

THE CHURCH FORUM

Annual Report 2022



Reporting Period:

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PROGRAMS 2022 HIGHLIGHTS

STRENGTHENING CHURCHES TO FIGHT AGAINST HIV/AIDS AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE, CONTINUATION

Introduction

The project aims to improve the wellbeing of persons infected with and/or affected by HIV and AIDS and reduce poverty, especially in the church. Training addressing stigma and discrimination in the church were conducted and establishment of savings and credit groups. The project is implemented in community and churches in the 4 regions of the country. The project activities include; Radio program, Savings and credit groups, HIV prevention meeting, Establishment of regional committees and internal capacity building of the organization.

Radio Programme

The radio program has been used as a tool to reach more people especially in the church on health and other issues affecting people. The radio program was on air every Thursday at 7:00pm on the Voice of the church radio station. The show is called *Teluleko Emabandle*. Different speakers are hosted each week to talk about different topics. Topics discussed include; Financial savings and budgeting - Listeners were taught on different ways to save money, how to prepare a budget plan and spending money wisely, Issues of children - Children's rights, caring for children with disabilities and special needs, Diabetes for children and Parenting skills, contextual bible study on GBV, Gender based violence, Sexual offenses and domestic violence Act, Women's right, HIV Messages of hope, Basic facts of Tuberculosis (TB), TB/HV co-infection and TB prevention therapy (TPT).

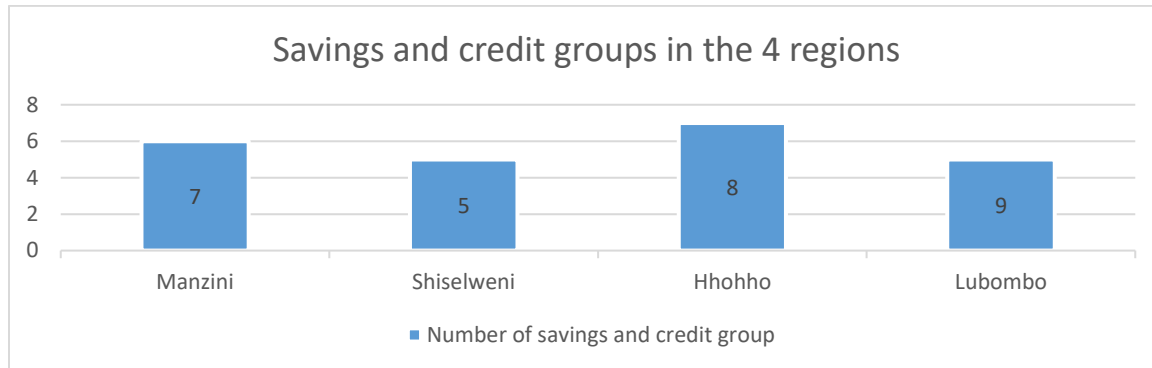
HIV/AIDS Prevention Meeting

Meetings were conducted in churches to raise awareness among congregants on HIV, Gender based violence, Covid-19 and the Sexual Offence and Domestic Violence Act of 2018. The meetings were conducted in churches at Siteki, Lamgabhi, Ngwabi, Bhunya, Nkaba, Kagwebu, Bethany, Mahlabaneni, Mkhalfene, Mambane, Mhlaleni, Joppa, Gege, Hlatsi, Kudzeni, Ntontozi and kwaluseni. The total number of people reached during the meeting was 977.

The congregants displayed great interests in learning about the Sexual Offence and Domestic Violence Act of 2018 and were encouraged to report issues of GBV. Through partnering with Domestic Violence-One stop centre cases reported and referred and addressed. On the HIV prevention meeting, HIV testing services were provided through assisted self-testing.

Savings and Credit Groups

The organization has been promoting economic strengthening in churches by supporting churches to start savings and credit groups. There are now 29 savings and credit groups located in the 4 regions of Eswatini. The groups meet once a month to save and borrow money at any interest of 10%. Group members have continued to attend meetings, borrowing money and pay outstanding loans.



Twelve (12) community Savings group supervisors and three (3) regional Savings group supervisors were recruited to monitor existing groups, form new groups and provide monthly reports. In June the savings group supervisors were trained on bee keeping, farming, piggyery and business planning.

