program (see p74). Evaluators consider it an important comment, as it was referred to in several interviews and FGDs where Alumni and Hosts spoke of the challenges of the tripartite arrangement and the desire to be given more responsibility as program managers (see respondents’ recommendations, p62). Program approach and power dynamics are explored further on page 29 and also in the Evaluators’ Recommendations (p77).
- **Financial support to projects:** “The financial support to carry out activities was not enough” – This issue was mentioned as different Host survey respondent flagged challenges with the financial support being insufficient for the time and the expectation of the project and that the weighting of the project costs did not fully account for differences in the project countries. These comments were corroborated in project reports in which Fellows’ struggled to complete their project activities within the budget. Indeed, issues surrounding financial support are raised quite frequently throughout the evaluation with several Alumni recommendations focusing on resourcing. Evaluators suggest that it is important to set achievable projects (see p83), both in terms of financing and scope and increase the transparency around project resourcing (see p65).
- **COVID:** Two respondents stated that COVID restrictions had posed challenges to the Host organization. Specifically, there was a report that, “Implementation has been slowed down by Covid 19.” This challenge is unique to the current global situation and it is hard to know if it will maintain its relevance. For now, the comments may be useful in considering how the Program could adapt to include more

virtual activities. The implied benefit being the potential for more collaboration across Alumni and geographies, rather than just the traditional Host-Fellow-US Mentor gatherings.

- The **significant time investment** expected from the Host: “The Fellow worked 100% of time on fellowship project, the design did not make provision for [the] fellow to work for the organisation except [if] the host organisation pays for the time spent on the organisation’s work. There was no provision for the Supervisors time on the Fellow’ project.”/ “Supervising a fellow requires time commitment”/ “The workload on the supervisor was much and the Project could not compensate him”. This is a major challenge that was brought up repeatedly by both Hosts and Alumni in their recommendations and is also addressed in the Evaluators’ Recommendations about promoting Host partnerships (see p80).
- The **problem of organisational integration** – This was also an area of consideration that arose in Host interviews. There are two types of integration challenges; the first, is the integration of an unknown Fellow into the Host organisation. One Host survey respondent offered this example, “Integrating a media person into the folds of a policy, evaluation and implementation organisation was sometimes challenging,” whilst another stated, “The only challenge we faced was to fit in the fellows work in[to] our large organization programme. However, over time this was addressed through integrating the fellows work in our strategic plan.” The second integration issue speaks more to the Fellows’ allegiance to Host organizations. These comments included, “the fellow was not part of the organisation despite numerous attempts to work with her, even being open to AVAC about this challenge”/ “The Fellow did not commit fully to the Organization as his primary allegiance was to his Organization and AVAC”. This issue was reiterated in a Host interview, where the respondent stated that since AVAC pay the Fellows, it biases Fellows’ towards them (AVAC), “They concentrate on AVAC and negate the host organisation”. Both integrational challenges are mentioned elsewhere in the evaluation and Evaluators consider this an important focus for AVAC moving forward, suggesting some questions that may assist in shaping a response to this recognized flaw in the tripartite Fellow-Host-AVAC relationship.

Projects

Summary

Hosts and Fellows concur that the project the Fellow carries out during their Fellowship year influences both the Host organisation and the wider HIV environment in each country.

Benefits

The Fellows’ projects were viewed by Hosts (n=21) as clearly contributing to their organisation’s work in HIV prevention (85%) specifically by expanding their understanding and/or capacity to engage in HIV advocacy (71%) The project was also seen to raise the profile of the organisation (61%) by contributing to the HIV landscape at a community (76%) and national (85%) level.

In their responses, Hosts and Fellows shared an understanding of how the project’s contributed to the wider HIV landscape. As seen in the table below, similar percentages of Hosts and Fellows responded positively and negatively to the selected project outcomes:

Theme	Host Responses (n=16)	Fellow Responses (n=32)
Raised awareness on HIV prevention	76%	71%
Helped inform policy	66%	59%
Built CSOs to engage in HIV prevention research	66%	71%
Helped Reframe an Issue	52%	53%
Added new learning to the field	52%	40%
Helped educated and inform decision makers	71%	59%
Helped influence allocation of resources	23%	34%

Table 5: Reported Project Benefits to the HIV Landscape

Finally, of the 32 responses, the majority of fellows (78%) felt their project addressed a gap in HIV prevention implementation, policy, analysis, and/or learning in the field “to a very great or great extent”. 21% believed their project addressed a gap “to a small or moderate extent”. Whilst no one reported their project failing to respond to or affect a gap in the HIV landscape at all.

Programmatic Approach

In considering the experiences of the Fellowship as presented above, Evaluators observed that respondents persuasively, though less directly, addressed elements of the Programmatic approach which are highlighted below.

Learning Culture

Alumni respondents repeatedly reported that the Fellowship year was extremely intensive, involving a significant workload and steep learning curve. One Alumni interview respondent told Evaluators “it is the most challenging thing I have ever done,” whilst another commented, “the pressure was huge, at times I thought I might crumble, but I survived it.” The theme of heavy workloads and competing demands was similarly evident in Host responses, with one Host mentioning that their Fellow had struggled to deliver against her workplan as the “targets were unrealistic”. In interviews, AVAC acknowledged that there is a huge amount of ground to cover during the Fellowship, with many technical areas often needing attention alongside skills development, such as writing and project management. This development process clearly requires a substantial level of effort (from Fellows, Hosts and AVAC alike) and though Fellows were obviously gratified by the huge gains they made, they also recognised the high levels of stress that came with these achievements. The data does not support a conclusion that this kind of high-impact and pressurized learning culture is necessarily negative; in fact it’s clear that the Fellowship engenders skills such as project management and communication which are highly valued by respondents as they move forward in their careers (see p21). However, with stress levels repeatedly mentioned, AVAC should ensure that Fellows are fully prepared and equipped, as outlined further in Evaluators’ Recommendations (see p83).

The AVAC Approach

Respondents made several references to the importance of the mentors and were overwhelmingly positive about how much they gained from the AVAC team. A sample of supporting quotes can be found below;

- “They became my friends, I learnt to generate evidence for advocacy, document it, work with other advocates and approach the duty bearer with so much elegance and confidence to present the task.”
- “I created a relationship with the mentors that's for life - i.e. personal and technical in nature”

- “We become good friends to this day. AVAC fellowship according to me is more than a program - it is a family to most of us. lasting partnership and allies in different ways (sic)”
- “AVAC mentors are awesome, even with my short comings they are always there to support me. And that's true definition of humility. And I am working so hard to integrate that into my daily activity as a person”
- “I like the way in which the AVAC team took time to mentor me, help me navigate advocacy spaces with so much hope and trust in me. Even in moments of giving up, the team always found a way of encouraging me to carry on and excel at implementing my fellowship activities!”
- Their openness and coaching skills were so beneficial in that I am now able to use the same skills as I do my work. Their continued connection with me during my Fellowship accorded more opportunities of cross-learning and on spot support which enabled me to have my self-esteem built”

Beyond the relationship, respondents also described AVAC team members going beyond what they could reasonably be expected to provide, including one respondent retelling a story of staying up all night preparing for a presentation with AVAC staff, “they stayed with me and helped me understand the report and prepare my questions, late into the night.” Another respondent recalled the multiple drafts of a policy brief AVAC had commented on, “never saying I was on my own, to finish.”

The inverse of this “hyper individualised approach to a fellowship” (Implementor stakeholder, in interview) approach is that AVAC reportedly finds itself occasionally unable to deliver on feedback or logistical arrangements in a timeous manner. One Alumni survey respondent reported, “Feedback from AVAC sometimes takes too long,” and another said, “I like things being done on time, delays in getting feedback from AVAC would sometimes make me get frustrated.” During interviews, two Alumni respondents noted that AVAC chased documents that needed to be delivered by a deadline, and “then took their time in returning them.” Made up of just four individuals, the AVAC team is very small and confirmed to Evaluators that the management of the program is naturally very labour intensive. There are certainly significant demands on the team and such challenges are both expected and understandable. However, the real limitation as seen by Evaluators, is that any future intention to scale up the program would be seriously restricted by human capacity.

Additionally, this individualised approach leads to a sense of inequity, with one interview respondent reporting, “AVAC have their favorites.” This comment was not entirely an outlier as Evaluators were told on three other occasions by two Fellows and a Partner stakeholder that AVAC engages over and over again with the same individuals. This is likely a result of the fact that the same individuals consistently and reliably engage with AVAC and/or are working in areas where engagement opportunities arise. It is also important to note that this view was countered by two Fellows who clearly felt the opportunities existed if the Fellow chose to make the most of them:

- “The fellowship experience is what one makes it to be, it is influenced by country situational circumstances. As a fellow, I was required to push boundaries to achieve the objectives of the fellowship and that is what advocacy is about.”
- “I think that it is safe to say, you get out as much as you put in, although this may not be that simple, but it is a reality.”

However, there remains a perception of unfairness by some respondents in this regard and Evaluators suggest that more could be done to enhance transparency surrounding opportunities and engagement. Specific suggestions are provided in the recommendations section (see p82).

Stakeholder Relations

Both AVAC and the Alumni are cognizant of the innate power dynamics present in a program that is led from the US and which provides funding to largely African Fellows and organizations. Consequently, the Program makes strong efforts to nurture collegial and supportive relationships with opportunity for Southern voice and decision-making. Additionally, AVAC are aware of the tensions that the dual position of “being a donor and colleague” creates. Alumni describe the situation as “having two masters” (Host supervisor and AVAC) and whilst some considered this a challenge, for others it was an asset, “it’s like having two doting parents.” Regardless, it remains clear that power (perceived and actual) lies with AVAC as the funder, selector and program manager.

This became relevant for the evaluation team, as one external stakeholder highlights, “the Fellowship is a unique experience of significant benefit to the individual but their (Alumni) criticism will be limited as their mouths are stuffed with gold.” Keeping this comment in mind, the Evaluators probed the power dynamics and constructs behind the program design, providing participants with several opportunities for input and challenging them to provide full answers to difficult subjects through interviews and FGDs. In this way, Evaluators found that contrary to being avoided, the issue was discussed in the South African case study and featured across the Alumni and Host recommendations. Practical suggestions on ways to address the perceived and actual power imbalance are outlined in Evaluators Recommendations regarding promoting Alumni and Host partnership in the Program (see p77) and increasing the transparency of the Fellowship Program as a whole (see p82)

Conclusion: Evaluation Question 1

Evaluators conclude that participants viewed the Fellowship Program as beneficial. In particular, the biggest takeaways for Fellows when assessing the value of the Fellowship are the financial support they receive; the access they get to key meetings/decision makers and the technical support they receive from AVAC.

Hosts and Fellows concur that the project the Fellow carries out during their Fellowship year influences both the Host organisation and the wider HIV environment in each country. However, there were widely differing experiences of the Fellowship and this was largely attributed to challenges outside of AVAC’s control and in particular, to the relationship with the Host Organisation. This relationship was seen to make or break the Fellowship experience. The feedback provided also raised some considerations regarding the programmatic approach which outlined some questions for AVAC to consider.

UGANDA CASE STUDY

Leveraging the AVAC Fellowship Experience for success in Uganda

As will be explored further in Evaluation Question 4 (see page 47), during the course of the evaluation, the positive example of advocates working with CSOs to hold government and PEPFAR to account was a recurring theme among Ugandan survey, interview and FGD respondents. This case study therefore explores participants' perceptions of:

- what the success looks like,
- what it took to get there,
- what part the Fellowship played

It also reveals respondents' vision in relation to how the Fellowship can continue to be relevant to the future.

What the Success Looks Like

Today, Uganda HIV CSOs and advocates are able to engage PEPFAR and the Government of Uganda in multifaceted ways.

Essentially, in regard to PEPFAR, CSOs participate in the development process and monitoring the implementation of Country Operational Plans (COP) by convening quarterly meetings with PEPFAR, which are led by CSOs themselves. CSOs undertake analysis of PEPFAR data, also on a quarterly basis, and provide ad hoc feedback from service recipients to PEPFAR at these meetings. This is enabled through the tripartite collaboration between the Coalition for Health Promotion and Social Development (HEPS-Uganda) that coordinate engagements with PEPFAR. Since 2018, HEPS also operates a Community Score Card (CSC) to integrate community accountability into PEPFAR Site Improvement Monitoring Systems (SIMS) in selected PEPFAR supported sites. CSOs are regularly invited to other stakeholder meetings to discuss this PEPFAR feedback and also have routine access to the office of the PEPFAR coordinator where they can raise issues.

Similarly, when it comes to engaging with government, advocates (including almost all of the AVAC Alumni body) sit on the National Prevention Committee and several technical working groups within the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Uganda AIDS Commission. Since CSOs are able to access where government is not able to reach, they also play a role in the service supply chain, implementing PEPFAR programs themselves. This allows them to represent key populations within the prevention agenda at the decision-making table.

The importance of CSOs in these forums cannot be ignored. They are in a unique position to bring the community voices to PEPFAR, MOH and other policy makers, which has allowed for a higher degree of transparency and accountability, and the opportunity to ensure that the voices of beneficiaries are at the heart of decision making. Respondents' confirmed that advocates are able to influence resource allocation to the community and monitor resource use, ensuring resources are equitably distributed based on need and that they are utilized optimally in the agreed upon manner. An FGD participant described this as part of the 'watchdog' role CSOs play, which ensures that they, "are keeping the government in check" and working in the national interest.

What it Took to Get There

It should be emphasized that Uganda is not just an exceptional case or some kind of HIV advocacy utopia and attaining the level of engagement described above didn't come easily. Interview respondents described how, in the early days, individual advocates took great personal risks by challenging the status quo. Survey respondents reported threats at their homes when they publicly challenged PEPFAR and others described how they were initially ill equipped, personally and professionally, or did not fully understand the protocols and processes

required to attend high level meetings. PEPFAR itself acknowledged that their bureaucracy is impenetrable and involves speaking a particular “language”.

As one FGD participant highlighted, “This representation did not come on a silver plate...there were times when we forced ourselves in the place. We walked into the [US] Embassy and demanded to say something.... We forced ourselves to be on the table.” As detailed to the evaluation team, engagement with PEPFAR started in 2012, at a time when, “the environment was extremely hostile” to CSOs. Advocates reached out to the PEPFAR Uganda team to access the draft COP and examine the targets, but “the PEPFAR coordinators doors were closed”. Undeterred, Uganda’s CSOs bypassed the local PEPFAR office and appealed at a higher level to the Office of the U.S. Global Aids Coordinator (OGAC), where they were granted access to the COP documentation. CSOs were then able to identify unrealistic aspects of the COP and demand that PEPFAR revise the treatment targets, empowered by the realization that, “If OGAC included things in global guidance, then country offices had to include it”. As a result, in 2013, for the first time Uganda recorded more people on treatment than new HIV infections, and PEPFAR began to recognize the impact CSOs could have, officially including them in the COP process in 2015.

Although this is written as a straightforward narrative, respondents stressed that it has taken time for the independent voice of the advocates to be valued and their technical expertise to be recognized. The restrictions and prohibitions placed on CSOs by both government and PEPFAR made them feel unwelcome and it has been a slow process of negotiation to arrive at the current position of regular meeting and contact. For the evaluators, what appears particularly valuable is the sense of ownership that the CSOs have over this engagement; convening meetings, analyzing the COP and bringing feedback from the grassroots level back to the policy makers. One respondent reported that the tripartite relationship with PEPFAR and government has been nurtured and, “in time they have relaxed... now, we meet in country before regional meetings so that we are all on the same page... now, we are speaking the same language.”

An interesting insight from a respondent about Uganda’s CSO community at this time was that it was a very large group that wasn’t coordinated in country. One external stakeholder further explained that although, “Uganda has always had a strong civil society,” it made it hard to bring all these views together. However, according to respondents, civil society knew its weaknesses and faced them head-on, “we didn’t have capacity and went back to the drawing board and built our capacity before we readdressed issues... we had to learn to work together. Now we have networks and coalitions within civil society.” The same external stakeholder also reflected in relation to AVAC’s Fellowship that “Fellows don’t advertise that they are Fellows; they align themselves to [Host] organizations”. This ensures that the CSO voice is clear and that the views being expressed are that of the collective. This is viewed as an effective approach since collective bargaining is considered a more powerful tool than perceptions of “individual rabble rousers”.

Although as one advocate pointed out, “I can’t say we are exactly where we want to be,” the evidence above shows that in Uganda CSO capacity and the relationship with government and PEPFAR stakeholders has come a long way since the 2012 initial starting point of that ‘silver bullet... OGAC mandating CSO involvement”. In fact, the efforts of the Uganda CSOs to push PEPFAR into engagement eventually led the US organization to reshape its approach to civil society in the COP process globally. It is now a PEPFAR requirement for civil society to be engaged in the COP process, with proof of CSO input being a prerequisite for plan approval.

What Part the Fellowship Played

The specific role AVAC (and the Fellowship) played in supporting this development was an area that respondents felt strongly about. In the survey comments, interviews and focus group discussion, participants agreed that the, “massive investment by AVAC has really helped us”. Specifically:

- AVAC was seen to both “open doors on our behalf” and “put us in touch with people who have helped open doors”. One respondent gave the specific example of AVAC calling offices that the Fellows had no contacts in, to “reach out beforehand” and “prepare the way for us”. These kinds of linkages were also seen to impact Fellows’ projects by enabling them to achieve goals within the 12-month timeframe.
- The Fellowship projects shaped the advocacy agenda in regard to the PEPFAR engagement by focusing on ‘community voices’ and bringing key populations, such as AGYW, to the fore (an important aspect of providing a space for beneficiary engagement in COP programming). As respondents described, “Technically we have put victims at the forefront” / “When we advocated for the intro of frontline or pre-exposure prophylaxes (PrEP), we put specific communities at the forefront”
- Thirdly, the funding AVAC avails towards advocacy projects was seen as instrumental in ensuring the projects’ impact. Financial freedom gave Fellows the opportunity to participate and speak into the needs of a particular moment in the national landscape.
- Finally, the capacity building from AVAC during the Fellowship year was critical, providing Fellows technical guidance and direction which they were able to share with the wider CSO cadre and beneficiaries.

The Vision for the Future

After discussing this Ugandan success story, respondents were able to come up with a list of unresolved issues, such as criminalization around HIV, PrEP service delivery access, gap in pediatric care and treatment, and pharmaceutical supply chain challenges, which all indicated that there is still much to be done to end the HIV epidemic in Uganda. It may therefore be useful to report practical suggestions that were provided about how AVAC and its Fellows can continue leveraging the program to contribute to this ongoing agenda.

1. Consolidate the work that has been done by strengthening the Fellowship itself through better engagement between AVAC and Alumni. Several methods were envisioned:
 - a) More regular contact with AVAC, including periodic check-ins
 - b) Create a solid coalition of the AVAC alumni with “a little funding to bring people together and share the work they are doing.” The coalition would act as a coordination body that will bring in younger/grassroots advocates, support current fellows and offer a space to share the advocacy experiences. The coordination role should be rotational so that there is “new energy every other year”.
 - c) Use the coalition/steering committee to create a strategic plan on moving forward as Alumni
 - d) Use alumni to support new fellows as ‘Alumni Mentors’ - “It should be on us as alumni to support fellows, particularly in the first quarter of their project and... Help with the baby steps, instead of focusing on the final goals...we can hold their hands through this process.” This would allow the alumni mentor to support the new fellow in project design and implementation and to access stakeholders and policy males to whom they are not yet connected. This would also safeguard against the scenario where the “host organization is difficult or unhelpful”
 - e) Assist Alumni in nurturing and strengthening relationships/networks that are made during the Fellowship through some kind of intentional intervention, so that these relationships eventually become independent of AVAC. This will allow Alumni to be connectors for new Fellows who become less reliant on AVAC, “So, we don’t see AVAC in the middle of the action year after year.”
 - f) Provide funding for Alumni to continue projects, perhaps as groups, to advance their scope/agenda/impact and include planning for this post-Fellowship phase in the original contracts with AVAC.
2. Keep using projects to access people and attract new Fellows – not only advocates in Kampala and urban areas, but from youth/grassroots advocacy – which will bring more voices to table, provide a human face to the needs, and ensure that government doesn’t tire of same faces.

