

IMPLEMENTATION OF JOINT ACTION ON IMPROVING QUALITY IN HIV PREVENTION HOW CAN WE CONTRIBUTE TO HIV PREVENTIVE PROGRAMS IN CROATIA?

Lessons learned from Croatia

Authors: Jasmina Pavličić, Tatjana Nemeth Blažić¹
¹ Croatian Institute of Public Health (CIPH)

Succeed piloting



NGO HELP's Drop-in harm reduction program, October 15, 2014



Network of VCT centers in Croatia, December 10, 2014

Dissemination activities in Croatia



Workshop on HIV counselling and testing – „Ten years of VCT centers in Croatia – a step towards comprehensive sexual health“, CIPH, December 16, 2014, Zagreb



Workshop on development of Harm Reduction Guidelines, Croatian Office for Combating Narcotic Drugs Abuse, September 18-19, 2014, Marija Bistrica



Workshop on HIV testing and counselling for counsellors working at the LGBT center, CIPH, October 3, 2014, Zagreb

Introduction

- Funded by the European Union within the Health Programme
- 25 associated and 20 collaborative partners from 26 EU member states
- Coordination: Germany, German Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA) in Cologne
- Total budget: 3.530.012 €
- Duration: 1.03. 2013- 29. 02. 2016
- Goal: education, implementation and promotion of quality improvement in the field of HIV/AIDS in government and civil sector by using quality improvement tools (QI) adapted from general health promotion tools and adapted for use in the field of HIV infection
- Croatia, associated partner: WP6 – Practical Application (Lead: Germany, Deutsche AIDS-Hilfe) – We have piloted the tool Succeed on programs conducted by CIPH (VCT centers' network) and NGO HELP (Drop-in harm reduction program)

Methodology

- Analysis of **project activities implementation** (available in more detail as CIPH and NGO HELP case studies)
- Feedback from a small **ad-hoc survey on informedness and interest for application of QI tools** conducted within 2 week period (last week of December 2015 and first week of January 2016) on national and local level; recipients were key stakeholders in HIV preventive activities in Croatia; survey of 9 questions sent via e-mail - 6 recipients from NGOs and 22 from 11 Health institutions (VCT centers at CIPH, PHI and hospitals, Ministry of Health, CIPH directorate)

Results

Greatest benefits / Main achievements of Quality Action:

- Raising awareness on the importance of QI
- Raising awareness on the importance of setting aside sufficient and time dedicated to QI activities in our work plan
- Two persons in Croatia educated in QI tools
- Piloted a QI tool on real projects/programs in Croatia
- Added value
 - European networking – being part of a European network of quality improvement
 - Exchanging experiences with representatives of other countries in the field of HIV

Barriers

- It proved very difficult to ensure enough uninterrupted time when piloting QI tool at the office
- The importance of implementing quality improvement activities is not sufficiently recognized in daily work

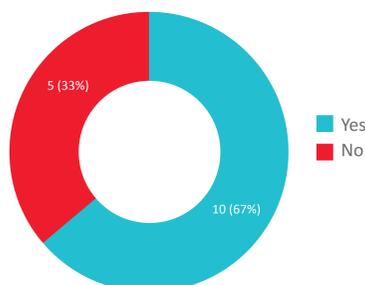
Challenges:

- Set aside enough time for the application of the tool with respect to other tasks
- Geographical dislocation of all partners involved
- Planning and implementing quality improvement activities in daily routine

Ad-hoc Survey 2016 - Results

- **Response rate:** 15/28 (11 from government and 4 from civil sector)
- **Detected areas for improvement:** Our survey results point to a need for **more intensified dissemination and information activities** on QI tools among our stakeholders' network. Even though informedness on the existence of such tools we do not find satisfactory, all those who responded to our survey are interested in applying QI tools in their work and **all respondents stated that they are interested in being educated in using QI tools.**