Church Forum Regional Committees

The mandate for Church Forum is to coordinate and provide comprehensive intervention strategies for churches at National, Regional, and Local church level. Through partnering with FHI 360, 4 regional committees have been established formed by church leaders from the 5 Church Organizations namely; Council of Eswatini Churches, the League of African Churches, the Eswatini Conference of Churches, the Eswatini Conference of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, the International Tabernacle Ministries. The committees were oriented on Church Forum and meet on a monthly and quarterly basis. There were 4 regional committee meetings that were conducted in Manzini, Lubombo, Hhohho and Shiselweni regions.



Image: Shiselweni and Manzini regional committees during their reporting meeting

Lastly the terms of reference were shared with them so they know what their role was. The member have been introduced in the different Church Bodies there now working at regional level and assist the organization in coordination of churches at community level.

Internal Capacity Building

In the beginning of the year in January 2022 there was internal capacity building of the Church Forum staff members conducted at Sidvokodvo Water world. The staff were trained on monitoring & evaluation, prevention from sexual exploitation, Organization governance and new tools for the organization.

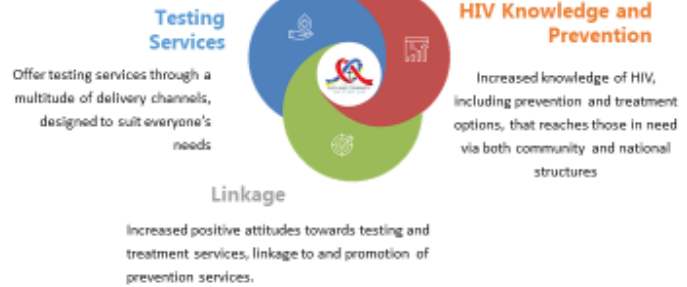
Following the selection of new Church Forum Board members during the annual general meeting, in August 2022 there was a meeting at Bethel Court, for the board induction/orientation. The Board members were informed on the organization programs, Church Forum Strategic Plan and important policies for the organization. CANGO was engaged to trained the board members on Governance(Organization overview, What a typical NGO in Eswatini Architecture, Important policies the organization should have, Roles of Board and management, Resources Mobilization and Board orientation checklist). This lead to the review and establishment of the organization policies.

FAITH AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVE (FCI)

Introduction

FCI Recap: What were are Doing ?

Priority 1: Engaging communities of faith to understand the epidemic, raise community awareness, and bring critical prevention and treatment interventions to reach men, women and children with testing and services through communities of faith, existing PEPFAR partners and new Faith-based partners.



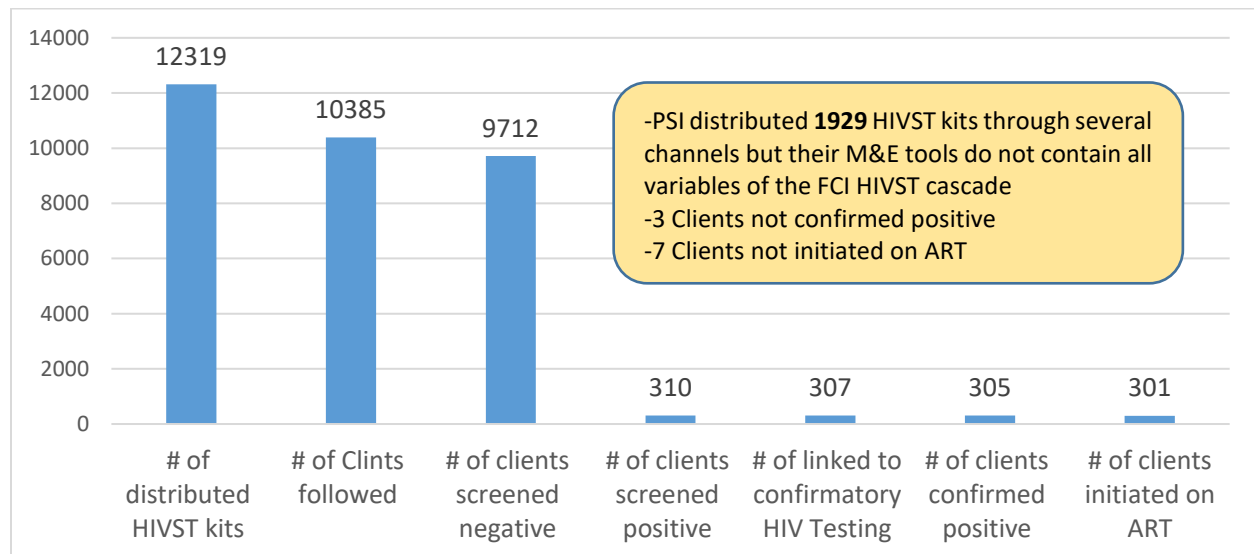
Priority 2: Strengthening justice for children through preventing sexual violence for boys and girls, as well as linkage to the justice sector through integration of faith leaders and FCIs as well as traditional & community leaders