Conclusion

This case study has shown how advocates in Uganda have taken ownership of their Fellowship experiences, capitalizing on the mentorship opportunity to access the resources, technical assistance and networks they needed to contribute to equitable CSO engagement with PEPFAR and the Government of Uganda.

The Evaluator notes that as Africa approaches epidemic control, funds will start declining, with PEPFAR due to be recommissioned in 2023. It is unlikely that funding will look the same from this point and activists will need to consider new models of sustainability, such as local manufacturing, private sector engagement, public/private partnerships and other locally grown solutions. In this context, independent programs like AVAC's Fellowship will become even more attractive and valuable, providing they are able and willing to adapt their programming and scope to accommodate the inputs and evolving needs of Fellows in regard to the resources, technical assistance and access they require.

Evaluation Question 2:

What have been the long-term impacts of the Fellows Program on its Alumni?

Introduction

When evaluating the long-term impacts of the program, the assessment used surveys and interviews to measure those that endured into the Alumni's post-Fellowship career by considering participants' perceptions concerning:

- skills and knowledge that were built
- the effect the Fellowship continues to have on their current work/career
- professional benefits that were accessed as a result of the experience
- personal and professional growth that has been ongoing post-Fellowship
- networks that were accessed and how these benefited professional careers
- relationships that have endured post-Fellowship

Effect on Current Work

In the survey, Alumni reported (n=28) acquiring knowledge or skills that impacted their professional lives to a great or very great extent, and which continue to influence their current work by contributing positively to:

- their effectiveness as an advocate – 89%
- their ability to develop a professional network – 93%
- their writing and presentation skills – 89%

In terms of the Fellowship having a long-term effect on the HIV landscape, 60% of survey respondents continue to work in the HIV field post-Fellowship (n=28) and 64% have received some kind of grant, award or honors based on their work (n =28). Additionally, 54% have pursued study/professional learning after the Fellowship, including two respondents pursuing PhDs (n=28).

One respondent who now works as a Policy and Advocacy Manager at a regional level noted: “the fellowship was the consolidating factor of my career, [it] gave me opportunities at a higher level than the community.” Others reported that their current work was “based on the fellowship” and told interviewers, “I am a recognized and contributed in the field and the fellowship played a significant role.”

Professional Benefits

In the Chart overleaf it can be seen that nearly 90% of respondents (n=29) felt that the Fellowship afforded them valuable connections in their home country whilst 79% also highlighted connections that were made with Advocates in Other Countries. An equal number (72%) reported that the Fellowship led to new opportunities (conferences, consultancies, grants, jobs, etc.) and an advancement in career.

There was not a single respondent of either the survey or the interviews that reported no professional gain from the Fellowship.

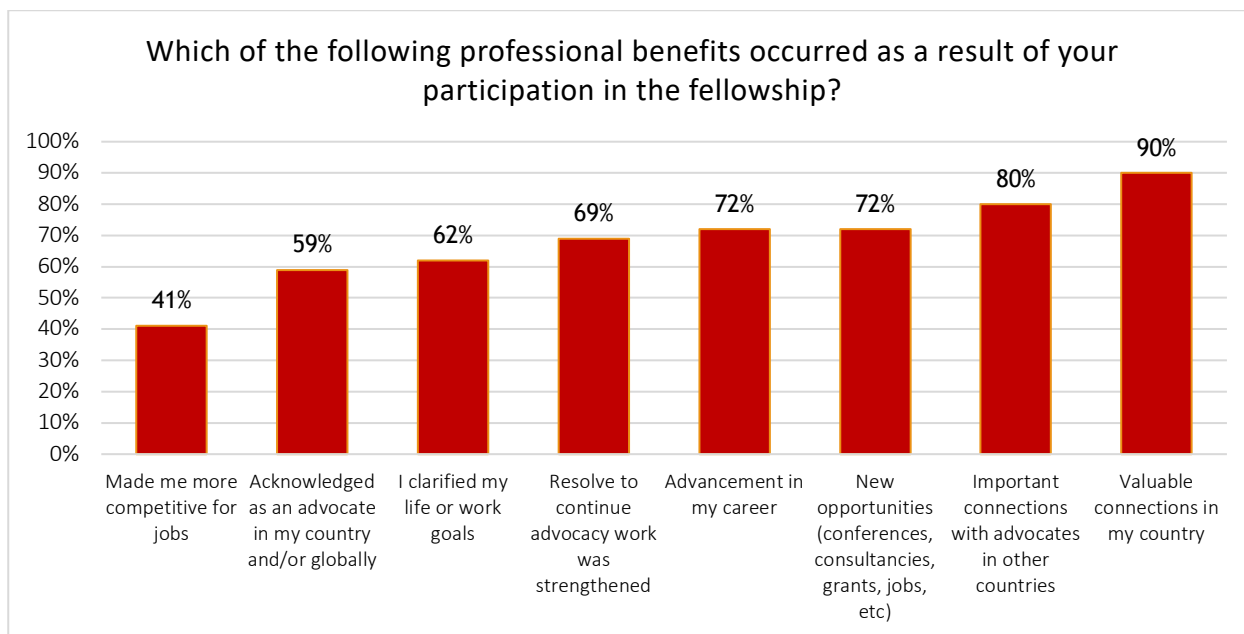


Chart 4: Professional benefits to participation in Fellowship, close-ended survey question, multiple selections possible (n=29)

Professional Skills

When Alumni (n=14) were asked what skills, they had gained through the Fellowship project that have endured into their post-fellowship career and been valuable in their working lives, respondents pointed towards the following skills:

- Time management
- Negotiation
- Communication
- Networking

Highlighting the specific value of the communication skills they developed respondents described gaining the ability to speak publicly, to “engage diplomatically but firmly”, learning to be “concise and decisive” in presentations, and “using evidence to back up” arguments. In regard to negotiation, they mentioned increasing their “community engagement skills”, learning to “be persistent” and to practice “patience and listening skills”.

However, the single greatest reported gain of the Fellowship experience were the networking opportunities and skills acquired by both Fellows and Hosts. Interviewees noted that on entering the Fellowship they either had no networks or some local networks at a grassroots level. One respondent then went on to explain, “These relationships expanded, and I developed a network at a district/national/regional and global level. These are the same networks I’m working with today.” Across the surveys and interviews, Alumni unanimously reported developing networks through the Fellowship that included local, national, regional and international individuals and organizations.

Alumni gave examples of accessing networks during their Fellowship to support the quality and effectiveness of their work. This included using extended networks to get indirect invitations to MOH events in instances where they had been excluded; and using their Host network to arrange access to an event or policymaker because as an individual they had no recognition. Other Fellows described creating networks of CSOs or HIV prevention

‘champions’ to further their own work, whilst one Host also reported using their network to carry out some positive PR for a Fellow who was regarded with suspicion by CSOs due to his/her work as a journalist.

Additionally, these networks were seen to benefit Alumni in their ongoing careers post-fellowship, with one interviewee reporting that they “gained access to working groups [in country] because of my affiliation with AVAC.” Indeed, several respondents reported that being part of the AVAC network leads to further professional opportunities, such as invitations to represent an issue on a public platform. Both Alumni and Hosts identified that one of the major benefits to organizations who hosted a Fellow was that their networks were widened and deepened. In instances where the Alumni continued to work for the Host organization therefore, these developments meant that in their ongoing work, they were able to benefit from new collaborations with “local stakeholders” / “international initiatives like PEPFAR and Global Fund” and/or “a broader network of organizations working in research advocacy”. In fact, in the Zimbabwe Focus Group Discussion, one participant argued that it would be impossible to work as an individual advocate and to “have a voice” on the ground without some kind of affiliation and network.

Outside of their Host networks, Fellows cited multiple examples of networks that had been established during, or as a result of their Fellowships, a few of which are listed below:

- Formation of a coalition of HIV CSO’s in Zambia (2012)
- Establishment of the Eastern Cape and National Task Teams on Safe Male Circumcision in South Africa (2014)
- Bringing together researchers and civil society for a consultation on the Ring Trial in Zimbabwe (2014)
- Formation of PrEP task team in Malawi (2016)
- Forming the first PrEP advocacy coalition in Botswana — PrEP Watch Botswana (2017)
- Established a national Cure Advocacy Group (CRAG) in Uganda (2017)
- Creation of CSO advocacy forum in the southern Malawi region (2018)
- Advocacy Coalition Team (ACT) Zimbabwe
- APHA SA – Advocacy for Prevention of HIV and AIDS

Survey respondents were asked “Are you connected with other alumni Fellows either in a professional capacity or collaborating on advocacy work?” 93% reported they were and 7% said they were not (n=29). When reviewing 34 comments across the survey, respondents provided the following examples of positive networking opportunities or engagement:

- “It has been an immersive opportunity to connect with other advocates, [and] fellows.”
- “The fellows and partners meeting at the beginning of each fellowship year is a great opportunity to network and link up with amazing peers working on similar issues.”
- “[I] got direct mentorship from the AVAC team and Alumni hence forging helpful networks.”
- “The engagement I had with past fellows was also motivating.”
- “The Alumni are easy to access and always willing to support.”
- “AVAC funded the formation of APHA (network of fellows in SA) – they are now a fully-fledged advocacy organization.”

However, some thought more could be done to formalize the Alumni network and capitalize on existing gains. This suggestion will be explored in more detail in the recommendations section:

- “The alumni network is weak and there should be more formal engagement with alumni.”
- “AVAC have their favorite and engage the same people over and over again.”
- “[We need] support for an official Alumni network.”
- “[AVAC should] improve cross learning with other fellows.”

- “There is a general assumption that new fellows get support from old alumni – it’s there but not as vivid as it should be.”

Long-term Relationships

As mentioned above, ongoing engagement, with both AVAC and the Host organization afford the Alumni a certain level of support and opportunity in their professional careers.

Engagement with AVAC

Positively, 85% of survey respondents (n =28) reported an ongoing relationship with AVAC and were on the whole satisfied with their rapport. The relationship was described largely as collegial with one respondent saying, “I still bounce ideas off AVAC, I know that they are partners.” And another going so far as pronouncing, “it is a family to most of us,” creating, “lasting partnership and allies.” Fellows participated in the advisory group for this evaluation and actively engaged in that role and also spoke of being invited to conferences and events by AVAC staff.

However, 14% of respondents (n=27) were actively dissatisfied with AVAC’s ongoing relationship and 22% of respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, indicating that there is still room for improvement. Additionally, 3 interviewees reported “very little engagement and very little contact” or no contact at all with AVAC post-Fellowship.

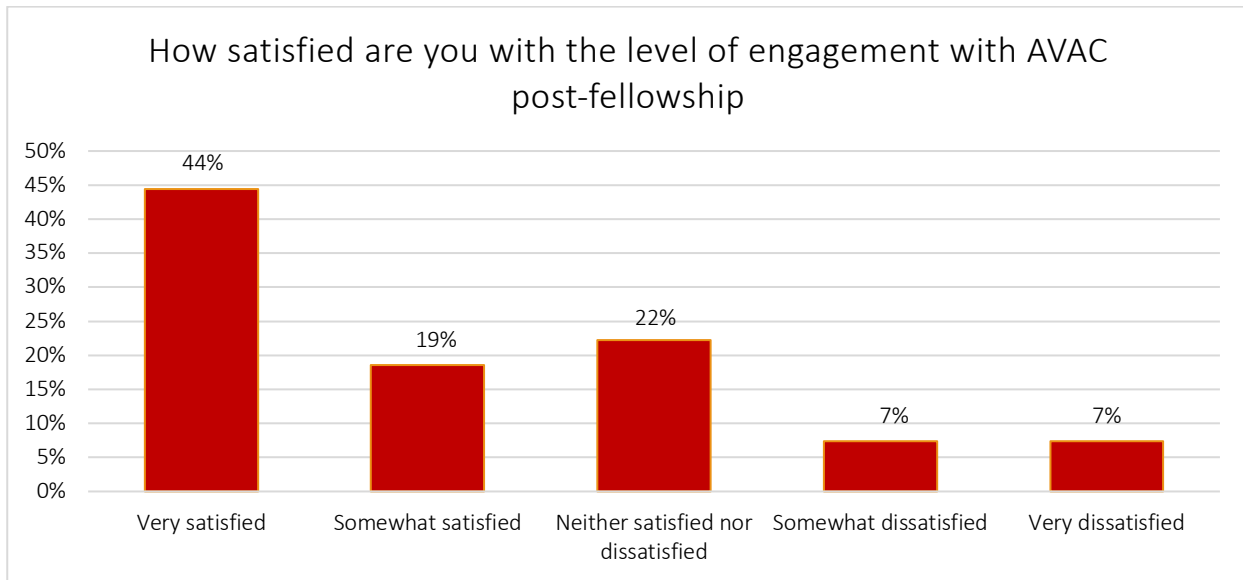


Chart 5: Satisfaction with AVAC engagement post-fellowship (n=27)

In email correspondence¹⁰ with the AVAC management team, Evaluators further probed AVAC’s ongoing relationships with its Fellows, requesting that they describe the efforts they have made to support Alumni engagement and bring together the advocacy community outside of the Fellowship. It is clear from their comprehensive response that over the ten years of the Fellowship, AVAC have engaged on multiple levels. AVAC outlined the following modes of engagement with Alumni (this response is quoted verbatim):

¹⁰ Engagement outlined in correspondence with AVAC, 13 August 2020

- **The Partners Forum:** an event that brings together partners from across the organization for a 3 – 4 day meeting. Several times the Fellows’ orientation has been included alongside the forum. Anywhere from around 75 - 130 people come together, primarily African civil society partners. Partners Forums have been held in Nairobi, Johannesburg and Harare. It should be noted that several evaluation respondents mentioned the Partners Forum as a valuable experience confirming AVAC’s description as “an event that invigorates everyone who attends”.
- **Individual engagement:** this was described as “a little different with each Fellow,” depending on their project, country, performance in their year, opportunities for follow-up and the relationship that has been forged. Examples include, granting no-cost extensions to finish pending work, providing follow on grants to work that links with AVAC priorities or projects.
- **Virtual Group engagement:** initiated by AVAC via social media platforms and more formal channels including Alumni email groups, Whatsapp groups for each year, and occasional check-in calls with individuals or groups
- **In-country meetings:** AVAC staff almost always host a get-together when they are in the country and also invite Alumni/Fellows to in-country meetings that other AVAC teams and partners are conducting, involving them as key stakeholders in local consultations, working groups, etc.
- **Fellow Selection process:** AVAC invites relevant alumni and Fellows to be part of the review committee for selecting new Fellows and also reach out to Alumni to help identify applicants for the next year, including offering a small budget for them to organize info sessions for interested applicants
- **Shared opportunities:** AVAC offers financial support for Alumni to attend conferences, suggest them as speakers/facilitators for meetings and conferences, send them opportunities for scholarships, conferences, jobs etc., and quote them in media coverage, referring in-country journalists to them for an advocates’ perspective
- **Technical assistance:** AVAC invites its Alumni to trainings and webinars, provide writing and editing support on request, and generally have an open-door policy to provide technical support when needed

The evaluators note that the above response from AVAC, does not detract from the experiences of engagement described previously, as they represent the perceptions of the respondents. However, it might indicate that not all Alumni know about AVAC’s engagement or feel that more is needed.

Engagement with Host Organizations

There was significantly less engagement with Host organizations post-Fellowship. Whilst, 60% of fellows reported (n=28) an ongoing relationship and were satisfied with their level of engagement (including 3 respondents who were still actively working for their Host, one of whom now leads that organization); 25% of Alumni were dissatisfied, (n=27) representing almost double the rates of dissatisfaction with AVAC engagement. This is perhaps to be expected, as per Evaluation Question 1, there was less satisfaction with Host Organizations engagement during the Fellowship itself.

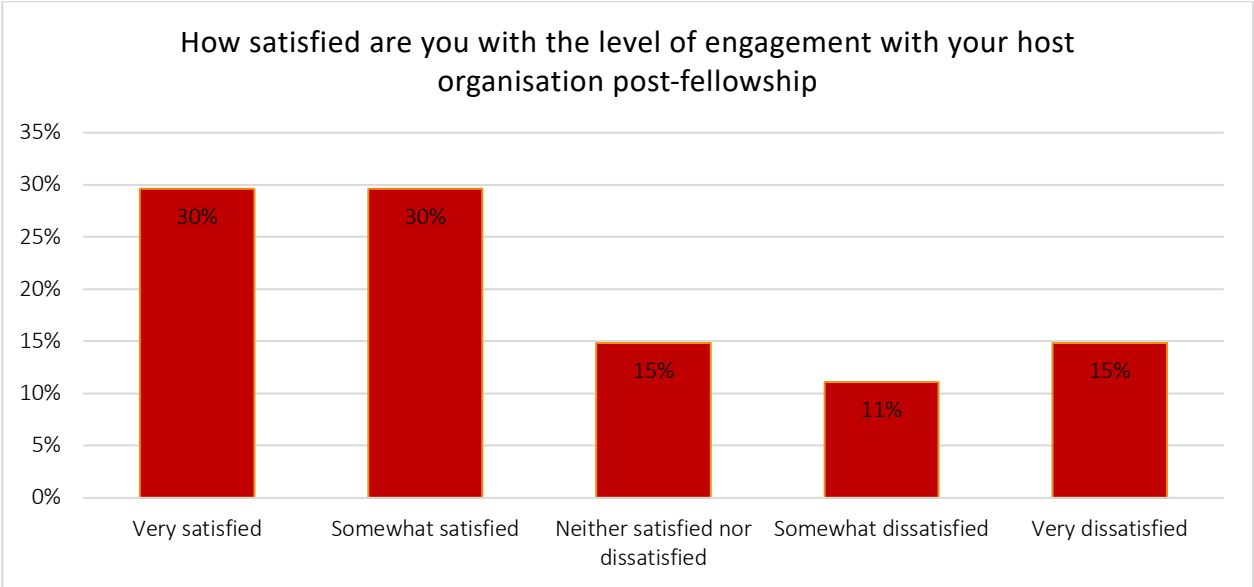


Chart 6: Satisfaction with Host organization engagement post-fellowship (n=27)

Conclusion: Evaluation Question 2

Evaluators determined that the majority of respondents have experienced ongoing professional success post-Fellowship and have attributed this in part to the knowledge and skills they developed, the support they received from AVAC and Host organizations, and networks they accessed through the Fellowship. However, there was a much wider disparity in experience of and satisfaction with ongoing relationships, which points to AVAC needing to promote Alumni partnership in the Fellowship Program; an idea which is explored in detail in the Evaluator’s Recommendations.

Evaluation Question 3:

How has the program enabled alumni to contribute to long-term impacts at the organizational and community levels?