Informedness on Quality Action and QI tools



- **Limitations:** Small and convenience sample, ad-hoc conditions for survey implementation; we expected a higher response rate

Piloting the Succeed tool - points for improvement:

CIPH (network of VCT centers)

1. Increase testing coverage of key populations by targeted preventive activities.
2. Strengthen the collaboration of Public Health Institutes and NGOs.
3. Advocate for higher financing of educational-informational material, marketing material, condoms and human resources.
4. Increase the use of rapid testing (dependent on financing).
5. Strengthen capacities for implementing health education on HIV and STD within the education system.
6. Strengthen the activities of evaluating, obtaining feedback from final users of our services.
7. Improve in everyday collaboration of various services within CIPH and strengthen human resources.
8. Continue and improve the collaboration and networking of all key stakeholders and information sharing through all available communication channels. Make policy makers more aware of our work, gain more political support for HIV prevention in Croatia.
9. Provide more feedback to all stakeholders by publishing more reports, comparison of data of our research, reviews etc.
10. An area to improve is develop new segments of our program, turn more towards STI and sexual and reproductive health protection and broaden our scope of services, potentially enabling the provision of more counselling and testing services in one place.

NGO HELP (harm reduction Drop-in program)

1. Provide continuous education of the PWID, particularly stressing the importance of avoiding risky behavior and on ways to improve their health and motivate them on the importance of proper disposal of used equipment.
2. Advocate and work on more systematic education of police and the public on what to do with discarded injecting equipment.
3. Put more effort into biobehavioral research.
4. Try improve informedness of our key population on the availability of harm reduction services. Make currently available services more accessible (regarding working hours etc).
5. Work on sustainable financing (enabling regular payment of salaries for our employees for the entire year), which is a problem caused by irregular payments from our financing bodies.
6. Fundraising for various needs of our NGO such as adaptation of our facilities, securing finances for continuous education of employees.
7. Keep up good acceptance of preventive activities in the community through continuous communication with stakeholders.
8. Put efforts into implementing QI in routine daily work (to maintain and improve quality and to help ensure sustainability of our organization).

SWOT ANALYSIS OF FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION QI

Strengths

- Tradition and continuity in surveillance, control and prevention
- Well organized and functioning public health network
- Network of stakeholders and professional knowledge of participatory stakeholders
- Experience in project management and research implementation
- Collaboration of government institutions and NGOs
- Innovation, networking, motivation (enough motivated people)

Weaknesses

- Insufficient funding for prevention and quality improvement
- Insufficient feedback with stakeholders on results of surveillance and other activities
- Insufficient awareness about importance of QI in HIV prevention
- Lack of human resources

Opportunities

- Strengthening networking
- Better use of intersectoral synergy and collaboration
- Exchange of experience and good practices in the country and internationally
- Advocacy for QI
- Application for projects funded by the EU

Threats

- Limited human resources
- Limited finances
- Changes in the health system

What are the next steps?

- Intensify dissemination of information on the existence of QI tools (through various communication channels: HIV prevention and public health mailing lists, Internet, medical professional meetings and other meetings, publishing material in medical gazettes, scientific publications)
- Organize education (national workshop) in use of QI tools

Sustainability

- Educate more educators in using QI tools (national workshop)
- Include the concept of quality improvement into the National HIV/AIDS Prevention Program for the upcoming period
- When applying for ESF funding plan for QI education activities

Conclusions

Quality improvement is of key importance for public health prevention programs and will contribute to the successful control of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The implementation of Quality Action in Croatia has been a very useful both as project experience, since this was the first Joint Action CIPH has taken part in, but also for our professional development. Two persons in Croatia have received education in application of QI tools and have successfully piloted the tool on current projects. The piloting experience has resulted in heightened awareness of securing enough time and planning for quality improvement activities, and even more, for their continued implementation. We would like to thank the coordinator of Quality Action on a giving us a very positive project experience through excellent and coordination, administrative and professional support and prompt replies to our emails.