18 YEARS OF SAVING LIVES THROUGH AMERICAN GENEROSITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

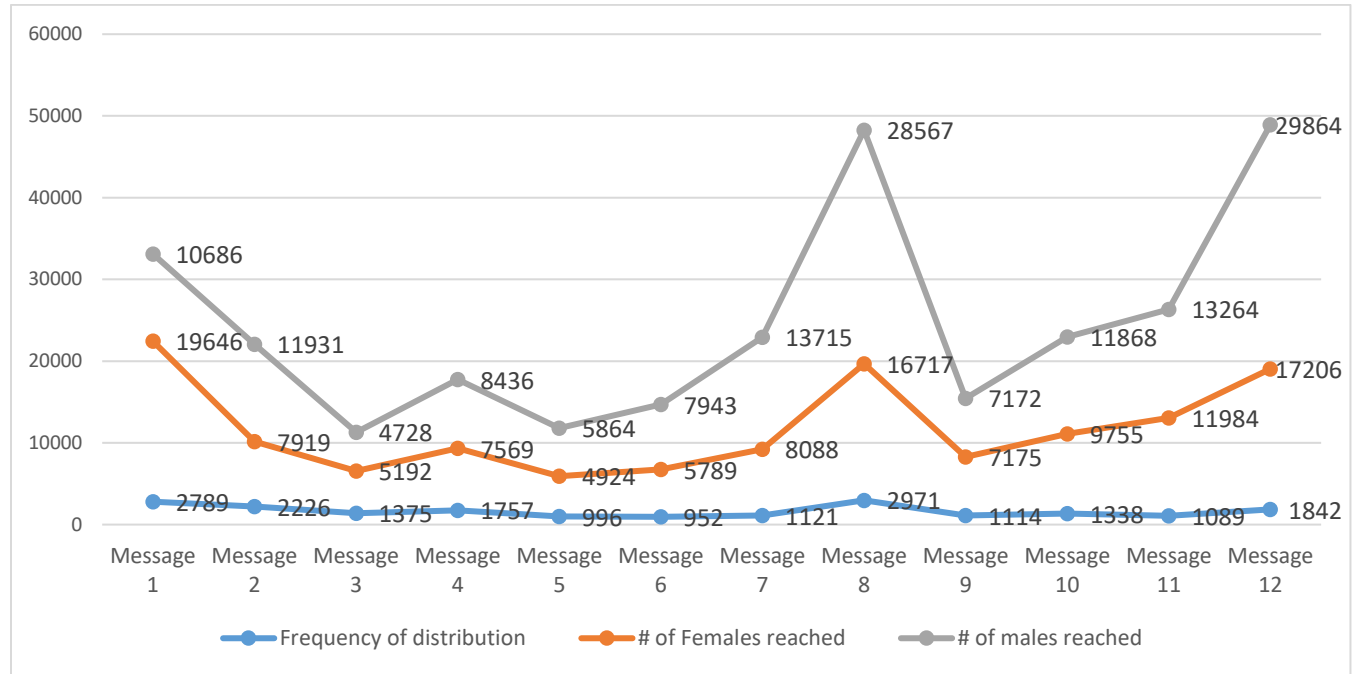
HIV SELF-TESTING

Church Health Committees (CHCs) and Carers through the assistance of the implementing partners (COAG, TLC and URC-DOD) have been distributing self-testing kits to congregants and community members to encourage them to know their HIV status. Below is a diagram showing the cascade of the HIVST;