(Both at host organizations and at organizations Alumni have worked at post-fellowship)

Introduction

Evaluators used surveys, interviews and Focus Group Discussions to gauge whether Hosts and Alumni identified shifts at organizational and community levels (during and post-Fellowship) and furthermore recognized Fellows' contributions to these shifts. In particular, they sought to identify whether Fellows had affected their organizations and communities by shaping policy/agenda, increasing knowledge or skills, and/or influencing structural changes.

Organizational Impacts

Host Organizations

As mentioned under Evaluation Question 1, Host organization respondents (n=21) were overwhelmingly (90%) in agreement that hosting a Fellow had been beneficial to their organization, with 100% of interview respondents who were asked indicating that they would be likely to host a fellow in the future if the opportunity arose. A similar figure (85%) believed that the project undertaken as part of the Fellowship year contributed to the HIV prevention work the host organization was doing and to the HIV landscape at a national level (n=21).

At an organizational level, 61% of Hosts identified (n=21) that these impacts were felt because the program activities (and indirectly its affiliation with AVAC) enabled Fellows to raise the profile of their Host Organization. One interviewee noted, "AVAC gives you credibility, people listen because they know you have understanding of the matters," whilst others reiterated that since AVAC is viewed as a source of accurate information, when Fellows are associated with AVAC, they are recognized as having access to knowledge and gain legitimacy.

More directly, the Fellow's work expanded the organizations' understanding or capacity to engage in HIV prevention advocacy. Hosts were able to give specific examples of how Fellows influenced strategy or policy at their organizations by:

- "engag[ing] us in policy working groups",
- "contribut[ing] to the shaping our work with project partners and beneficiaries",
- "influenc[ing] the HIV self-testing strategy in our organization", and
- Three organizations specifically reported that PrEP "education" and "advocacy" was integrated into their activities as a direct result of the Fellows' activity

Additionally, on the national level, Hosts reported that they believed the Fellows' projects contributed to raising awareness of HIV prevention and helping to educate and inform decision makers. Informing policy and building/strengthening CSOs to engage with HIV prevention were also strongly noted by respondents, whilst helping to influence allocation of resources was not as apparent to Hosts. An exception to this can be seen in the Uganda case study, where AVAC Fellows are considered to be strong influencers behind PEPFAR's decision to include recommendations from CSOs in the drafting of Country Operational Plans that dictate funding allocations.

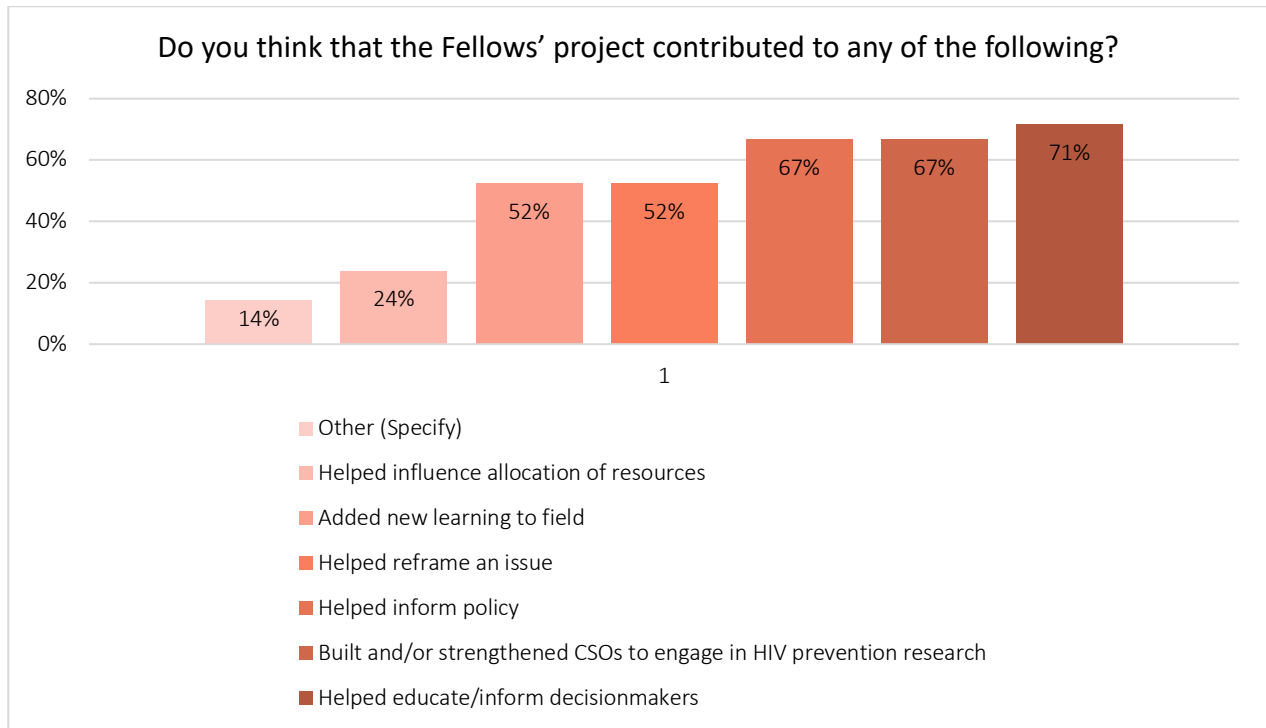


Chart 7: Fellows project contribution, close ended question, multiple selections possible (n=20)

There was only 1 (out of 21 responses) that had a negative view of the Fellowship's impacts. In this case, the Host felt they had little knowledge or engagement with the Fellow and did not know what they had achieved during the year, "It is impossible to respond [to this question] because we don't know what [they] did and how [they] did it. [W]e got reports' summarized version with no details, for example: conducted 6 workshops with advocates in the community. This does not mean anything." However, this appeared to be an outlier response and was not a theme that arose elsewhere in the survey or in any of the interviews conducted.

Fellows were also asked to what extent they thought they had influenced strategy or policy in organizations they worked at during their Fellowship. The majority (78%) reported that they did influence strategy or policy, with 46% indicating that this was 'to a great extent'. Only 7% acknowledged that their influence was on a small scale, whilst no respondents reported a nil effect.

Alumni were asked to describe the specific contribution their work had made, and the significance it has had, on any prevention-related changes or shifts at the Host organization. Half of the responses related to strengthening the organization's role in the field of advocacy by either:

- a) improving capacity, or
- b) raising profile in regard to HIV prevention

Some examples from the 24 responses included:

- "My host organization took on leadership in HIV prevention research advocacy efforts, collaborating with other civil society organizations nationally and regionally."
- 'My work strengthened the organizations interests in HIV prevention advocacy.'
- "I think that my work has informed the prevention strategies for young people at my host organization."
- "My work created visibility of the organization in HIV prevention advocacy"
- "My work as a Fellow have [sic] made my host organization to start thinking big about some members of the community that they don't really consider more at risk of HIV earlier"

One Fellow noted a contribution to the workflow process at their Host organization, explaining that their Fellowship work had a cascade effect by informing the projects of subsequent Fellows, “I did the groundwork and my work acted as a springboard on which the Fellows who came in after me built their work on.”

Only one respondent held that their work had made no long-term contribution, despite it initially prompting developments at the organization, “No contribution made in relation to HIV prevention - an advocacy department was just started but it did not live up to its first birthday.”

Post-Fellowship Organizations

In investigating long-term impacts, Alumni were asked to reflect on how their work has contributed to HIV prevention related changes post-Fellowship (n=28). Fellows’ responses reflect similar impacts to those Hosts described at their Fellowship organizations. These can be categorized as follows:

1. Providing technical support: “I have been providing technical support to local organizations by sharing current HIV prevention work and also technical support for the adoption of new HIV prevention methodologies that are available.”
2. Shaping Agenda: “My work helped shift focus to treatment for the double of improved health and the benefit of prevention, where I work today”
3. Shifting Perspectives: Several respondents reported that the importance of stakeholder engagement is now recognized in organizations that they work in and that this can be traced to principles they learned as part of the Fellowship.
4. Representing Organizational Interests: A number of respondents also described sitting on various national Technical Working Groups (or equivalent) and that this has significant importance to their organization and the wider prevention agenda at a national level.

One clear example of the kind of impacts Fellows are able to have post-Fellowship comes from a survey respondent who is now working for an international organization at a national level in an East African country. The Fellow explains, “I have used the skills and advocacy experience gained from the fellowship to inform the design and implementation of a project...In this project, I speak and ensure that voices of key populations are included.”

Community Impacts

Moving up to the community level, 76% of Host Organizations that responded to the online survey (n=21) believed that the project undertaken as part of the Fellowship year had an impact on the wider HIV prevention landscape. Similarly, 64% of Fellows said they had a great or very great influence on community policy or strategy with only 3.5% reporting that their projects had no effect at this level (n=28). In regard to the specific prevention-related change that occurred via Fellows’ work post-fellowship, they reported:

1. Increasing HIV Prevention Awareness: e.g. “Increasing awareness of the importance of community involvement in HIV prevention”/ “I founded a community-based organization working on HIV prevention strategies”
2. Increasing Knowledge: e.g. Fellows work has “Increased knowledge on HIV prevention options among young people”
3. Increasing Community Pride: e.g. “Empowered the community to understand the importance speaking our truth and further demanding for our rights”.

An example that stood out for its impact and longevity was that of a Fellow that had directly strengthened the advocacy capacity in the community in which he worked, “I created new HIV prevention champions – by mentoring young women to engage in advocacy to influence research, programs and policies that impacts their lives. They are still doing that today.” Other specific examples include a Fellow who introduced PrEP at 2 universities in Zimbabwe and laid the groundwork at other universities to enable the work to continue, a project that resulted in the development of guidelines at a national level for index testing in Kenya which are still in use, and a Fellow who established national guidelines on self-testing and introduced a self-testing program, also in Kenya.

Program Design

If one links the above information about organizational and community impacts with the increased skills and personal developments that were identified by Hosts and Fellows in Evaluation Question 1 and 2, it becomes apparent that the Fellowship Program enables impacts by enabling people.

As summarized in Question 1, Fellow’s believe that they are enabled through the financial support they receive, the access they get to key meetings/decision makers and the technical support they receive from AVAC. Thus, people are inherently enabled through the Program design itself which, according to AVAC, includes¹¹:

- Mentoring and capacity building in HIV prevention research and implementation advocacy from AVAC for both Advocacy Fellows and Host Organizations.
- Connection to a global network of HIV advocates including current and former Advocacy Fellows, researchers, civil society leaders and other individuals and/or organizations working in similar fields.
- Opportunities for networking and information sharing with other Advocacy Fellows and a broader community of advocates including activists, scientists, clinical trial staff and other stakeholders working in the HIV movement.
- A small stipend and technical assistance for the selected Advocacy Fellow for the initial development of a detailed work plan (up to three days over a maximum of two months). This phase takes place before the official Fellows Program year begins.
- Financial support and technical assistance from AVAC for project implementation over 12 months. Through a grant to the Host organization, the Fellow will receive full-time salary support, a budget for project execution and access to a discretionary fund for specific travel, infrastructure or and information technology (IT) needs.
- Overhead administration funding to the Host Organization to cover costs associated with hosting a Fellow will also be included in the grant...(for example, proportion of rent, phone, some personnel costs such as executive director, accounting and administrative staff time) and calculated as a percentage of the overall grant.

In the survey, Fellows’ noted that the AVAC Advocacy Fellowship was “a well thought program for mid-career advocates, [that] pays a competitive salary” and credited the actual program design for providing “a chance to learn and connect with other people.” Several aspects of the program design mentioned above were further endorsed by survey respondents:

- Mentorship: “AVAC throughout the program provided exceptional mentorship through monthly calls and in-country partner organizations and researchers.”/ “I had a local mentor with whom we planned, implemented and evaluated our performance collectively. We literally did everything together although she let me take the lead as she took a backstage (at times). I had a very active AVAC team on the other side of the world that closely monitored and gave direction on a regular basis.”

¹¹ AVAC, *Advocacy Fellows Program Information Packet*; p:5

- Capacity Building: “[The] specific knowledge I gained when I was a fellow with AVAC is informing my current community mobilization work” / “Fellowship exposed me to knowledge that I would not have had an opportunity to be exposed to.”
- Opportunities for Networking: “The fellows and partners meeting at the beginning of each fellowship year is a great opportunity to network and link up with amazing peers working on similar issues.” / The partners meeting help strengthen linkages with researchers, policy makers and other fellows for one’s work life / “opportunity to interact with a diverse group of people from different backgrounds”
- Opportunities for Information Sharing: “[Gained] access [to] information and data for our own use” (Host respondent)
- Technical Support: “The technical support from my [Host and AVAC] supervisors enabled me to achieve more than what I expected.” / “The training was hands on, and this enhanced skill building.”

This last point, mentorship, is seen to be particularly valuable in shaping Fellows into professional advocates capable of creating lasting change. Survey respondents commented that the mentorship provided “Post-fellowship collaboration”, “continued technical support”, and “motivation and self-confidence”. Mentors taught skills such as “discipline”, “leadership”, “critical thinking”, “report writing”, and “efficiency”. Importantly, the relationship with mentors also contributed to Fellows’ personal development in a way that was long lasting, with Alumni stating:

- “Their continued connection with me during my Fellowship accorded more opportunities of cross-learning and on spot support which enabled me to have my self-esteem built.”
- “Their openness and coaching skills were so beneficial in that I am now able to use the same skills as I do my work,”
- “I learnt a lot about myself and how much strength I possess within me,” and
- “Their mentorship has taught me to realize my potential as an advocate.”

These findings substantiate the survey results which revealed that the mentorship provided during the Fellowship exceed expectations for 60% of respondents (see p20).

Additionally, Hosts recognised the capacity building that took place, noting their Fellows developing independence, self-confidence, and ambition during the Fellowship year (see p22).

Conclusion: Evaluation Question 3

In summary, respondents perceive that the Fellowship Program has enabled Fellows to influence outcomes at organizational and community level in three ways:

1. The foundational work that AVAC does to empower Fellows through the program design, improves their confidence, ambition, scientific knowledge and technical abilities which in turn influences the efficacy of their work and the attitudes at their organizations.
2. The Fellow’s actual project activities shape organizational agendas and work which in turn, affects communities and national priorities.
3. The link to AVAC provides recognition, legitimacy and access (specifically to AVAC networks) which allows Fellows to carry out their projects successfully and perhaps at a higher level than they would individually.

Based on this evidence, Evaluators are able to conclude that, in its current form, the approach the Program takes contributes to developments at organizational and community levels.

Evaluation Question 4.

What contributions to the HIV prevention landscape have alumni made as a result of their fellowship opportunity?

Introduction

Surveys, interviews and FGD's again provided data to Evaluators with which they measured Fellows, Hosts, and AVAC's perceptions of:

- changes to the wider prevention landscape in each country
- Fellows influencing these outcomes through their Fellowship and ongoing work

Country changes were confirmed by referencing evidence provided by public sources, such as Avert.org.

The section ends with a Kenyan Case Study which was based on information largely provided through in-depth interviews.

As will be shown, the AVAC Advocacy Fellows have played a part in shaping the HIV prevention landscape in their home countries although several points should be noted:

- It is beyond the scope of the evaluation to find independent verification of all the information provided; therefore, the evaluators are unable to attribute any country change directly to the Fellowship and can only report contribution as it was conveyed in surveys, interviews and reports.
- The evaluators received survey responses from 10/14 countries that have hosted Fellows but are only able to assess the 7 countries for which data about changes to the HIV prevention landscape was provided.
- There is obviously no 'one size fits all' answer; each country, project and Fellow has a unique context, with an individual set of circumstances that affect both the Fellowship experience and the impacts Fellows were able to make.

With this in mind, the findings to this question are organized alphabetically by country below and should be considered more as anecdotal accounts than comprehensive assessments.

India

It should be noted that there has only been one AVAC Fellow in India and therefore it is expected that contributions to the HIV landscape as a whole would be minimal at this stage.

Background

India has the third largest HIV epidemic in the world, estimated 2.14 million people living with HIV and 87,580 new infections in 2017¹². There is higher prevalence among key population groups, including sex workers and men who have sex with men¹³. Recognizing the situation, there has been particular efforts to reach these two high-risk groups with targeted interventions (TIs) led by the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO). This has resulted in sharp declines in HIV incidence over the last decade and compared to neighboring countries, India has made good progress in reducing new HIV infections by half since 2001. However, despite free antiretroviral treatment being available, access to clinics remains a barrier to uptake.¹⁴ Additionally, while national HIV prevalence has decreased among sex workers from 10.33% in 2003 to 1.56% in 2017, prevalence is higher than average in certain states.¹⁵

¹² NACO & ICMR, *HIV Estimations 2017*, p:3

¹³ NACO, *HIV Sentinel Surveillance*, p: 1

¹⁴ Avert, *HIV and Aids in Kenya*

¹⁵ NACO, *HIV Sentinel Surveillance*, p: 2

Fellowship Impacts

The project in India confronted the issue of PrEP at a national level by, “seek[ing] to build political and wide-spread community support to pave the way for PrEP’s rollout” (among sex workers). The monthly project reports document running training in the local community amongst FSW and meeting with state and national level stakeholders to develop state-specific advocacy plans. Specifically, the Fellow reported that there is now a draft policy on PrEP in India, inclusive of sex workers.

There is additional publicly available information on the host CSO being involved in the demonstration project and feasibility study to roll out PrEP among female and transgender sex workers prior to the Fellowship.¹⁶ In one independent study, the host organisation was described as a “well-established community-led” organisation and noted, in regard to the PrEP study, that, “similar models of community mobilisation and support can be adopted to other environments.”¹⁷ Thus, situated within a strong organisation that held specific knowledge of PrEP in the Indian context, the Fellow was well-placed to advocate for PrEP policy nationally and clearly contributed towards the processes that are expected to result in roll-out.

Malawi

Background

According to an Avert country overview¹⁸, despite making progress in recent years, Malawi continues to have one of the highest rates of HIV prevalence globally. Those at greatest risk include:

- Young people - due to early sexual activity and marriage. Around 1/3 of all new HIV infections in Malawi occurred among young people (ages 15-24) in 2018 and around 60% of young people don’t have sufficient HIV prevention knowledge.
- Stigmatized key populations – including men who have sex with men and sex workers.
- Women – disproportionately affected by HIV, make up 60% of People living with HIV (PLHIV) and show double the infection rates of men in the young adult age group.¹⁹

In regard to HIV prevention, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is not widely available in Malawi, with only about 1,500 current PrEP users (far short of the targeted 19,647 set in the PEPFAR COP 2020 plan)²⁰. A clinical trial among HIV-positive pregnant adolescents and young women (ages 16-24), a demonstration project and large-scale implementation project through PEPFAR are underway. However, in May 2018, the Minister of Health, Atupele Muluzi, described the government’s approach to PrEP as one of “caution”, suggesting national roll-out is not imminent.²¹

Despite this reality, Malawi is approaching epidemic control and close to achieving the 2020 UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets which include 90% of people with HIV knowing their status, 90% of these accessing Antiretroviral drugs (ARVS) and 90% of those on treatment being virally suppressed. Malawi figures in 2019 were 90-84-90²².

Fellowship Impacts

Survey and interview respondents point to the introduction of PrEP in Malawi as being the main change in the HIV landscape that the Fellowship has contributed to. One host even attributed the country’s engagement directly to the Program, “initial conversations on PrEP were initiated by AVAC fellow in 2015.” This was backed

¹⁶ AVAC, *PrEP Projects, India*

¹⁷ Sushena Reza-Paul, *The Ashodaya PrEP project*

¹⁸ Avert, *HIV and Aids in Malawi*

¹⁹ UNAIDS, *Malawi*

²⁰ PrEP Watch, *Malawi*

²¹ Quoted in Avert, *HIV and Aids in Malawi*

²² PrEP Watch, *Malawi*

up by an Alumni respondent who repeated the assertion, “Fellows have helped in engaging policy holders to consider revising the policies for Malawi to embrace PrEP, it was as a result of advocacy work by fellows for 3 years. In fact, the discussion on PrEP in Malawi was brought by [an] AVAC Fellow in 2015.”

Alumni and Hosts noted the shift at Ministry level in Malawi with PrEP being included in the national HIV prevention guidelines in December 2018 in spite of the Minister’s concerns mentioned above, “the Ministry has been able to accommodate the advanced HIV prevention methods that the Fellowship (sic) has been lobbying for by allowing the commencement of demonstration sites.” This was viewed as a “significant move”, with the enrolment of people into PrEP as a “win for prevention”. A Malawian Host respondent pointed to the work of AVAC Fellows as contributing to these developments, including:

- A 2017 project which focused, “on pushing PrEP guidance to be included in Policy”
- Fellows dedicated to providing vulnerable populations with access to PrEP
- Specifically, an AVAC Fellow’s project to “enhance the PrEP conversation for AGYW in tertiary schools” in 2019 was cited as an important example.

This is even more relevant when considered in light of a response in the Alumni survey that another gain in the prevention landscape in Malawi in recent years has been that, “AGYW now have a voice to demand for what they need in HIV prevention.” According to the available information about Malawi’s Fellows on AVAC’s website, several projects (2015, 2018, 2019 and 2020) have, or are focusing, their attention on empowering AGYW and other groups to earn them recognition as key populations²³. This attention is seen to align with one of the goals of PEPFAR’s Country Operational Plan for 2020 (COP20), “To complement retention efforts, COP20 will expand implementation of high impact prevention interventions targeting men, key populations (KP) including men who have sex with men (MSM), female sex workers (FSW), male sex workers (MSW), transgender persons, and adolescent girls and young women (AGYW).”²⁴ Drafted in consultation with CSOs and the Government of Malawi, PEPFAR’s annual COP outline the national focus in HIV prevention and treatment each year, providing the expectation that if Fellowship projects continue to support COP goals, the impacts of the Fellowship will be ongoing.

Nigeria

Background

With a massive population of close to 220 million, Nigeria has the second largest HIV epidemic in the world²⁵ and one of the highest rates of new infection in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2013, Nigeria contributed 9% of the people living with HIV, 10% of new HIV infections, and 14% of HIV-related deaths in the world²⁶. Six years on, in 2019, UNAIDS estimated that around two-thirds of new HIV infections in West and Central Africa occurred in Nigeria.²⁷ The HIV epidemic in Nigeria affects populations of all age groups and locations although there is geographic variation as well as age and sex disaggregation, with the southern and central parts of the country faring worse and women in general, and in the 35-39 age group in particular, recording the highest prevalence²⁸. Additionally, “key populations constitute about 1% of the adult population in Nigeria, but they contribute as much as 23% of new HIV infections. Together with their partners, KPs account for 3.4% of the adult population and 32% of new HIV infections.”²⁹

²³ AVAC, *Fellows & Alumni: Malawi*

²⁴ PEPFAR, *Malawi COP 2020 Strategic Direction Summary*, p: 4

²⁵ NACA, *Nigeria National Framework on HIV and AIDS*, p: viii

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Quoted in Avert, *HIV and Aids in Nigeria*

²⁸ PEPFAR, *Nigeria COP 2020 Strategic Direction Summary*, p: 9-11

²⁹ NACA, *Nigeria National Framework on HIV and AIDS*, p: 10

One of the main barriers to controlling the epidemic in Nigeria has been the challenge of ‘case-finding’, with only 67% of all PLHIVs knowing their status.³⁰ Other difficulties include the relatively low numbers of HIV testing and counselling sites across the country, low access to antiretroviral therapy (ART), stigma and punitive laws against homosexuality and sex work (which affects access to services for key populations), and the high prevalence of co-morbidities, in particular, Tuberculosis.³¹

Current figures estimate a mere 600-800 PrEP users nationwide and the existence of 1 demonstration and 1 implementation project.³² However, the National HIV and AIDS Strategic Framework 2017-2021, “recognizes the efficacy of HIV combination prevention approaches by the application of a mix of evidence-based behavioural, biomedical and structural interventions to prevent new HIV infections.” It promotes access to pre- exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), and Treatment as Prevention (TasP) and outlines a goal to implement PrEP amongst 90% of key and vulnerable populations by 2021.

Fellowship Impacts

Respondents reported that the main gain in the prevention field in Nigeria in recent years has been improvements in support and services for key populations and young people, specifically at a local level. One respondent provided the following detail: “SRH-HIV collaboration in Lagos state and Abuja...now has active advocacy programme integrated into their work. This has helped to facilitate the development of a policy that promotes younger adolescents’ access to SRH-HIV services without parental consent. It has also increased public awareness and support of adolescent’s access to SRH-HIV services as an HIV prevention pathway.” Other examples explored the relationship between the Fellow’s “continued advocacy for broader access and availability for key populations” and the noticeable, “increased prevention and treatment services.” This included, one hosts report that Fellows had “produced advocacy tools (desk review and policy briefs) used for stakeholders’ engagement.”

Showing recognition of the realities on the ground, two of the Nigerian Fellows’ projects focus/ed on promoting and improving access to prevention methods among sex workers as a key population. The remainder dealt with sharing information on HIV prevention tools and sexual health education with the aim to ensure “treatment is available, accessible and affordable to all that need it.”³³

This advocacy emphasis on accessing and sharing accurate information can be seen to align with recent national interest in data collection. In 2019, the government released the Nigeria HIV/AIDS Indicator and Impact Survey (NAIIS) which was lauded for attempting to seriously map the epidemic, “For the first time ever in Nigeria, we have robust data that tell us where HIV is concentrated; viral suppression among people living with HIV; the gaps in the HIV response by geography, gender, and age; and what HIV policies and focused resources are needed.”³⁴

It appears that in such a large and populous country, where even identifying how far the epidemic reaches has been a challenge, AVAC Fellows’ advocacy projects and campaigning are an important resource which simply provides a group people “willing to engage with the research, influence policy, watchdog, capitalize on funding, ensure community voices are heard,” just as AVAC envisioned.

South Africa

Background

³⁰ PEPFAR, *Nigeria COP 2020 Strategic Direction Summary*, p: 9

³¹ Avert, *HIV and Aids in Nigeria*

³² PrEP Watch, *Nigeria*

³³ AVAC, *Fellow Profile Taiwo Oyelakin*

³⁴ Ambassador Deborah L. Birx, quoted in *PEPFAR Release*

South Africa has the highest profile HIV epidemic in the world with 7.7 million PLHIV and the world's largest ART program. Although prevalence among the general population is extremely high at 20.4% there is wide-ranging regional variation. There has been a 50% decrease in AIDS-related deaths since 2010³⁵ as well as a marked decrease in new infections (although incidence remains high).³⁶ South Africa has also made huge improvements in getting people to test for HIV in recent years, and met the first UNAIDS 90-90-90 target, PLHIV knowing their status.³⁷ South Africa was the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to fully approve PrEP, which is now being made available to people at high risk of infection.³⁸ PrEPWatch currently estimates that there are 17 PrEP projects completed, ongoing or planned countrywide.³⁹

According to PEPFAR, "South Africa's HIV epidemic is largely driven by heterosexual transmission, with underlying behavioural, socio-cultural, economic, and structural factors influencing HIV transmission risk."⁴⁰ Some of the challenges to controlling the epidemic include treatment retention problems with high rates of loss to follow up, poor quality of HIV services available in the public sector⁴¹, criminalisation of sex work, a lack of coordination and implementation capacity at the subnational level, and the need for stronger HIV monitoring and accountability.⁴²

Fellowship Impacts

The evaluation surveys provided limited information on changes in the South African prevention landscape other than "rollout of new HIV prevention modalities," which, "are constantly being reviewed." Similarly, there was little data on Fellows' impacts, except for the comment that Fellows, "have been invited to be part of consultative processes and decision making in policies and programs," (and presumably contributed to these discussions).

However, investigating the projects carried out by AVAC's South African Fellows, it appears that a major change in the South African context is the development of HIV fatigue. Two projects focused on addressing this reality, with one "re-energiz[ing] advocacy in the context of a feminized epidemic"⁴³ and the other "working with media to overcome HIV fatigue".⁴⁴

Another identifiable trait which the projects highlight is the complexity of the response to the South African epidemic since policy was first drafted in 1994. Since the early 2000s, there has been a shift at the national level from suspicion of science and orthodoxy towards bio-medical prevention, with several sources noting the effect of history on the initial response, "Suspicion of Western drugs and denial of the epidemic [by the SA government] can be understood as deeply embedded effects of the actions of the apartheid regime."⁴⁵

Although such suspicions are largely laid to rest, there are many social determinants still affecting prevention and treatment that continue to complicate advocacy. Thus, South African Fellows appear to have contributed to the wider landscape by addressing specifics in their advocacy, rather than just calling for basic rollout of prevention modalities as in other countries. Some of their projects include a focus on:

- Assisted partner notification
- Safer approaches to traditional male circumcision

³⁵ UNAIDS, *South Africa*

³⁶ PEPFAR, *South Africa COP: Strategic Direction Summary*, p: 9

³⁷ UNAIDS, *South Africa*

³⁸ Avert, *HIV and Aids in South Africa*

³⁹ PrEP Watch, *South Africa*

⁴⁰ PEPFAR, *South Africa COP: Strategic Direction Summary*, p: 8

⁴¹ PEPFAR, *People's COP20 South Africa*, p:2

⁴² UNAIDS, *HIV 2020 Road Map*, p: 9, 21

⁴³ AVAC, *Fellow Profile Nomfundo Eland*

⁴⁴ AVAC, *Fellow Profile, Yvette Raphaelle*

⁴⁵ Didier Fassin and Helen Schneider, *The Politics of AIDS in South Africa*

- Integrating gender equality education with Voluntary male medical circumcision (VMMC) scaleup
- Analyzing research findings and prevention methods in a culturally appropriate manner
- Exploring key ethical issues in the conduct of trials
- Integrating support services for gender-based violence (GBV) into HIV prevention packages

See South African Case Study (p72) for further details on Fellowship role in the South African advocacy space.

Uganda

Background

According to the MOH, Uganda has an estimated 1,392,742 people living with HIV⁴⁶ As in many other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, women are disproportionately affected by HIV with prevalence among AGYW being 4 times higher than among adolescent boys and young men.⁴⁷ Avert notes that “There are many political and cultural barriers which have hindered effective HIV prevention programming in Uganda.” This includes stigma against homosexuality, and laws that penalize men who have sex with men, sex workers, and people who inject drugs. As these are some of the key populations most vulnerable to HIV infection, it is expected that infections will rise as these groups continue to have difficulty accessing services.⁴⁸ Treatment retention is another challenge with, “Persistently high rates of loss to follow up (LTFU), as illustrated by the loss of 140,000 PLHIV (12% of the overall number of Ugandans on treatment) over the implementation of COP18.”⁴⁹

However, UNAIDS highlights the existence of various factors that reflect positively on Uganda’s HIV prevention landscape including the operation of a National Prevention Committee to oversee the HIV prevention response, technical working groups to support day-to-day prevention work, and a dedicated framework for HIV prevention.⁵⁰ Additionally, in an index of policy and programmatic readiness for PrEP, Uganda was rated highly⁵¹ with its roll-out expanding to a current estimate of 32,000 users and clinical trial, demonstration projects, large-scale implementation, national level availability in government clinics and product introduction underway⁵²

Fellowship Impacts

Changes in Uganda’s prevention landscape recorded by respondents included:

- “Aggressive scale up of prevention programs”
- A shift towards combination prevention that includes emphasis on bio-medical and behavioral prevention
- Higher priority for HIV prevention in part due to the introduction of “mandatory annual reporting against set indicator[s]”
- “Significant increase in funding towards prevention”
- Increased engagement with key populations who are disproportionately affected by HIV

With 11 AVAC Fellows thus far, there has been a great deal of activity on the ground in Uganda. Fellows have featured in the media locally and internationally, created policy briefs, fact sheets, statements, abstracts, at least one civil society report, and a variety of blog posts, radio presentations, videos and even songs.⁵³ The main

⁴⁶ PEPFAR, *People’s Voice Uganda COP2020*, p:2

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Avert, *HIV and Aids in Uganda*

⁴⁹ PEPFAR, *People’s Voice Uganda COP2020*, p:2

⁵⁰ UNAIDS, *HIV 2020 Road Map*, p: 44

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² PrEP Watch, *Uganda*

⁵³ AVAC, *Fellows & Alumni: Uganda*

impact according to respondents, as outlined in the Uganda Case Study (p32), is that the Fellowship has played a role in engaging policy makers to affect change on the HIV landscape.

Specifically, one Fellow reported that this was done by, “consistently and regularly shar[ing] the science that revealed treatment as prevention.” Fellows were also seen to have, “influenced rollout and scale up of new prevention option [PrEP],” with one host respondent corroborating this finding by reporting that as a result of the Fellow’s activity, “The country has in a way agreed to include PrEP as a preventive tool for high risk populations.”

Fellows were also seen to directly contribute to mobilising key populations and increasing demand for services, “The Fellowships have also increased awareness levels in most of the affected population and this empowered them to demand for the services through Community sensitization to create demand” / “the landscape is more focused to those at high risk i.e. the AGYW and Key populations.” One final project report also noted that the Fellow had, “Established a national viral load monitoring advocacy group...which contributed to creating overwhelming demand for the services.”

Zambia

Background

According to PEPFAR data on Zambia, in the last decade new HIV infections have dropped more than 50 percent; over 1 million people are on ART; and thousands of babies are born free from HIV each year because nearly 100 % of Zambian women have access to HIV prevention of mother to child transmission services.⁵⁴ With up to 77%⁵⁵ of PLHIV now virally suppressed, life expectancy for the PLHIV has also improved.⁵⁶ In 2007, Zambia was listed as one of the UNAIDS/WHO priority countries for VMMC and in the subsequent 10 years targeted funding and programs have led to voluntary circumcision by 2,450,898 men and boys.⁵⁷

However, prevalence remains high (around 11%⁵⁸) with women being disproportionately affected by HIV, (prevalence among young women is more than double that of young men).⁵⁹ In regard to key populations, “robust data on population size and HIV impact remains a challenge,”⁶⁰ and it is expected that economic challenges in 2019 will limit the resources the Government of Zambia can contribute towards sustaining its gains in HIV epidemic control.⁶¹

Fellowship Impacts

Limited information was provided in surveys and interviews on the role that Zambian Fellows played in the prevention landscape. One respondent did make the general comment that, “The fellowship program has produced very strong advocates who have managed to bring change at many different levels of decision making.” Another Host respondent provided a more specific example, stating that the greatest change in the Zambian landscape was increased donor involvement and outlining how a Fellow had contributed to this by utilizing evidence-based advocacy in a discussion during a strategic meeting (involving donors).

Additionally, according to AVAC’s website, Zambian Fellows have advocated to optimise VMMC rollout, improve the accuracy of HIV related media reporting, raise awareness on PrEP for AGYW, and promote the integration

⁵⁴ PEPFAR, *Sustainability Index: Zambia*, p: 1

⁵⁵ PEPFAR, *Zambia COP 2020 Summary*, p: 6

⁵⁶ Avert, *HIV and Aids in Zambia*

⁵⁷ UNAIDS, *Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision*, p: 2

⁵⁸ PEPFAR, *Zambia COP 2020 Summary*, p: 6

⁵⁹ Avert, *HIV and Aids in Zambia*

⁶⁰ PEPFAR, *Zambia COP 2020 Summary*, p: 6

⁶¹ PEPFAR, *Sustainability Index: Zambia*, p: 1

of SRH and HIV services⁶². These projects can be seen to respond to realities on the ground including prioritisation and scaling-up of VMMC as mentioned previously, and identification of limited and inaccurate health reporting (in particular HIV/AIDs) within the country.⁶³ In the final program reports, one Fellow and Host partnership mentioned that the Fellowship secured them a place in a national technical working group and improved the Hosts relationship with various relevant ministries, allowing them to influence policy decisions in a way that was not previously possible

Zimbabwe

Background

At 12.8%, Zimbabwe has one of the highest HIV prevalence's in sub-Saharan Africa,⁶⁴ and is one of 30 countries that contributes to 89% of all new HIV infections globally.⁶⁵ However, since 2010 there has been progress in the number of AIDS-related deaths, with a 60% decrease, from 54 000 deaths to 22 000 deaths.⁶⁶ The number of new HIV infections has also declined nationally from 91,000 in 2003 to 35,000 in 2019.⁶⁷ Zimbabwe is also noted for being one of the first countries in the African region to adopt a full set of HIV prevention program targets.⁶⁸ And more recently, Zimbabwe achieved the UNAIDS 2020 targets with 90% PLHIV knowing their status, 90% on treatment and 73% virally suppressed.⁶⁹ In regard to ARTs, nearly every pregnant woman now has access to antiretroviral medicines, thanks to the success of PMTCT services in Zimbabwe, and this has contributed to a decline of new infections among infants.⁷⁰ PrEP progress has also been encouraging, with Zimbabwe receiving the highest score in an index of policy and programmatic readiness.⁷¹ According to PrEP watch there are currently six types of PrEP delivery projects being implemented across the country and an estimated 24,000 users.⁷²

While Zimbabwe is celebrated for achieving more with less, according to Zimbabwe's Community COP20 report, "the health delivery system is at its lowest since 1980."⁷³ Current reports are full of socio-economic challenges that affect the operating environment, including project implementation and sustainability. Although, the larger burden of health care funding (two-thirds) of HIV expenditure in Zimbabwe comes from international donor sources⁷⁴ the consolidated total funding still falls short of projected requirements necessary to fully implement the national health strategy. Other ongoing challenges include the illegal nature of sex work and homosexuality, gender inequality within marriages which contributes to unprotected heterosexual sex being the main transmission route for new infections, inadequate data on key populations,⁷⁵ and limited CSO engagement by the government in regard to the HIV response.⁷⁶

Fellowship Impacts

Significant changes that were highlighted by Zimbabwean respondents included:

⁶² AVAC, *Fellows & Alumni: Zambia*

⁶³ Wellington Radu and Sandra Banjac, *Writing It Right* and Times of Zambia, *HIV/AIDS Training for Journalists*

⁶⁴ Avert, *HIV and Aids in Zimbabwe*

⁶⁵ UNAIDS, *Accelerating Action*, p: 7

⁶⁶ UNAIDS, *Zimbabwe*

⁶⁷ PEPFAR, *Zimbabwe COP 2020 Summary*, p: 8

⁶⁸ UNAIDS, *HIV 2020 Road Map*, p: 48

⁶⁹ UNAIDS, *Seizing the Moment*, p:76

⁷⁰ Avert, *HIV and Aids in Zimbabwe*

⁷¹ UNAIDS, *HIV 2020 Road Map*, p: 48

⁷² PrEP Watch, *Zimbabwe*

⁷³ PEPFAR, *Community COP20 Zimbabwe*, p: 3

⁷⁴ Avert, *HIV and Aids in Zimbabwe*

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ PEPFAR, *Zimbabwe COP 2020 Summary* p: 21

- “Recognition of AGYW as Key populations in the HIV response” A host specifically said that the response has evolved “to include more engagement of young women and youth”
- Demonstration and rollout of PrEP
- Prioritization of VMMC as a prevention method - “national targets have been rising exponentially since the time I was a fellow.”