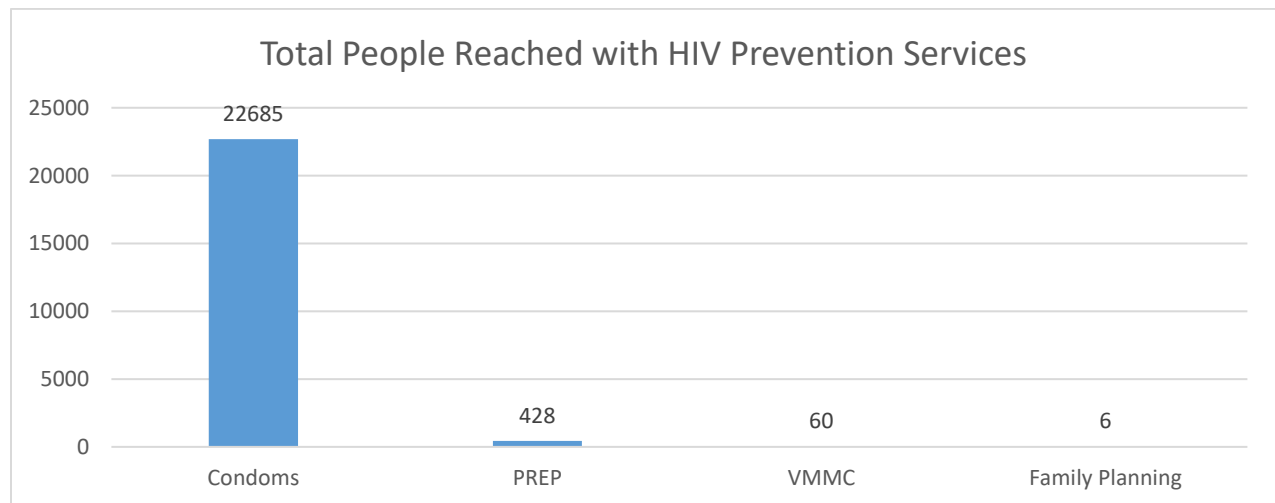
MESSAGES OF HOPE

The CHCs and carers also were dissemination messages of hope in their different communities. Dissemination of messages of hope was evenly distributed among the churches.



HIV PREVENTION SERVICES

Faith Leaders, Carers and CHCs were trained on HIV Prevention services so that they can be able to assist clients in their different churches and communities. When distribution HIVST kits client that test HIV negative are referred to the nearest health facilities to access HIV prevention like PREP, Condom, family planning and Voluntary male circumcision.



- A total of **22685** condoms distributed (21538 male condoms and 1147 female condoms).
- 428 clients were initiated on PrEP in 2022 with 158 being males and 270 females. A majority of those on PrEP were among the 20-34 years
- 60 Clients were initiated on VMMC

STRENGTHENING CHURCHES TO RESPOND AGAINST COVID-19

Project Area: Manzini, Shiselweni, Hhohho and Lubombo

Project Summary: Church Forum has developed information, education and communication materials to support churches to stop the spread of COVID-19. The project strengthen the Health system in churches by training church leaders, caregivers and church members on Covid-19.

Training of Church Leaders on Covid-19

Last quarter a pre-test evaluation was conducted to church leaders in 9 communities at Kandinda, Lushikishini, Nyamane, Hlatsi, Mahlabaneni, Phuzumoya, Ndzingeni, Nkwalini and Luhhumaneni. Currently, 8 communities have been visited to be trained on Covid-19 reaching a total number of church leaders reached was 69 (33 males and 36 females). The last training is yet to be conducted at Hlatsi. The church leaders were taught on;

- *Covid-19 Background Information and Basic Facts*
- *Characteristics of Covid-19 compared to other major viruses*
- *Eswatini COVID-19 Situation*
- *Transmission of Covid-19*
- *Signs and Symptoms of Covid-19*
- *Covid-19 Infection and Prevention Control (IPC)*
- *Covid-19 Vaccine*

After the training a post-test evaluation was done to see if the church leaders had gained knowledge on Covid-19. The result of the evaluation are still under analysis and will be share in the next report. Myths and misconception about covid-19 were addressed during the meetings especially on the topic on vaccination. Some church leaders feared to be vaccinated but other were role models in their churches because they had vaccinated and encouraged their congregants to also vaccinate.