There has been a Zimbabwean Fellow in nearly every year of the Fellowship, and they have worked among the media, key populations (in particular, women and sex workers), and taken part in both community and national level diplomacy.⁷⁷ Fellow and Alumni reported that through this work, the main Fellowship contributions have been:

1. to give a voice to marginalized, vulnerable and key populations
2. to create demand for PrEP by raising awareness and implementing rollout

Answers incorporated details on how these contributions were made, including Fellows taking part in PEPFAR consultations and on the Adolescent SRH policy, bringing marginalized voices to key decision-making bodies (again through consultation and meetings), and creating policy documents and working with young people to support youth access to PrEP. AVAC’s end of year program reports also documented Fellows’ perceptions on project impacts at a country level. Some examples included:

- Affecting awareness: “through media coverage, the nation came to realize that bio-medical research results can even go down to rural communities”
- Providing information: “hence the project also became a reservoir of information/knowledge for evidence-based advocacy [among CSOs]”
- Drafting treatment guidelines: “I managed to put their sex work program on the map and having it getting recognition by the country and the different media houses”
- Writing reports: “Created a position paper that we shared with the ministry of health and the PrEP technical working group.”

Conclusion: Evaluation Question 4

Evaluators are able to conclude that the HIV landscapes in each country considered have certainly undergone momentous changes during the decade of the Fellowship Program. Although it is problematic to attribute these significant changes directly to the Fellowship Program, there are certainly clear cases of contribution, including the Ugandan and Kenyan case studies. Overall, the activities of the Fellowship can be seen to support an enabling environment for the development of HIV treatment, care and prevention.

⁷⁷ AVAC, *Fellows & Alumni: Zimbabwe*

KENYA CASE STUDY

How AVAC played a role in bringing PrEP to Kenya

Background

As one of the first countries to approve the use of PrEP and, as a leader in the provision of VMMC⁷⁸, Kenya has been a prevention success story and made significant progress reducing both its infection (30% decrease) and HIV related mortality rate (55% decrease) since 2010.⁷⁹ TB-related mortality among PLHIV has also declined by 69% during the same period.⁸⁰ However, by September 2020, there will still be an estimated 1.5 million people living with HIV in Kenya, of whom 100,000 are children aged <15 years.⁸¹ The HIV epidemic is generalized among the population, but, as in many other countries, there are vulnerable groups, including men who have sex with men, sex workers and people who inject drugs.⁸² Women are also twice as likely as men to be infected (6.6% vs 3.1% respectively).⁸³ According to UNAIDS, there had been few specific efforts to reach these key populations until 2015, when LINKAGES set up in 17 counties with the highest HIV prevalence among key populations. New methods were introduced to increase case detection, and these proved so effective that the HIV case-finding rate among female sex workers, their clients, and gay men and other men who have sex with men at LINKAGES sites more than tripled in 2019.⁸⁴

However, nationally, the biggest gap in HIV prevention and treatment among all age groups remains case identification⁸⁵ and retention⁸⁶, with a sizeable 31% of PLHIV living without access to treatment.⁸⁷ There is also substantial regional variation in ART coverage across counties, ranging from 36% in Turkana county to 93% in Nairobi county.⁸⁸ Additionally, although awareness of HIV and AIDS is high in Kenya, many PLHIV face high levels of stigma and discrimination which prevent people accessing necessary HIV services,⁸⁹ including PrEP.

Predictably, many Kenyan survey and interview respondents identified the uptake of PrEP in the prevention landscape as the biggest change in the last decade, noting that “[Kenya] has been in the forefront of taking up new interventions i.e. PrEP, HIVST,” and is “proactive about new technology,” and that as a result, “HIV prevalence has generally come down.”

So, how did Kenya become the largest PrEP provider in Africa and one of only five countries worldwide to have more than 25,000 people currently on PrEP?⁹⁰

⁷⁸ Avert, *HIV and Aids in Kenya*

⁷⁹ UNAIDS, *Kenya*

⁸⁰ UNAIDS, *Seizing the Moment*, p: 101

⁸¹ PEPFAR, *Kenya COP2020 Summary*, p: 4

⁸² Avert, *HIV and Aids in Kenya*

⁸³ PEPFAR, *Kenya COP2020 Summary*, p: 4

⁸⁴ UNAIDS, *Seizing the Moment*, p:206

⁸⁵ PEPFAR, *People’s COP20 Kenya*, p:5

⁸⁶ Ibid p:3

⁸⁷ UNAIDS, *Kenya*

⁸⁸ PEPFAR, *Kenya COP2020 Summary*, p: 5

⁸⁹ Avert, *HIV and Aids in Kenya*

⁹⁰ AVAC, *PrEP Initiations Worldwide*

Kenya's PrEP Journey – a Timeline⁹¹

I. Research and Evidence Generation

2014/2015/2016: A series of PrEP trials, observational studies and demonstration projects begin among varying groups, including SEARCH, PrIMA, MPYA, MP3-YOUTH, POWER, IPCP.⁹² This kicks-off the process of generating local evidence to shape the roll-out of PrEP in Kenya.

July 2016: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation finances Bridge to Scale – Jilinde Demonstration Project which enrolled 32,963 people in Kenya, mainly from key populations. The aim of the project was to scale up delivery of oral PrEP as an HIV prevention option to demonstrate that taking PrEP to scale is both feasible and impactful in reducing HIV infections⁹³. The project also aims to answer operational questions and barriers to scaling-up PrEP. It was hoped this approach would influence key policy makers towards routine implementation of PrEP.

II. Policy & Guideline Development

July 2016: Jilinde and other demonstration projects create an enabling environment which allows the National AIDS and STI Control Programme (NAS COP) to lead a participatory process reviewing scientific evidence generated from clinical trials and demonstration projects to inform development of national guidelines. NAS COP revises HIV care and treatment guideline. The government is amenable to moving things forward if PrEP is shown to be effective, but questions of how to actualise PrEP and institutionalise scale-up remain.

Oct 2016: Following inclusion of PrEP in the national ARV guidelines, the Ministry of Health set up a PrEP Technical Working Group (TWG), chaired by NAS COP. to provide strategic direction and oversight for the

implementation of PrEP in Kenya in line with the health sector policies. The TWG included a Research and Implementation Science sub-committee which members from MOH, donor community, researchers, implementing partners and academia who worked to analyse current PrEP research and challenges in Kenya and develop a research framework.

2016-17: During this time, the PrEP agenda is supported by CSO advocacy backed by WHO guidelines developed in 2012 and 2015, which recommend PrEP for all population groups that were at substantial risk of HIV infection. Recognising that religious leaders are gatekeepers in matters of health and public morality⁹⁴, sensitivity trainings and forums are specifically held with religious stakeholders. Service provider and client education toolkits are developed alongside the implementation framework, and in this way positive public awareness of PrEP is raised with the inclusive message, "PrEP is for anyone who is HIV negative and at an ongoing risk of contracting the virus" and the tagline, "Jipende JiPrEP" (Love yourself, PrEP yourself).⁹⁵

III. Implementation

May 2017: This culminated in the development and official launch of the Kenya PrEP Implementation Framework and the national PrEP program which involved a Pilot, Scale-up and Evaluation phase carried on throughout 2017-18

2018 and ongoing: Around 62,000 people currently on PrEP as of 2020.⁹⁶ Engagement has been shown to be most successful among serodiscordant couples and female sex workers.⁹⁷ Through this process PrEP has been successfully launched in Kenya but work remains to sustain the gains, including targeting specific populations, addressing social stigmas against HIV and PrEP, and improving adherence and retention.⁹⁸

⁹¹ Masyuko et al, *PrEP rollout in Kenya*, and PrEP Watch, *Kenya*

⁹² PrEPWatch, *PrEP projects in Kenya*

⁹³ Musau et al, *PrEP: the Jilinde experience*

⁹⁴ Gichuru, *Engaging religious leaders in Kenya*

⁹⁵ Musau et al, *PrEP: the Jilinde experience*

⁹⁶ PrEPWatch, *Kenya*

⁹⁷ AidsMap, *How did Kenya build PrEP?*

⁹⁸ Avert, *HIV and Aids in Kenya*

AVAC's Role in PrEP Rollout

As can be seen above, rollout of PrEP was catalyzed by, “strong government leadership; partnerships between government, partners, communities, and potential PrEP users; granular knowledge of the HIV epidemic and response, robust social marketing and communication campaign; integration of PrEP into existing logistics and health information systems; incorporation of implementation research into the routine program and resource mobilization to sustain PrEP programming.”⁹⁹

AVAC, was one such partner involved in the rollout by working to create an avenue and platforms for advocacy to drum up support for PrEP. As one external stakeholder has described, AVAC can be seen as “a connector”, linking civil society. This included:

- Providing technical and financial support for meetings/forums during the planning stage, and generally providing space to encourage dialogue between government, CSOs, researchers, and community groups
- Working with partners across prevention research through the HIV Prevention Market Manager (PMM) Project - a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation-supported grant through which AVAC and Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) seek to facilitate an efficient and effective rollout of HIV prevention products.¹⁰⁰
- Partnering with Jhpiego Kenya, an existing not-for-profit which runs the Jilinde Bridge to Scale Project and assisting them with advocacy (of which they had little prior experience) including helping to develop media strategy and engagement planning; and providing advice when needed.
- Engaging the media, including partnering with CSOs to run journalist training on accurate health and HIV reporting
- Additional investments to help civil society to advocate and organize

Essentially AVAC can be seen to have strengthened local expertise over time and then at the key moment brought CSOs together to work on the messaging and challenges to implementation.

The Role of the AVAC Fellowship

AVAC Fellows were also active participants in Kenya's PrEP rollout, with one Alumni survey respondent noting that it was the cumulative effect of all 15 Fellows' projects that had a discernible and positive impact by advancing each other's work: “It takes the effort of all the fellows in various projects to be able to push the cascade of these steps in realization to the end goal, reduced numbers of new infections, enrolment into care and/or uptake of other HIV prevention strategies. HIV prevention is a package, and through various projects by different fellows, the positive strides can be linked to them.”

Thus, in support of the respondents' claim that they had played a part in contributing to Kenya's PrEP success, it can be seen that 6 of the 15 Fellowship projects specifically addressed PrEP roll-out, education, and policymaking¹⁰¹. The group dynamic is neatly visualized by a host respondent who stated that the value of the Fellowship in Kenya was in providing, “a human face now to the HIV prevention, care and treatment guidelines.” As has been shown in other countries, by lobbying and raising awareness, the Fellows contributed to the wider enabling environment for developments in Kenya and were seen to be particularly effective due to the volume of work that was done in certain areas.

⁹⁹ Masyuko et al, *PrEP rollout in Kenya*

¹⁰⁰ AVAC and CHIA, *HIV Prevention Market Manager*.

¹⁰¹ AVAC, *Fellows & Alumni: Kenya*

Specifically:

- Almost all the Fellows who addressed PrEP in their projects sat on NASCOP’s technical working groups which highly influenced the Ministry’s position and shaped the national workplan
- Fellows participated in and lead meetings/workshops which brought together CSOs in a platform to coordinate their efforts
- Fellows’ projects engaged with different individual groups (e.g.: MSM/sex workers) that were identified as potential PrEP users
- Fellows engaged with the media directly by writing articles, speaking on radio and TV and developing relationships with journalists in order to raise public awareness of PrEP

According to interview respondents, Fellows were seen to play an essential role by, “working as a bridge” between community beneficiaries and stakeholder groups. They negotiated and translated the approach being formed by the policy makers to stakeholders and in turn, communicated the community response back to the policy making table, helping to “translate the views into operations.” As they engaged both up and down the PrEP continuum, Fellows were able to strengthen capacity of CSOs and communities by:

- Understanding the science of PrEP
- Understanding the practicalities required for rollout
- Increasing the quantity of skilled practitioners working towards the same goal

As one external stakeholder who was interviewed in relation to Kenya’s PrEP rollout commented, “Everything I know about PrEP I learned through AVAC and the AVAC Fellows.”

Conclusions

AVAC has credited some of the success of Kenya’s PrEP rollout to the Fellowship Program, stating that although it would have happened regardless, Fellows, “made PrEP happen faster and better”. After tracing the history of the rollout and investigating perceptions and reports about AVAC’s involvement (including through the Fellowship activities), the evaluators certainly agree that this case study is an example of best practice.

However, the Evaluators are cautious of ascribing attribution and would rather recognize the contributions that AVAC has made in creating a supportive atmosphere in Kenya’s HIV landscape. In particular, it is abundantly clear that the resources committed to convene CSO meetings and groups was an important element in facilitating PrEP’s rollout.

The Kenyan HIV eco-system is, by and large, an enabling environment for new HIV prevention technologies. Kenya has not only been an early adopter of PrEP; HIV education has been part of the school curriculum since 2003, mass media and sporting campaigns are used to raise awareness about HIV, and more recently, has approved innovative approaches to HIV testing.¹⁰² The combination of variables mentioned earlier – strong government, workable partnerships from Ministry down to beneficiary level, localized knowledge of PrEP, effective marketing and communications, adaptable health systems, sustainable funding and advocate researchers – combined to create a perfect storm.

Overall, the Kenyan case study illustrates that by working together through complementary projects and agendas, the AVAC Fellows in Kenya contributed towards connecting the dots that brought PrEP to the country. It is certainly an experience AVAC should keep in mind when planning the future Fellowship approach.

¹⁰² Avert, *HIV and Aids in Kenya*

Evaluation Question 5. What is the future direction of the Fellowship Program?

Introduction

In this section, Evaluators provide participants' insight into what direction the Fellowship Program should take in the future by presenting and analysing the findings of surveys, interviews and FGDs in regard to two sub-questions which interrogate:

- respondents' perceptions of the Program's success over time and whether they perceived the Program's objectives to remain valid
- respondents' recommendations based on their experiences

a) To what extent are the objectives of the program still valid?

The specific objectives of AVAC's Advocacy Fellowship Program have been outlined in the Program Description on page 13. Though the question design did not directly quote this text, Evaluator's used the following closed-ended survey question to probe Alumni and Hosts: "In your opinion, are the objectives of the Fellowship program, as you understand them, still relevant in supporting or building the HIV prevention advocacy movement?" The response was then explored further through discussion in which interview and FGD respondents were specifically asked to describe how the Program objectives were valid in their context and given the opportunity to discuss the issue more broadly.

When asked in the survey whether the objectives remained relevant, 100% of Alumni respondents (n=28) and 95% of Host respondents (n=17) answered 'Yes'. Additionally, all interview respondents said they felt the programme was relevant in their context and offered significant gains to the advocacy landscape. Further detail provided by interviews and FGDs on how this relevance was perceived is outlined below.

Alumni Responses

Fellows were overwhelmingly positive in the comments they made about the program still being valid, providing specific details about the gains the Program brings to advocates personally, as well as to the wider field, a sample of these quotes for illustrative purposes included "The fellowship...builds the field beyond the usual suspects [existing advocates] and broadens the base for advocacy," and it "allows personal growth and formalises your skills." Fellows described the Program as a "tool" which created "idealistic" advocates (this was viewed in a positive light), provided "opportunities"/ "connections"/ "resources", that "ma[de] it possible to have a voice" and assisted advocates "to grow and expand", further noting that "there is powers is numbers".

One host interview respondent described how the Fellowship addressed a challenge in the local context, "researchers, implementors and advocates work in silos, the Fellowship creates an opportunity to bring them together." Similarly, during the Zimbabwean FGD, Alumni noted that the Program developed, "more and more young advocates," which was viewed positively because, "organizations are out of sync with reality," and need input from younger advocates with new ideas and approaches.

The Interviews allowed a more in-depth analysis of the topic and Fellows did highlight two areas of concern in regard to relevance. However, the Evaluator's considered both comments as outliers, to varying degrees, since they were not strongly backed up by other submissions to the evaluation:

1. "However, in the beginning there was so much uniqueness in the fellowship. That's gone now, it's all been done, and the fellows are younger and there are fewer wins and fewer innovations." This

respondent indicated that the wider HIV landscape has developed to such an extent that the 'easy wins' of the past are no longer an option; Fellowship impacts are harder to see, and the Host organization now has a bigger responsibility in guiding Fellows towards success. In contrast to this comment, several other respondents highlighted that there are still substantial efforts needed in particular areas of HIV advocacy, pointing specifically to the Ring and injectable PrEP. Additionally, it appeared that younger advocates were valued by many respondents who perceived that they came with new ideas and enthusiasm. From their assessment of the breadth of data the Evaluators conclude that this really is an outlier comment and does not warrant any particular action.

2. "Information about the program is secluded (hard to find)" according to one Alumni respondent. This comment spoke to the difficulty of finding out about the AVAC Fellowship Program for future advocates. The issue was backed up by a South African interviewee who mentioned that Fellowship information was perhaps not shared as widely in South Africa as it was in other countries, remaining instead within certain networks. However, these limited comments provided the only data in this regard, and the Evaluator's suggest that this is not a major point of focus. Still, it may be worthwhile to investigate how the Program is advertised in different countries and interrogate whether, and how, different approaches could be taken in relation to the context.

Host Responses

Hosts had similar views about the relevance and acceptability of the Program, also highlighting specifics. One key insight was that the AVAC Fellowship design was unique in regard to other Fellowships (particularly educational programs) because it provides, "work and training at the same time," and, "keeps people in the country," ensuring that local advocates are developed and supported at home and remain in country following their Fellowship. In interviews, one Host elucidated, "The model is very appropriate and well managed," impacting the individual in the local environment. Another Host informant added that there is particular value in the arrangement with the Host organisation because it develops the skill and capacity of both the individual and the organisation.

There was one contrasting view of the Program design voiced in a Host interview: "There is a strategic view missing, Fellows are individuals, "they do not carry others with them...there is a lack of cascade training, fellows are capacitated but they don't capacitate others in the organization." However, this comment did not correlate with other survey data in which Host respondents listed multiple ways in which Fellows affected their organizations beneficially including:

- "We had an opportunity to learn from the fellowship and access information and data for our own use"
- Hosting a Fellow, "improved the skills of the organization in HIV Prevention Research Advocacy and enabled us to sit on national working groups"
- The Fellowship provided, "useful capacity strengthening for fellow, which in turn strengthened our advocacy techniques"

Indeed, the data provided in Evaluation Question 2 and 3 specifically speaks to the ways in which Program participants perceived the Fellowship to impact not only the Fellow, but the wider HIV landscape. Evaluator's therefore consider that the above example more likely signifies a poor relationship between the Host and Fellow, rather than a flaw in the Program design. However, examples of how to further develop the Fellowship's learning cascade are outlined in the Evaluator's recommendations part 3, 4 and 5 (p79).

Overall, the data presented for this sub-question illustrates that in the eyes of participants, the Program objectives have remained valid and relevant across various contexts and timeframes. Since respondents represented a cross-section of countries and Fellowship years, Evaluator's can conclude that the Program has adjusted to suit developments over time. However, respondents did provide a variety of recommendations to ensure the Program maintains its relevancy into the future

b) What are respondents' recommendations based on their own experiences?

All respondents were asked to provide input regarding future implementation of the Program, including its design and management. 54 distinct responses to this question were captured and ordered into common themes, which are detailed below. There are clearly recommendations that hold more value than others and the Evaluators have flagged these for stronger consideration by the reader, being guided by the frequency with which the recommendation appeared, whether it showed up across multiple evaluation instruments, and whether it could be achieved practically and was appropriate in the context of the Program.

1. Alumni engagement and support

The position of Alumni within the program was the largest area for recommendations of how the Fellowship might develop or adapt in the future, making up 18 of the 54 responses. A number of both Alumni and Host respondents felt Alumni could play an essential role in fulfilling program objectives, but this had not been sufficiently considered in the program design and there were concerns about the way in which Alumni are currently engaged. Evaluators consider this section to contain the most important recommendations from the respondents, not only because they appeared most often, but also because Alumni represent an untapped and willing resource that is easily accessible to AVAC for future program delivery. This area of recommendations can be grouped into three themes; Alumni selecting and supporting Fellows; AVAC engagement with Alumni, and Alumni working together.

a) Alumni selecting and supporting Fellows

Respondents across the surveys, interviews and FGDs strongly suggested that there should be formal arrangements to allow Alumni to participate in the selection and support of new Fellows. This was seen as essential for the sustainability of the program. The justification from alumni respondents was that local participation by the Alumni could offer current Fellows encouragement that, "will provide better contextual support than AVAC can give." Additionally, it was seen as a way to "consolidate the gains" that have already been made with the existing Alumni, the support between new and old Fellows was there but "not as vivid as it should be." Specific ideas on what format this role could take included:

- Simply increasing the Alumni engagement with new Fellows, "In future AVAC may consider utilizing the outgoing or former fellows to help in guidance."
- "A 'senior fellows' fellowship position. The senior fellow, chosen each year, ensures that there is continuity in the work of AVAC and also coordinates with AVAC alumni."
- An "Alumni mentor" role. This was particularly seen as an asset in instances where the Fellow may be struggling in their relationship with the Host organization but was viewed as beneficial for everyone.
- Include relevant Alumni in the selection process of new Fellows, which would enable AVAC to "utilise the Alumni to sustain certain agendas," in each country. This way advocacy work in the country could be more structured with "systematic building blocks" rather than being based on the individual interests of each application.

Given that existing levels of engagement between Alumni, AVAC and other Fellows within countries appears to differ, and indeed, that AVAC has mentioned implementing some of these recommendations to some level already, the Evaluators suggest that it may be useful to view the Fellowship experience as a continuum. Each country is on a different stage of the continuum, with different levels of activity and engagement needs. The Evaluators rank these suggestions highly but note that AVAC will need to map out an engagement continuum that suits the Program in order to work out what action needs to be implemented in each context.

b) AVAC engagement with Alumni

Some respondents had strong feelings about the support provided to Alumni once the Program ends, with one respondent making the vivid analogy, "When you leave it is like an umbilical cord is cut; unless AVAC need you,

they don't get in touch with you." Others suggested that AVAC should follow up better on how Fellows are doing (after the Fellowship ends) , send check in emails and take the lead on engaging with their Alumni, stating, "it's just courteous to get in touch, as it said once a fellow always a fellow."

It's worth noting here that 44% of survey respondents reported that they were very satisfied and a further 19% where somewhat satisfied with engagement from AVAC post-Fellowship (see Chart 5 p39), so these comments reflect the minority who were not wholly satisfied. However, other respondents who may have been satisfied with current engagement, still had comments on how this could be developed in future. "The alumni need support financially beyond the project as they need to continue to work to achieve the objectives of the project." Ideas included providing project grants, or finance to groups of Alumni to complete a given project are listed below either as direct quotes or paraphrases:

- "AVAC should continue supporting the fellows through grants to continue with the work, or better still, employ them"
- "We need alumni programs that are funded" / "Funding and technical support" for an Alumni structure or central coordination system
- "AVAC alumni should be play a greater role in national advocacy initiatives, either through the creation of dedicated offices run and led by AVAC alumni or through some form of support from AVAC"
- As Alumni bodies we should have a periodic check in with AVAC to report/discuss our progress, and AVAC should check in with every fellow to see what has happened with their projects, etc. (maybe annually?)
- In the case where Alumni were invited to speak at conferences, etc., "Alumni should be compensated for giving talks."

Many of the responses included reference to some kind of continued funding, which is an important reality of continuing work post-Fellowship. However, the Evaluators recognize that disbursing funding indefinitely is neither practical nor appropriate, and in their recommendations have provided specific guidance about where AVAC could focus its funding in the future to support specific programmatic objectives and in particular, address perceptions of inequitable engagement. At this point readers are encouraged to keep in mind that in this case 'inequitable' doesn't necessarily mean 'unfair'. Evaluators stress that opportunities should be fair and accessible, but engagement and attention could naturally be different as, in an highly individualized Fellowship Program such as this one, they are shaped by the individual response to these opportunities, or as one alumni respondent put it "you get as much as you put in". Nevertheless, broad engagement should always be sought and encouraged (see Evaluators' Recommendations part 1 and 6, p77 for further details).

c) Alumni working together

Throughout the evaluation, references to Alumni working together, either officially or unofficially, post-Fellowship emerged in most countries (with notable examples in Uganda and South Africa). However, there were a substantial number of recommendations about the need for AVAC to formally support Alumni in this capacity. It was felt that the different experiences, approaches and networks each Alumni could bring to such a network would be invaluable to AVAC and to the objectives of the program.

Some responses recognized that such models were already being used and were valued. However, multiple sources emphasized the need for formal structures and leadership from AVAC to, "support for an official Alumni network", and "consider opportunities to bring alumni together to learn from these different voices and approaches". Practical submissions included:

- "Consider holding annual regional sessions with former fellows to evaluate the work done, opportunities and areas of interest for immediate action or future program/projects"
- "AVAC should also be organizing an alumni conference or meeting rotating in different countries of the region once or twice a year in order for the Alumni to strengthen their network and keep all fellows engaged post fellowship"

- AVAC should suggest relevant structures and assist with technical set up and funding of Alumni coalitions
- AVAC should “advocate[e] for seed funding for advocacy initiatives such as the Advocacy Coalition Team (ACT)”
- AVAC should integrate the Fellowship with other AVAC programs like Coalition to build Momentum, Power, Activism, Strategy & Solidarity (COMPASS) Africa and Coalition to Accelerate & Support Prevention Research (CASPR)

These are valuable and practical insights, and certainly warrant further attention by AVAC, although again, the Evaluators note the existence of the Fellowship continuum, which means that in certain contexts some of these suggestions may already be implemented. Other recommendations on how to promote Alumni partnerships and integrate their work into the local context are provided in Part 1 and 3 of the Evaluator’s Recommendations (see p77).

2. Host engagement

The role the Host organization plays came through very strongly in the evaluation and it is clear that the quality of this relationship has a significant impact on the success of the Fellow’s project and the gains they are able to make post-Fellowship. Respondents had strong views about possible changes to the Host approach which broadly align with how the host is engaged by AVAC, how communication between all the partners takes place, and how the Fellow fits into the Host organization or the Host “buy[s] in” to the Fellowship. The areas represented 11 of the 54 distinct responses. Specific answers are detailed below:

a) Host engagement

- Set a minimum standard when engaging hosts as this will, “make it mandatory for the host supervisor to do their job”
- Provide incentives to supervisors in order to avoid “lackluster supervision”. This could involve, “Certificates and stipend”, “a small allowance” and, “Supervisors that are not the executive director should be remunerated”
- Improve screening of Host organizations, “AVAC has enough partnerships in all these countries, maybe they could just decide to work with organizations they 'know', as hosts for the selected fellows”

b) Partner Communication

- Communication between the three parties (AVAC, Fellow and Host) should begin at the time of application, “There is need for prior engagement with proposed host organizations before a confirmation on hosting” / “to include the host organization when applying”
- All communications should be transparent and shared equally, “The communications to the fellow should be shared with the host, it’s not appropriate to expect fellows to be the ‘piggy in the middle’ and make it look like the fellow works for AVAC instead of the host.”

c) Host Buy-in

- The program design should include a plan to introduce the Fellow and the project to the entire Host organization so that everyone understands the objectives of the Fellowship equally and the project is incorporated more fully into the Host organization’s activities, “The host organization should get training in the new project/new concept” and “There needs to be more work with the hosts so that the fellows are not isolated and have buy in from their host organizations”.

In light of the fact that this is a significant area of recommendation by respondents and impacts the Fellowship experience to such a large extent, Evaluators have earmarked ‘enhancing Host partnerships’ as a particular area of focus in the Recommendations section (see part 4, p80). In some cases, it appears that AVAC may already be following these recommendations (for example, they have reported engaging Hosts in a variety of ways before and during the Fellowship) and so it is unclear whether the failure that has been identified is due to

implementation or poor communication/understanding by the respondents. There is undoubtedly a need to investigate the tripartite relationship between Fellow, Host and AVAC with the ambition of improving the standard and equality of the Host experience for all Fellows and Host Organizations.

3. Management of the Fellowship Project

These were recommendations that broadly outlined ways to improve how the Fellowship project itself was managed, representing 10 out the 54 responses to the survey question.

a) Time

- “Not enough time, should consider projects longer than a year” (this was mentioned repeatedly throughout the evaluation)
- “There is need to increase the duration of the fellowship and or ensure that the projects can continue after the year has come to an end” / “AVAC should devise a technical plan to keep fellows engaged post the fellowship year by providing small grants to support their work”
- “There needs to be better closure on the project and/or support of Alumni to continue the project”/ “As soon as your fellowship end (sic) you are back to zero and AVAC leaves you”

According to interviews with AVAC management, the team is aware of the time pressures Fellows face with their projects but considers that there needs to be a reasonable limit and that ultimately any length of time will face scrutiny. Evaluators agree that the projects will simply mushroom to whatever duration is selected and suggest that the issue is not the length of time the projects are given but rather challenges with workload and time management that could be addressed without necessarily changing the Program duration.

b) Design

- Introduce a component on M&E for every project post-Fellowship, “AVAC should set up a monitoring team that will visit fellows and host organizations before the end of the project / “assess the gaps in the problems addressed”
- “More interconnectedness in projects of fellows”
- “projects that are able to be implemented regionally needs (sic) to be given a chance as an alumni project to ensure some level of alumni engagement post-fellowship”
- Here the evaluators have paraphrased 2 similar quotes which illustrate how there is need to revisit the budget for activities for the fellowship year but also consider the salary structure for fellows across all countries in view of fellow’s experience and education.

Desk review evidence shows that AVAC has already included a component of M&E throughout the Fellowship year and, aside from the monitoring team mentioned above, there was not much practical input on how to shape M&E further. Evaluators do pick this up as a recommendation in part 2 and also speak further to the ‘interconnectedness’ point in part 1 and 3, suggesting that group projects at local and regional levels could occur through improved partnerships between Alumni and with other local organizations/entities if this was a direction AVAC chose to follow. The last point relates to perceptions of inequality within the Program. Here, Evaluators are hesitant to endorse different salary structures based on skill level, as the Fellowship application is not contingent on any particular experience or education (in fact, recognizing that advocates come from all backgrounds and experiences is one of its real strengths). However, the Evaluation team does suggest that AVAC consider the language they use around payments and ensure transparency in differing salaries. It would be important to ensure that salaries are benchmarks against local salaries and cost of living and that this is clear to all involved to prevent any speculation around salary costs. Another consideration might be the language of a salary vs a stipend a change in language may allay concerns around merit-based considerations. Similarly, AVAC should perhaps be more intentional about publicly discussing budgets and costs, increasing transparency about the variability of project costs as already outlined in the Application documents (see Info Packet 2020).

c) Opportunities/Resources

- “Laptops should be provided to everyone, not out of the discretionary fund”
- “Everyone should have the opportunity to engage at a global level through conference and meetings because it increases your skills and confidence and these opportunities lessen after the Fellowship is over.”

These 2 comments speak to the personal experience of each respondent. Evaluators recommend discarding the first suggestion as not everyone undertaking the Fellowship needs a laptop and the discretionary fund seems like a very appropriate option for those who do. The second comment arose because the respondent had reportedly not had the same opportunity to participate in a conference either at a local, regional or international level as his/her colleagues in his/her fellowship year. Again, it certainly highlights the need to present all participants with equal opportunities which is examined in part 1 of Evaluators’ Recommendations. However, the Evaluation team recognizes that global level engagement opportunities are never guaranteed, cannot necessarily be planned or allocated evenly, and may not be an ambition for every Fellow. The Evaluation team suggest that the outcomes of advocacy projects (publication, conferences, media engagement, etc.) be considered as part of the initial work plan and if the Fellow seeks conference opportunity, it is prioritized in the Fellowship year or followed up with assistance from AVAC post-Fellowship.

4. Fellow Selection

The way AVAC selects and manages the Fellows and the program came in for a series of recommendations from respondents and represented 8 of the 54 responses. There was definitely consensus that the program should continue as it is, “support[ing]/grow[ing] more advocates focusing on the trends the HIV is taking” but with ideas about how to shape the pool of future Fellows.

Firstly, the selection process itself was considered by a respondent who viewed it as “too long and too technical”, and was concerned that the process could discourage participants, “it puts organizations off and they don’t want to host fellows as it seems they may be out of their depth”. There was also a comment about modifying the selection to ‘screen’ applicants, “in a way where there is a high level of guarantee that the fellow shall not be lost post the fellowship”, although no specific methodology for achieving this outcome was included. The Evaluators challenge both of these comments, as the volume of quality applications AVAC receives every year and the many instances of ongoing Alumni engagement with AVAC are both evidence that while these barriers may exist they are not limiting the success of the Program in any significant way.

Secondly, the Program’s emphasis was questioned by one respondent who noted that it was very heavily research focused and prejudiced any applicant who had strong grassroots/community credentials but did not have sufficient ‘academic experience’. This theme did not occur in any other data collection, and in fact, the desk review highlights that many Alumni have very strong grassroots advocacy and implementation credentials. Additionally, several respondents commented the Fellowship equipped them to utilize research for evidence-based advocacy. The evaluators are cautious of treating ‘academic experience’ and ‘grassroots/community credentials’ as mutually exclusive terms, and do not have sufficient data from the evaluation to consider this comment to be of great significance.

Several respondents also highlighted the need to focus on younger advocates with new ideas, including, “Maybe we should have slots for person between 18-24 on the fellowship. It is like catching them young,” and, “Need to tailor the fellowship towards creating a movement among young people and key populations that understands the science and aggressively advocate for it (in Africa we leave science to the scientists).” This recommendation calls to mind comments made about the relevance of the Program, which valued the trend towards younger

Fellows. Evaluators agree that, given the fact that youth in Africa are disproportionately affected by HIV¹⁰³, this is a relevant and useful consideration for AVAC in planning for the future and warrants further consideration. One suggestion is to actively partner with youth organizations in order to promote the Fellowship application opportunity.

5. Strategy and Coordination

The need to take a big picture strategic approach at a national level emerges as a theme from the Fellowship interviews, mainly with external stakeholders, with 5 of 54 responses documenting this topic. The respondents acknowledged the value of the Program approach to developing individuals, and, in some cases, mentioned the knock-on effect Fellows had developing the organizations they worked in. However, there was concern that the “Fellowship lacks a strategic approach”. One respondent framed the recommendation as follows, “There should be a proper mapping mechanism in-country with relevant authorities who should ensure that the program builds specific capacity that will contribute to HIV prevention in a tangible and sustainable way.” Both FGDs similarly mentioned the need for “coordination” and “a proper plan in moving forward” in order to “assess the gaps in the problems [that have already been] addressed” and “consolidate the works and efforts that have been done”. These recommendations are valued by Evaluators for addressing the contextual relevance of the Program and for recognizing the need to consider and incorporate the gains already made in future Program planning. Practical suggestions about planning and strategy are explored further in part 3 of the Evaluator’s Recommendations (see p79).

6. Scope

A small number of respondents (2) had recommendations about the technical focus of the program including the need for AVAC to look beyond HIV and other conditions and ‘widen the Scope beyond HIV related issues’. A separate survey respondent highlighted the need for AVAC to “embrace more prevention areas than the current one” but it was unclear what was meant by ‘the current one’. The implied suggestion seems to be to broaden the focus of the program to include other conditions and prevention methodologies. However, the responses were so limited that they certainly cannot be seen as representative of respondents as a whole. Although they are presented here to ensure a fullness of presentation, the Evaluators would not recommend any further action is taken on these suggestions alone. If AVAC were to consider a change in the Fellowship’s scope, further consultation should be sought to determine a) if these opinions are more widespread than suggested by this evaluation, and b) what directional shift would be appropriate.

7. Host Specific Recommendations

There were some suggestions, repeated in both Fellow and Host feedback, that related specifically to the experience of the Host organization. Several of these have been mentioned from a different perspective above, especially the need for specific resources for supervision. However, as they also appear to be a direct response to the Host challenges outlined in Evaluation Question 1 (see p27), these issues bear repeating. Additionally, there were a couple of points which appear for the first time below:

a) Funding:

- “allocation of more resources; as well as technical support”
- “Build in supervisor's time with appropriate remuneration in the program design”

Whilst the first point is undefined by the respondent, it highlights the need for equitable opportunities/a level playing field for Hosts which could be addressed by AVAC investing some of its resources and attention into Host

¹⁰³ Avert, *Young People, HIV and Aids*

organization development. This is a valuable insight and is explored further in Evaluator's Recommendations part 4, p80. The second comment is a clear and practical suggestion and the Evaluators advise that it is strongly considered by AVAC.

b) The Tripartite arrangement:

- "I would recommend deliberate space be given to the host to supervise and have input into the fellow's work. No work should be accepted without the supervisor's endorsement."
- "The fellows are mentored to become very independent advocates. It would help if there is a deliberate strategy for their experience to cascade within the organization and to contribute to other areas such as fundraising, advocacy plan development, policy briefs etc."
- "The Fellows should commit and devote their time to the host Organization"
- "Need to resolve the allegiance issue somehow. AVAC training an 'independent operator' within the host organization – leads to some confusion and tensions."

These comments indicate that there is a clear need to interrogate the tripartite relationships between Fellows, Hosts and AVAC. The Evaluators have further assessed this topic in their recommendations, focusing particularly on how to manage the power dynamics within these relationships through communication, formalizing arrangements, engaging relevant consultants and involving Alumni in the mentoring process.

8. Case Studies

The case studies also presented an opportunity for respondents in focus countries to provide input on how the Fellowship Program might support change in their local context. A brief overview of the lessons from each country includes:

- **Zimbabwe:** highlights the necessity for continued support of Fellows (who are now Alumni) beyond the Fellowship year
- **Kenya:** presents the idea that projects should work cumulatively and complementarily towards goals, instead of expecting individual projects to have significant impacts
- **South Africa:** raises the issue of maintaining contextual awareness which allows AVAC to identify positive/negative trends in country and respond accordingly in order to keep the prevention advocacy space open or from getting worse
- **Uganda:** illustrates the benefits of integrating Fellowship projects and Fellows themselves into existing national frameworks and agendas

Conclusion: Evaluation Question 5

The evaluation found the Program remains relevant in every country in which it operates. Specifically, approval was awarded for certain aspects of the program's design including how it allows individuals to be mentored while working and receiving a salary, how it locates the project in Fellows' own countries, and how it generates access to the international advocacy space. However, there are areas for concern including about the assumption that developing an individual would result in organisational, community and national developments. In the South African context for example (see overleaf), some considered the personal focus less appropriate than working strategically at an organisational level. Additionally, the evaluation brought out the perspective that AVAC needed to cede some responsibility to local organizations, or even just Alumni, in order to balance the North-South power dynamic inherent in the program. Participants were able to give a number of practical recommendations for future Program implementation. Evaluators have highlighted where AVAC should consider focusing its attention and have used some of the ideas when shaping their own recommendations. None of these suggestions were considered to detract from the relevance of the current intervention, but rather to be an added element that could make the program more relevant in the future.