Caregiver's Refresher Training On Covid-19 Home Based Care

The caregivers' refresher training was successfully done 15th of June 2022 at the Alcon house in Manzini. The objective of the training was to remind the caregivers on their duties in the communities and train them on the elements of a good training design. We also invited a team from the ministry of health on the Covid 19 response wing from the Manzini regional office to assist in the facilitation of the training workshop. The picture below was captured during the training session.



(Caregivers listening attentively as a representative from the ministry of home affairs reiterates on the role of social behavior change in ending the spread of Covid 19)

Radio Program on COVID-19

The radio program has continued to provide health education on Covid-19 to listeners. The show is on air on the Voice of the Church radio channel every Thursday at 19h00 to 19h30 every. The Ministry of health has assisted in topics covered this reporting period which include; Covid-19 home based, protecting yourself, keeping social distance and wearing mask, How to conduct a basic Patient, Assessment, Actions to be taken if patient has signs for Covid-19, Who should care for the patient, Isolation guidelines, General household hygiene, Handwashing, Masks, Care For The Patient Monitoring And Revisiting Rehabilitation. The main aim of the radio program is to impact positive change towards Covid-19 in the church, address myths, safe precautions preventing the spread of the virus and encourage to vaccinate

Referral for COVID-19

The Community Health Volunteers have been frequently supported with material on Covid-19 which has been assisting them when doing work in their different communities. The material involve information on the Basic facts of Covid-19, prevention, vaccination and home based care. The caregivers will be visiting and supporting families in HBC of Covid-19 patients. The organization developed Covid-19 screening tool to be used by caregivers, church leaders and family members in the project community. The caregivers have using the tool to screen clients to be referred to health facilities for Covid testing or vaccination. A referral tool was also developed for the caregivers to monitor referred clients and to assist them with transport to the health facilities. The caregivers work closely with their near local health facilities. The reporting period 31 clients were for Covid testing. With the upcoming trainings on HBC for family members we aim to increase the number of people referred for vaccination.

Baseline study on COVID-19 in churches

The organization conducted study to gain the knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding Covid-19 in the Eswatini churches. The target population was 90 Church Leaders from 9 communities (10 church leaders in each region) representing the 5 Church Bodies in the country. The communities were; Kandinda, Lushikishini, Nyamane, Hlatsi, Mahlabaneni, Phuzumoya, Ndzingeni, Nkwadini and Luhhumaneni. The study was conducted through structured interviews with church leaders using a questionnaire to collecting information on Covid-19 knowledge, attitude and practices of the participants.

A total number of 87 church leaders were interviewed in the pretest assessment and 79 church leaders were interviewed in the posttest assessment. Knowledge on Covid-19 was 100% of the respondents. The study showed that after training the respondents gained knowledge which affected their attitudes in regards to Covid-19. The study results showed that respondents had good practices because of fear of being exposed and in the post-test respondents had good practices because they had been empowered on Covid-19.

In the end of the study the respondents demonstrated good knowledge, attitudes and practices when it comes to Covid-19 in the church. The findings demonstrate that adequate knowledge on the Covid-19 pandemic improves how the respondents conduct themselves in issues of Covid-19 transmission, prevention and treatment.

Water Harvesting for Neighbourhood Care points

Twenty neighborhood care points from the Church Forum database were selected and provided with water harvesting material. The NCPs were from the 4 regions (5 NCPs per region). The NCPs care for orphaned and vulnerable children by providing meals and early childhood education.

The material include water tanks and gutter. The harvested water will be used to in the NCP.



Image 1 & 2: Water harvesting at Mahamba and Zombodze NCPs in the shiselweni region



Image 3 & 4: Malkerns NCP after tank was put and children accessing water during their graduation.