ZIMBABWE CASE STUDY

The Relevance of the AVAC Advocacy Fellowship in the context of the Zimbabwe situation

What is the Zimbabwe situation?

As mentioned in the Zimbabwe response to Evaluation Question 4, in the last two decades, Zimbabwe has made significant progress and is heading towards epidemic control, experiencing an ongoing decline in HIV infection rates as well as HIV-related morbidities. However, HIV prevalence remains stabilized around 14% (ZIMPHIA, 2016) and marginalized key population groups, as well as, vulnerable groups, have been left behind.

HIV prevalence rates in Zimbabwe are negatively affected by social, economic and political challenges including:

- The criminalisation and stigma against sex work, same sex relationships, and drug use
- Patriarchy and gender inequality, particularly within heterosexual relationships
- A high prevalence of comorbidities, such as cancer and TB (Zimbabwe remains in the WHO Top 30 for TB prevalence)
- The adversarial relationship between the government and CSOs (particularly international NGOs) who bear the larger burden of costs regarding HIV funding
- Lack of support, training and up-to-date information for health workers
- The flagging economy, which has increased rates of extreme poverty and both internal and external migration
- The challenging macro-economic environment, and more recently the stresses of drought, Cyclone Idai and COVID-19

Zimbabwe is a vulnerable nation, with particularly vulnerable key populations constrained within the limitations of a fragile health service. As PEPFAR reports, “Zimbabwe continues to be challenged with socio-economic issues, fuel shortages, load-shedding, health worker strikes and generally a fragile health care system.” Rampant inflation affects the value of health budgets, makes project implementation “costly and unsustainable” (Peoples COP) and leads to “weaknesses in supply chain”. Furthermore, existing laws “indirectly restrict civil society from playing an oversight role in the HIV/AIDS response”, and input is only solicited in an “ad hoc manner”; a situation which leads to concerns about mismanagement. Zimbabwean HIV CSOs conclude that “in Zimbabwe, ordinary poor citizens suffer collateral damage as the health delivery system is at its lowest since 1980.” (Peoples COP)

On the surface it would certainly appear that the objective of the AVAC Advocacy Fellowship, “to expand and strengthen the capacity of civil society advocates and organizations to monitor, support and help shape HIV prevention research and rapid rollout of new effective interventions in LMIC with high HIV burdens,” is more relevant than ever in the context of the Zimbabwean situation. However, this evaluation sought to elicit a more detailed response to the question of relevance by interrogating the specific responses of the Zimbabwean Alumni who have completed the Fellowship Program.

Who are the Zimbabwe Fellows?

Zimbabwe has a total of 12 Fellows who participated across every year of the Fellowship except 2011 and 2016. There are 4 male and 8 female Fellows. For the evaluation, we recorded 5 survey responses, 4 in-depth interviews and a focus group of 5 participants with the Zimbabwean cohort. There is obviously some overlap in survey/interview/FGD participation, and some respondents are likely to have taken part in all three activities.

What is meant by relevance?

For the purposes of this evaluation, respondents were asked directly if they believed the program was relevant in their context and their answers were not guided by any parameters on definition set by the evaluator.

What were the findings?

To begin with, respondents were asked for their view on the wider advocacy environment within the country. Their response was that advocacy in Zimbabwe is heavily slanted towards individual relationships, with advocates focusing on building such relationships and quietly lobbying individuals rather than participating in more public activism, “we do not protest; it doesn’t get us what we need’. Additionally, during the focus group, participants explained that it is, “difficult to have a voice as an individual advocate,” in Zimbabwe. In order to be validated (and presumably build the relationships mentioned previously) advocates require a recognised affiliation as, “it gives you the platform to speak from and access to opportunities.”

In light of this operating environment, Alumni highly valued the Fellowship experience and what had been achieved through it, “We have Fellows year in and year out...they help to formulate certain policies that aren’t operational and also help with increasing access to certain populations. “In particular the mentorship provided by AVAC was seen as invaluable in developing Fellows personally and professionally and none of the respondents felt that having a mentor overseas was detrimental to their experience. They emphasised that the program design took care of contextual relevance by providing a “local mentor who understands the local environment” and an “AVAC mentor who provides technical support...the two cannot be separated.” Respondents also felt that AVAC accommodated contextual challenges by keeping everything “flexible” and trying to “seek guidance” from Fellows themselves. No one reported a lack of understanding from AVAC but instead mentioned that most of the issues Fellows faced were rather due to the relationship with the local host.

The overall consensus was that the AVAC Advocacy Fellows Program, in general, is still relevant in the Zimbabwe context and “We have seen real success on the ground with the existing objectives – this was because of AVAC.” However, there were some concerns raised, which broadly centred around the program design and what role Alumni should play within the Fellowship:

1. Respondents noted that there was a general assumption within the program that new Fellows get support from past Alumni. While they confirmed this situation did exist, there was comment that the support was “not as vivid as it should be” and could be improved upon.
2. FGD participants were also concerned with how the Fellowship projects fit into the wider landscape. “There is some consultation with old Alumni to see what they are working on but there are no systematic building blocks,” the new Fellows work independently, and their focus depends on “their interests and that of their host organization.” This was also reflected in discussion about monitoring and evaluation, where it was stated that there was, “no assessment of projects at the end of the projects taking place to see if the gap addressed has been adequately covered.”
3. Alumni perceived that they represented a missed opportunity for the Fellowship program. The respondents felt that, “we have failed to utilise the Alumni to sustain certain agendas.” There are “rare instances that work done in the advocacy year is carried on...We need a way to structure advocacy objectives/agendas for the nation as a whole.” Essentially, in order to ensure projects remain relevant to the Zimbabwean context, Alumni need to be included in Fellow selection and project planning.

As per the last point, respondents considered that there were opportunities to do more to ensure the program was responding to the specific conditions and context in Zimbabwe. These suggestions largely involved Alumni

working together with their complementary skill set to assess the gaps in projects thus far and shape future projects around the national need via conversations with, and guidance of, potential Fellows. The existing coalition, ACT (Advocacy Core Team), was debated but it was felt that participation in ACT was largely dependent on alliance with particular Host organisations and there was a need to broaden the playing field to include any Alumni who wished to be included.

Overall, FGD participants outlined the following objectives for the future of the Fellowship in Zimbabwe:

- The current objectives are relevant as there is still a need for new advocates, “We have noticed more and more young advocates, and this is good because organizations are out of sync with reality.” Alumni grow into different interests post-Fellowship, so there is a space for new strategies, ideas and viewing the landscape from a different lens, which new advocates will bring.
- We should have hybrid objectives – strengthening existing coordination and supporting new Fellows.
- There is a need for consultation with Alumni during the application and throughout the ongoing process to ensure we make maximum gains.

What can AVAC do to further support relevance?

Participants were asked directly what AVAC could do support these objectives and the following responses were recorded:

- Provide funding and technical support for some kind of coalition specifically related to Alumni and the work they are already doing (similar to APHA in SA but specific to Zimbabwe).
- Assist with suggesting appropriate structures for Alumni coalitions
- Assist with creating some kind of programmatic workplan that streamlines areas of focus and sets targets
- Provide resourcing for Alumni to support AVAC fellows that are coming in. The suggestion was to have a central coordination system (some kind of committee or association).
- Allow Alumni into the application process for new Fellows in Zimbabwe

SOUTH AFRICA CASE STUDY

The Legacy of the Apartheid Struggle and the Future of Prevention Advocacy

“Given the history of South Africa, it is perhaps not surprising that race and cultural identity came to assume such a central place in public discourse on AIDS. By the time AIDS began to take such a visible toll on South Africa, the country had barely surfaced from apartheid, a political system characterised by extreme forms of social, and economic inequities and ideological domination that systematically denigrated and dehumanised black people’

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The history of the struggle to end Apartheid and the resultant cultural distrust of both government and science informed the fight for access to HIV testing, treatment and prevention measures in South Africa. It was in this early environment of denialism and newly won freedom that South African HIV Advocacy was born, utilising “locally embedded political symbols, songs and styles of the anti-apartheid struggle”.¹⁰⁵ For example, HIV campaigns for Fluconazole resonated with previous anti-dompas (passbook) campaigns of the apartheid era. Just as anti-apartheid activism had been bolstered by support from those in exile as well as sympathetic governments overseas, so HIV/AIDS advocacy in South Africa was characterised by highly successful global networking.

In these early days, much of the advocacy energy was taken up with local mobilisation of poor and working-class communities, using the courts to compel the Ministry of Health to provide ARVs at public facilities and campaigning to protect the autonomy of scientific institutions from government interference. Although mobilisation was primarily at a grassroots level, in black African working-class communities, the organizational structure and support frameworks crossed barriers of race, class, ethnicity, occupation and education and in particular, had strong links into youth-led or youth-engaged activist groups.

It is imperative to view the AVAC Advocacy Fellowship and its successes and challenges in the context of this history and the developments outlined overleaf. For the purpose of this case study, the evaluators therefore considered it relevant to pose the following question, “In an environment like South Africa, where activism is so deeply rooted in the culture, what can AVAC do to support the future of prevention advocacy in South Africa?”

As a result of its antagonistic beginning, the South African HIV advocacy space is a challenging, competitive, and often an “uncomfortable space”. There is, however, a strong history and foundation for advocacy and many vibrant youth and grassroots organizations using their voices for change and particularly, to hold government to account. The AVAC Fellowship Program itself has had 14 AVAC Fellows over ten years in South Africa, with a Fellow in every year of the program. Additionally, AVAC has funded a group of Fellows to work together (includes Fellows from 2012, 2013 and 2014) and they have now formed a fully-fledged advocacy organisation, Advocacy for the Prevention of HIV and AIDS (APHA). APHA strives for accountable advocacy, mobilising civil society to take part in research, working on research to roll out (particularly PrEP advocacy), and lobbying government.

The AVAC Fellows are a talented and professional group who have demonstrated strengths in evidence-based advocacy and a very strong biomedical background. However, since the majority have rooted their practice in biomedical advocacy, they are not always connected to the broader HIV activism networks. (This is perhaps a reflection of AVAC’s character being connected in the research space). Interview respondents have noted this gap and suggested that there needs to be stronger ties to the wider HIV space, including grassroots CSO and youth organisations, in order to move research advocacy forward, as these are the traditional power houses of HIV/AIDS activism.

¹⁰⁴ Robins, *From Revolution to Rights in South Africa*, p:111

¹⁰⁵¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p.119



Figure 1: Timeline of Key Moments in South Africa's HIV Epidemic¹⁰⁶

It was felt that to attract more of these youth and grassroots advocates as applicants, the format and distribution of the application itself needs to be amended. The CSO space in South Africa was viewed as being disorganised, siloed and territorial, deterring any kind of collaboration and preventing information about the Fellowship from being shared widely. It was agreed that the Fellowship offers “opportunities which are exceptional” but that generally speaking the applicants that apply are there because they are encouraged to do so. The application process, “it’s not accessible,” the “Fellowship is niche” and the “Application is a slog”. Practical suggestions included more appropriate application formats, such as “a video”, and using South African advocacy CSOs with activism legitimacy in the HIV landscape as a mouthpiece to advertise the Fellowship.

Another takeaway from the anti-apartheid movement, is that in South African civil society, individuals continue to hold a huge amount of resources, in terms of knowledge and access. At the height of the AIDS crisis in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) embarked on nationwide treatment literacy campaigns. The organisations wanted to convey the basics of AIDS science and antiretroviral therapy to the wider public and several activists became “lay experts...They were able to translate their knowledge and experiences as activists and people living with HIV into forms of expertise and scientific capital that were recognised by scientists and policymakers.”¹⁰⁷ Well-known ‘citizen scientists’ include Prudence Mabele, Zackie Achmat, Thembi Ngubane, Fezekile "Khwezi" Kuzwayo, Nkosi Johnson and even Nelson Mandela. Although the HIV ‘hero’ method was successful in reducing ignorance and stigma about HIV/AIDS, according to respondents, it has led to a “fragmented” civil society.

Interviewees highlighted that AVAC is in danger of falling into the trap of capacitating personalities, rather than building organizations. Individuals are at the core of the Fellowship design, with personal relationship being both a major impetus and outcome of AVAC’s mentoring. Post-Fellowship, AVAC has facilitated the above-mentioned APHA organization, but there is a fear that in building such coalitions, all that has been achieved is to set up a “new space with the same people”. The recommendation from respondents was that work needs to be institutionalized and the relationships of the future need to be those of institutional partnerships, which will enable the connections and alliances that are currently missing.

‘Individualism’ was also seen to negatively affect the Fellowship approach itself, with one respondent explaining that the, “Mentor approach, which is all about the individual, feels very paternalistic, very old fashioned.” The model received censure for being outdated, “Like a teacher checking up on you”. Furthermore, it was expressed that context affected the three-way partnership between AVAC, the Host organisation and each Fellow. Although respondents felt that the Fellowship was potentially “very relevant” as “an African fellowship program,” there was some comment that “Africa is not one country and...it’s not a one size fits all”. AVAC was criticised for its “lack of contextual understanding,” and whilst there was recognition that this was “where the host comes in, they provide the contextual aspect,” in practice, it seemed to create tension between the Host and AVAC. This left the Fellow in-between two disparate agendas, often, tied to a host who didn’t fully ‘buy in’ to AVAC’s program¹⁰⁸.

The suggestion was to shift towards an approach that offers individuals, “more autonomy, “that focused on “collective work,” with responsibility for the development of advocacy coming from “African leadership”. Practically, this could be achieved in future if AVAC supported (financially and with technical capacity) African organizations to lead Fellowship events and take the forefront. This would involve AVAC moving from, “the driving seat to the passenger seat,” and creates an urgent action to map relevant allies who could support and assist with remodeling the Fellowship’s North-South dynamic through partnerships that considers race and

¹⁰⁶ SAHO, *HIV/Aids in South Africa Timeline* and *Spotlight, Timeline* and Robins, *From Revolution to Rights in South Africa*

¹⁰⁷ Robins, *COVID-19 and HIV Activism*

¹⁰⁸ Refer to p 23 where host ‘buy in’ is reported as one of the major challenges that Alumni respondents faced

power dynamics more actively. Overall, there was a call for the Fellowship design to stop concentrating on the personal and start being more strategic, with such examples as:

- Organizing advocates in consortiums/partnerships,
- Considering Pan Africanism as an option for partnerships and looking beyond South Africa's borders
- Taking opportunities to directly foster collaboration and African leadership in the Fellowship, by linking with other AVAC programs
- More actively engaging the youth movement and supporting youth led programs
- Changing AVAC's focus to providing technical assistance to a bottom-up agenda shaped locally.

However, despite the historical and contextual complications inherent in the legacy of South African HIV/AIDS activism, the AVAC Fellowship was recognized by survey and interview participants as being constructive. For example, one respondent was delighted that the Fellowship had broadened his approach, after spending six years focused on trials, policies and research, the experience had, "opened my view to what else was happening out there."

And even though the Fellowship's 'independence' from South African HIV activism was viewed as problematic, as previously discussed, there was a positive view of it as well. An interviewee explained it in this way: "The [South African] environment should be ripe for advocacy; a constitution that protects speech, a history of opposition to power and a culture of speaking up for what is right, but government plays a central role in funding," as do large international donors. "It is challenging to call out [these donors] for certain policies when they fund your organization or to speak up against service delivery issues when government holds the purse strings." By contrast, AVAC funding was described as "freeing" as it allows for independence. AVAC's resourcing should therefore be cherished as an important part of the South African landscape, since unrestricted funding is increasingly rare.

Overall, the future of the program was viewed as having potential - its Fellows have proven to be professional advocates, and it has already been shown to shape advocacy movements in South Africa. As highlighted in the South African data provided in Evaluation Question 4 (see page 46), a large cadre of Fellows have used the opportunity to carry out necessary and specific projects. There is now a need to sustain the movement by:

- a) Strategically partnering with local organisations to take some collective responsibility for certain aspects of the Fellowship
- b) Investing more in the activities of the Fellows post-Fellowship, perhaps not in any specific 'alumni' group, which risks building on mistakes of the past, but by supporting them to take their work to existing networks and institutions
- c) Capitalising on the resources available to AVAC to continue to fund the Fellowship and other opportunities for 'independent' advocacy, unfettered by the constraints imposed by existing funders

4. CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation has found that the AVAC Advocacy Fellows Program is highly valued by the Fellows, Alumni and Hosts alike. External stakeholders are respectful of AVAC for their contribution to the prevention field and admiring of the Alumni's demonstrated skills, professionalism and knowledge. The Program is considered to be relevant and effective in delivering its goal, "to expand and strengthen the capacity of civil society advocates and organisations to monitor, support and help shape HIV prevention research and rapid rollout of new effective interventions in low- and middle-income countries with high HIV burdens".

The evaluation demonstrates that significant personal and professional gains are made by the individuals who participate in the Fellowship Program. These changes include increased confidence, communication and advocacy skills, and are recognised by the Fellows themselves, their Hosts, the AVAC mentors, as well as, external stakeholders. In countries where AVAC Fellows work, the Fellowship has helped to create a group of "highly professional" and "skilled advocates" who have technical expertise, a network of contacts and a range of experience. The evaluation showed that AVAC's engagement with Alumni varies by country and individual. Many Alumni are actively engaged with Fellows, each other and with AVAC, in addition to being vocal and successful advocates in their own circles. However, the evaluation also highlighted potential for further development of this group and harnessing of its abilities.

The investment made in each Fellow is clearly significant; representing substantial cost and time on the part of the AVAC team, Host supervisors and the ecosystem of stakeholders involved in the Fellowship. This investment appears to pay dividends as Fellows go on to contribute to change in organizations, their community and at a national/international level both during and after their Fellowship experience. But respondents identified gaps and provided examples of Alumni groups in Kenya, Uganda and South Africa which raise the question of how much broader the impacts could be felt if Alumni are supported to work collectively and take on some responsibility for the program itself including supporting the cadre of new Fellows each year.

Fellows report effecting change in their Host organisation, while Host organisations perceive certain benefits to organisational agenda that are gained from supporting Fellows, such as increased advocacy profile and capacity. There is evidence that Fellows go on to have similar impacts in organisations they work in post-Fellowship. This is attributed the Fellowship providing personal and professional development and access to networks. The projects that Fellows undertake during their Fellowship year has an impact on the community in which they work. However, the evaluation did not assess the individual weight and durability of each of these impacts, because it was outside the scope of the exercise.

At a national level, the evaluation did find evidence of Fellows going on to become leaders, participating in all levels of governance and technical groups working on a range of policy and implementation related to HIV prevention. There was also some evidence that Fellows go on to operate at regional and global levels in the prevention landscape acting as key witnesses for technical development, being asked to speak on behalf of key population and taking on leadership roles in organisations. Respondents attributed this in part to the opportunities and networks gained through the Fellowship ("the access") their personal and professional growth ("the technical assistance") they gained through the mentorship, and the finances ("the resources") provided which allowed them to manage an advocacy project.

Recommendations were provided by Alumni and Host respondents, to improve the quality of the program's impact. These were considered as a way of building on the significant gains and successes already apparent in the program and included practical suggestions about potential changes or tweaks to the structure, design, duration, and ownership of the Fellowship, as well as its ongoing monitoring and evaluation processes. Evaluators considered these recommendations when drafting their own contribution in the following section.

5. EVALUATORS' RECOMMENDATIONS

The Evaluators offer the following recommendations for possible next steps in the development of the AVAC Advocacy Fellowship Program based on an assessment of 10 years of the Program's reports and outputs, the results of the online surveys, and conversations with interview and FGD participants. This evidence has shown that there is a need to update the Program design and the following points provide some insight into where attention should be focused, which questions should be asked and what direction could be taken in each case. The Evaluators also suggest that appropriate professional advice is sought where highlighted and that AVAC consider some of the Fellows' ideas included earlier in this report.

1. Promoting Alumni Partnership in the Fellowship Program

The potential of individual Alumni is clear, and examples provided in the report of successful Alumni collaborations in Kenya, Uganda, South Africa and elsewhere raise the question of how much greater their influence could be if Alumni are supported to work collectively and take on some of the Program's responsibilities.

Alumni respondents themselves have requested a bigger role in selecting, managing and supporting future Fellows and the Evaluators recommend that mechanisms are put in place to honor these suggestions and find other ways to actively build the Alumni network, particularly in countries where several Alumni exist. A formal focus on Alumni will not only benefit future Fellows and the Program but will also secure the investments already made through the Fellowship program. It is advised that these developments are driven by Alumni themselves in each country, so as to be contextually relevant and address the North-South power dynamic that has been raised in Evaluation Question 1 (see p27, 30). The goal is to create an environment where Alumni feel like they are Program partners, rather than just participants.

Potential approaches that AVAC could pursue include:

- Providing minimal amounts of resourcing and technical support to create a space in each country, where there are more than about three committed Alumni, for the group to meet and organically develop their own approach to an Alumni network/coalition and Fellowship support mechanism. As mentioned in respondents' recommendations (see p62), part of this process could include mapping the existing Alumni engagement continuum across the Program in order to create a formal 'model' which can then be used as a basis for future engagement.
- Investigating ways to facilitate Alumni as supervisors or local mentors and shift AVAC's input into new Fellows towards purely technical mentorship. This may start to address the current situation described in the report in which Fellows are perceived to prioritize their allegiance to AVAC over the local Host organization. By technical mentorship we mean, the advocacy, communication, project and research skills that Fellows have clearly articulated they gain from a relationship with AVAC.
- Continuing to offer and formalizing all opportunities available to Alumni post-Fellowship (mentioned in Question 1) and making them publicly available so that there is a higher degree of transparency and visibility.
- Practically, social media groups hosted by AVAC should be disaggregated by country rather than year group, as Alumni are more likely (and eager) to base their ongoing work on their geography, rather than on what their Fellowship peer group is doing.
- Encouraging Alumni to advertise their Fellowship experience, speak publicly about it and promote the Program. This could include resourcing them to do so by paying for conference registrations, etc.
- Promoting Fellows' work by compiling it or publishing it where appropriate. This could involve creating an interactive map on the AVAC website, which allows viewers to click on a country and see details on Fellows and their projects. Certainly, the existing website could be improved to be more representative

and coherent (for example, some Alumni have many links and work attached, while others have nothing). The Evaluators strongly recommend setting up a new site or social media pages dedicated to the Fellowship which could be used to regularly share up-to-date information on the Fellowship.

- Prioritizing Alumni investment in the countries where there is critical mass of Fellows.

In mapping a way forward, the Evaluators strongly recommend considering the following questions:

1. Is the focus still on developing individuals? Or on building the field? How might this shift the program design?
2. How will AVAC address, not just acknowledge, the power dynamics inherent in a donor-grantee relationship? What other programs can AVAC learn from that present this tripartite alliance in other ways?
3. How can AVAC practically support country-level collaboration/connections among and across Fellows and its broader network of partners?
4. How can AVAC practically address perceptions of inequitable engagement? Is there a way to encourage broader participation?

2. Enhancing the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework

As evidenced by this lengthy evaluation report, the AVAC Advocacy Fellowship program is rich with data and stories of success and significant change. Collating and analyzing this data on an ongoing basis in a systematic and scientific way would provide significant evidence for future decision making. It could also influence others in the field to consider their approach to mentorship, capacity building and advocacy. The AVAC Team is consistent and holds detailed experience, insight and perspective and the Alumni are enthusiastic, eloquent and value research. Participants showed a genuine willingness to engage with this evaluation, suggesting that they could be used as a resource for future M&E exercises.

Keeping in mind that AVAC should be cognizant not to over-burden participants (or its own staff) with heavy MEL exercises, specific recommendations in this regard include:

- Developing a formal Theory of Change (TOC). The team, Fellows, stakeholders and Alumni showed an understanding that the Program goal was broadly the development of a cadre of local advocates, equipped and confident in advocating for HIV prevention, innovations and developments in each country. However, no formal reference for this goal was apparent and the goal itself had certainly (and appropriately) changed over the decade. The use of a TOC to understand the expected path of change from inputs through to the goal would provide a structure to analyze the success and relevance of inputs. When used in conjunction with a results framework (for example, a log frame) these tools could support the Program, donor and stakeholders to more accurately measure the level of progress. It would also provide a way to interrogate models of success and in so doing understand more fully to what degree the inputs have brought about any change.
- Implementing a formal but simple, fit-for-purpose monitoring and evaluation program. When done in a participatory and reflective manner, this would support ongoing learning from the Program and benefit AVAC and its Fellows in learning from the experience. A very basic suggestion is to survey the Fellows and Hosts before, during and 2 years after the Program to collect formal data on expectations, objectives and experience of the Program (similar to what has been done for this evaluation). MEL professionals (either internal or external to AVAC) should be consulted when designing these monitoring tools to ensure that they are specific to AVAC's needs and capabilities.
- Conducting an in-depth investigation of the Fellowship projects. There have been 77 projects undertaken over the Fellowships' decade, each displaying varying levels of complexity and success. Information on these projects formed part of the desk review for this evaluation, but as a whole the

projects were beyond the scope. The potential resource these projects hold, in conjunction with the experiences of undertaking them, offers a rich resource for the understanding of HIV advocacy in 14 countries.

- Analyzing the cost-effectiveness of the Program. Again, the evaluators recommend developing a TOC and using a MEL approach in order to determine if the investment over time (which the Evaluators agree is significant) represents an effective use of funds.
- Systematizing data and file storage for the Program, so that institutional knowledge and information is not held by any one individual but is stored centrally and accessible to the team as a whole. Here, the Evaluators recommend consulting a Knowledge Management consultant who could suggest appropriate and reliable systems and tools to create, for example, country specific databases, file naming and backup protocols, etc.

Again, these recommendations highlight certain questions for AVAC to consider:

1. What model of MEL is cost and time-effective in light of the small management staff and already busy Program participants? How can AVAC ensure not to collect unnecessary data in the attempt to balance effort and usefulness?
2. Could Alumni play a role in the reporting/monitoring duties? Eg: Is it worth considering how the CDC Evaluation Fellows work¹⁰⁹? Or could AVAC hire local M&E experts in countries where there is a critical mass of Alumni to take on some of the data collection?
3. Could a similar investment cost-wise bring about more change if the Program focused on organizations rather than individuals, or if it prioritized thematic or geographic issues?
4. How does the local context affect these considerations?

3. Integrating the Fellowship into National Agendas/Frameworks

AVAC have a clear and rich understanding of the global HIV prevention landscape and, as the evaluation has shown, share their insights and technical expertise with enthusiasm and effect. As a result, the advocacy capacity in each Fellowship country is increased by the Program. However, respondents commented that the strategic approach to advocacy at a national level is not always clear in the Program design and Fellows' projects are not tailored to any wider agenda.

In places where there have been a minimal number of Fellows and Fellowship impacts, it may still be suitable to maintain this degree of flexibility, allowing Fellows to follow their interests and adapt their projects to advocacy demands on the ground. However, the issue of strategic approach again raises the question of whether the goal of the Advocacy Program is to develop leaders or to influence the wider HIV landscape. The Kenyan case study presents a best-case scenario in which PrEP rollout was approached strategically, with the efforts of AVAC and its Fellows feeding into the wider national agenda to establish PrEP. The Evaluators suggest that there are lessons to be learnt from this example, and that ten years into the Program, there are gains to be made by consolidating some of the advocacy wins the Fellowship has already made to impact the wider landscape, particularly in countries where there have been multiple Fellows and projects. As such, they recommend:

- Carrying out strategic planning in countries with high numbers of Fellows to create something like a country operating plan. This would include carrying out collaborative mapping exercises at national levels in each Fellowship country to chart the successes already made and the pressing issues in HIV prevention from all perspectives, as well as potential partners and key gatekeepers. In this way Fellows and Alumni could develop clear pathways to change in their advocacy work, which is measurable and attributable. It would also create a more organized view of relevant partners, providing information which could direct Fellows during project planning. The evaluators recommend that this should also be

¹⁰⁹ See CDC [Evaluation Fellowship Program](#)

an exercise which is led by local advocates, including Alumni, Fellows, and other local stakeholders and supported technically by AVAC.

- Increasing visibility of planning activities that may already be happening organically. Adding visibility to the process is a step that would make the efforts more obvious and the findings more accessible, thereby increasing transparency and allowing stakeholders to understand and engage with AVAC and its Fellowship Program.
- Reinstating the partners meetings which were highly valued by respondents and not only provide effective networking opportunities but also show partners that they are valued members of the Fellowship team. In light of current events, it may be worth investigating whether these meetings can take place remotely in a similar way to the 2020 Fellows Induction.
- Limiting the geographic scope of the Fellowship to focus on Sub-Saharan Africa and leveraging existing linkages. If expansion is a goal, then perhaps AVAC could consider how regional focus could improve impacts, rather than starting from square one in an entirely new area of the world and diluting the effectiveness of the small management team.
- Partnering with youth-led advocacy to draw in younger advocates as suggested by evaluation respondents. AVAC could partner with relevant youth organizations to advertise the Fellowship opportunity, engage with them to find effective ways to attract interest from a younger cohort and reserve at least 1 Fellowship place a year for 'Youth Fellow' (age 18- 21).
- 'Developing networks' was mentioned frequently in the evaluation as a valuable outcome of the Fellowship experience. This was in reference to Fellows gaining access to AVAC and Host networks, and, less frequently, to launching their own collaborations, networks and coalitions. These different types of networks and their potential worth to Program goals were not investigated in depth however, suggesting that a valuable exercise for AVAC may be to further analyze the subject.

Questions to consider include:

1. How does AVAC need to adjust its model to optimize its strengths -- access, connections, resources?
2. How does the Fellowship fit into CSO and national advocacy agendas at local levels? Has this changed?
3. How can AVAC support country-level collaboration/connections among and across Fellows and its broader network of partners?
4. Is it relevant to extend projects/connections across regions instead of just countries? Are existing groupings like SADC and EAC useful frameworks to consider?
5. What will the HIV donor landscape look like in 5 years' time and how might this affect the program design and geographic focus? Which locations are more vulnerable and will need stronger civil society?
6. Is there a model which allows for a mixture of direction and flexibility?

4. Promoting Host Partnerships in the Fellowship Program

As per the evaluation results, it appears that, to a large extent, Fellows are guaranteed a high standard of individualized attention from AVAC, which includes limitless technical assistance, time, and encouragement. However, this kind of support is not as certain when it comes to the Host organization, and respondents have outlined how their project outcomes and overall experience have been negatively affected by disinterested, disorganized or busy and overstretched supervisors. This has created unfair conditions, where some Fellows arguably have a better Fellowship experience than others simply because of the circumstances surrounding their supervision. The Evaluators therefore recommend leveling the playing field by ensuring that all Host supervisors are capable, interested and resourced to provide quality input. Specific avenues to explore in this regard include:

- Creating a set of guidelines for Host selection. This could be done by mapping past Hosts and identifying a set of criteria that characterize effective supervisors and organizations. Unknown Hosts could then be checked against the criteria to determine whether they may be a good fit for the Fellowship or could take a particular action to improve their suitability and chances for success.

- Creating a set of guidelines for supervisor selection which considers the work/time load that supervisors have. There is also the possibility of adding an in-country Alumni mentor position to help support the supervisors.
- Providing financial incentives to Host organizations by paying for the supervisor's mentorship time. By essentially 'buying a service', AVAC can set and demand minimum criteria for supervision.
- Formalizing the collegial relationship between AVAC and its Host partners by creating something akin to a Memorandum of Understanding/ Partnership Agreement, which holds both parties to account and provides solutions in cases where either partner is not able to perform the required duties and the Fellowship experience is in jeopardy. If such a document already exists, then it may be necessary to update its relevance and investigate where there are shortcomings.
- Investigating the workload planning process and setting goals and targets for supervisors alongside the Fellow that take into consideration what the Fellowship demands, and how these requirements fit in with their ongoing organizational duties.
- Ensuring that Host organizations implement some kind of event or presentation which introduces the Fellow and his/her project to the whole organization and provides an opportunity for colleagues to ask questions and provide support.
- Implementing in-country project evenings during which Fellows present their projects and experiences to other Fellows, Host organizations, CSOs, Alumni, and other relevant stakeholders. This raises the visibility of the Program and of those involved in it and ensures Fellowships do not occur in silos.

Essentially, AVAC should ask questions about how it can invest in organizations, rather than individuals, to build a culture of advocacy, for example:

1. How can AVAC level the playing field and create more equitable access to the Fellowship experience?
2. What aspects of the current Host induction process are not as effective and how can these shortcomings be addressed? Which parts work well and can be enhanced?
3. How can accountability be ensured for all parties in the tripartite arrangement without losing the strong collegial relationships that are built?
4. How do you invest in organizations in ways that can be reasonably scaled?

5. Supporting Post-Fellowship Development

Although AVAC is rightly cautious to label the Fellowship a training program, it is evident that participants' skills and knowledge are enhanced throughout the Fellowship year in ways that continue to affect their work post-Fellowship. Indeed, it appears that the Fellowship provides such a good environment for learning and development that it can be difficult for Fellows to return to the 'real world' and implement their learning without the level of support they have become accustomed to. To address this challenge, the Evaluators recommend the following:

- Interrogating the training aspect to gauge how important formal and informal training really is to Fellows and Alumni and whether there are particular skills or learning experiences that are valued.
- Supporting Fellows during their Fellowship year and afterwards to plan for their future post-Fellowship and capitalize on the experience in a way that suits them personally. This should be built into the Program design and discussed at points throughout the year. Some ideas in this regard include:
 - Arranging Alumni presentations about their post-Fellowship experiences and/or highlighting these stories on AVAC's social media/website to provide inspiration for current Fellows
 - Implementing an exit interview for outgoing Fellows in which they present their plans and consult with AVAC about how the organization can support them moving forward
 - Committing to ensuring engagement specifically for Alumni in their first year post-Fellowship. This will go a long way towards allaying Alumni concerns about feeling abandoned when their Fellowship year ends.

- Highlighting all the post-Fellowship opportunities that already exist by listing them publicly, providing a handout during the exit interview, and featuring them on social media posts. This ensures all Alumni are informed about post-Fellowship engagement opportunities whether or not they chose to participate.

Some relevant questions to consider are:

1. How much does AVAC value training? Is this reflected in the Program design?
2. Is AVAC equipped to provide all the training that is requested or needed? Is it worth formalizing or partnering with training organizations to provide some aspect of formal education which would support Fellows moving on post-Fellowship?
3. How much responsibility does AVAC have for Fellows post-Fellowship?
4. How can AVAC ensure that post-Fellowship engagement is fair and equitable?
5. How can the management team improve post-Fellowship engagement without sacrificing its commitment to the current Fellow cohort?

6. Increasing Transparency

If nothing else, this evaluation has highlighted the difficulty of crafting an effective Fellowship Program that takes into consideration all the intricacies and disparities of the diverse geographies, people and experiences that its design constitutes. The fact that Fellowship participants have recorded significant successes year after year is of great credit to AVAC's vision, commitment and enthusiasm. Evaluators recommend that a decade in, the time is therefore ripe to increase the visibility of the Program in order to a) create a level of transparency that may have become hidden amidst all the complexities b) improve the targeted reach of the Program. Specific guidance includes:

- Advertising the Program in different ways according to the local context in order to attract a wider audience. Methods should be informed by local input but not rely on individual relationships that already exist. In this way AVAC should explore ways to deepen institutional partnerships and endeavor to reach out to the HIV sector as a whole.
- Creating a website, as previously suggested, specifically for the Fellowship Program and/or social media accounts where Fellows and Alumni could play a role in updating and contributing to social media posts.
- Exploring options for co-designing future Program activities with relevant partners. This includes seeking out existing stakeholders who have not previously contributed their views and encouraging them to participate and looking for other avenues of input. For example, AVAC could consult with other organizations that run Fellowship programs, such as the Ibrahim Leadership Fellowships¹¹⁰, the Mastercard Foundation¹¹¹ or the CDC Evaluation Fellowship program.
- In these changing times is it essential to actively and honestly explore unconscious bias within the Fellowship design and management team itself. The Evaluation team suggests hiring a diversity management specialist who could assist with this.
- AVAC have readily and honestly acknowledged the intrinsic power dynamics of the Program. This acknowledgement is significant and should be developed by interrogating some of the language, personal perceptions and approaches based into the design and management of the Fellowship program, at all levels. This is another area where a specialist diversity consultant may offer expertise and support.

Questions AVAC might consider when undertaking this next step:

¹¹⁰ See [The Ibrahim Leadership Fellowships](#)

¹¹¹ See the [Mastercard Foundation](#)

1. How can AVAC view our program from other perspectives? Who can AVAC involve in creating the future of the program?
2. How does AVAC engage people differently from the “usual suspects”?
3. What support does AVAC need to interrogate our unconscious bias?
4. Is AVAC able to step back from our deeply held views about the program we’ve created?

7. Improving Project Planning and Management

In Evaluation Question 1, respondents noted several challenges that were faced in undertaking their projects. Accordingly, Evaluators felt that the project process itself requires some consideration, specifically in regard to time/workload project management. Suggestions include:

- Providing some additional input to prepare Fellows adequately for the heavy workload and time pressures. A short time management course may be an option or, as previously suggested, creating more formal and ongoing workload planning *with* supervisors, so that there are joint targets that realistically consider other organizational work priorities.
- Ensuring achievable projects that are completed at the end of the year. Projects that are too ambitious run the risk of making Fellows feel frustrated or despondent about failing both oneself and one’s community. Evaluators recommend that projects are considered using SMART indicators and follow a clear project close down process that celebrates and promotes the outputs and hands them over to relevant recipients if necessary. Additionally, taking into consideration Host comments about Fellows struggling with project costs, some kind of budgeting short course may also be beneficial to assist Fellows in creating projects that fit within their financial means.
- Investigating shortcomings in the current work planning process. Evaluators note that the Fellowship Program already sets aside time outside the actual Fellowship for Fellows to undertake project and budget planning with AVAC and the Host Organization. This process was not investigated in any detail in the evaluation and should be analyzed further to find out which aspects could be improved. For example, from a brief consideration of the Work Plans provided, there could be value in minimizing the number and scope of milestones and setting visible target dates for each.

Questions to consider are;

1. Are the projects a vehicle for the development of the Fellow or are they in themselves a vehicle for change within the prevention landscape. Or both?
2. How does AVAC define a successful project? What are the characteristics? How should AVAC support people in building successful projects in future?
3. Are projects time-bound? Can they have a life beyond the fellowship? If so, what support is there for ongoing projects.
4. Projects need to be achievable, manageable and sustainable, how does AVAC ensure that *every* project meets this standard?
5. Could better budgeting affect project costs?