HIV PREVENTION FOR THE YOUTH IN CHURCH

ESTABLISHMENT OF YOUTH HEALTH COMMITTEE

The organization identify 50 youth leaders from churches that had been trained on HIV, SRH, GBV, and other health issues. The 50 youth leaders were from 25 churches (2 per church) in the 4 regions. On the 22nd to the 24th of April 2022 there was a refresher training for the youth leaders to be trained as church Youth health committees. The main aim of this activity was for churches to be able to attend youth issues especially to promote HIV prevention and GBV reporting. Facilitators from SWAAGA: presented on sexual gender based violence (SGBV), sexuality, teenage pregnancy and family planning (contraceptives) and Nazarene Compassionate Ministries: presented on Substance abuse and HIV prevention, testing and treatment. The youth were encourage to start savings and credit groups in their churches. The youth committees were provided with working tool to be used as they conduct their work which include the, HIV 101 Manual, Life Skill Education manual and SODV Act.



(Image: Youth Health Committees)

Lastly, after the training of the Youth Health Committees, there was a reporting meeting held at the George Hotel on the 10th of June 2022. The objectives of the meeting was to share experiences, learn from each other on how to improve on their community engagements and challenges.

CHURCH FORUM SUPPORT

Introduction

Church Forum got support from FHI 360 to help the organization improve where needed and to build the capacity of the organization staff. A network analysis was conducted between the Church Forum, the Church Organization and the local churches in the country. The support also assisted in capacity building of staff members and establishment of regional committees.

Establishment Of The Regional Committees

The Church Forum operates at a national level embarked in the process of establishing regional committees in the 4 regions. The overall goal is to make sure the work of churches is coordinated in the regions and fundraising is done at regional level. Through partnering with FHI 360, meetings were conducted in the 4 regions targeting Church Leaders (20 per region) from the 5 different Church Organizations. Elections were conducted in 4 regions and the committees were established with 9 members each. Each committee has a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and other members. In total there are 36 members that make up the regional committees.



Image1&2: Shiselweni and Manzini regional committees during their reporting meeting

On the 22nd - 24th of June 2022 a national meeting was conducted at eSibayeni Lodge to orient the committees on their role & responsibilities, Church forum programs, Leadership Skills, Basic Facts on Covid 19, of the regional committees, HIV, Gender Based Violence, Human Rights, Church Stigma and discrimination on HIV and Messages of Hope and proposal writing. The terms of reference for the committees were shared and the signed a letter consenting about being members of regional committees. The committees have been presented to the church bodies. FHI 360 supported the meeting with facilitation on Basic facts on HIV and transport reimbursement for participants.

To ensure the regional committees were functional, FHI360 supported the first meetings for the regional committees. The committees have continued to meet on quarterly basis for information sharing and planning.

Board Induction and Meetings

On the 21st of June 2022, there was Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the Church bodies affiliated to Church Forum. On that day the new Board of Directors for the organization were selected to serve a term of 3 years. Ongoing board meetings were held after the AGM which raised the need for a board induction

meeting. On the 8th - 9th of August 2022 there was a meeting at Bethel Court, for the board induction. The Board members were informed on the organization programs, Church Forum Strategic Plan and important policies for the organization. CANGO was engaged to trained the board members on Governance(Organization overview, What a typical NGO in Eswatini Architecture, Important policies the organization should have, Roles of Board and management, Resources Mobilization and Board orientation checklist).



Image3: Church Forum Board Members

On the 24th -26th of August 2022, there was meeting for internal capacity building on the policies. Participants of the meeting were the Board of directors, Church Bodies and Church Forum staff. The purpose of the meeting was to present, review and adopt policies for the organization which include; *The Human resource policy, Accounting policy, Board charter, Disciplinary policy, Code of conduct, Conflict of interest policy, Prevention of sexual violence and exploitation (Safe guarding) policy.*

Three committees were formed; Governance Committee, Human Resource Committee and Finance & Audit Committee to review and adopt policies that had been presented. The meeting led to the establishment of quarterly reporting meetings and information sharing for Church Forum and the Church Bodies

Establishment of the Church Forum Database

The mandate of Church Forum is to coordinate the church on health and other socio-economic issues at National, Regional, and Local church level. For the organization to fulfil its mandate there was need to establish a baseline or database for churches in the country. The organization church database was project oriented but through FHI 360 the organization was engaged with NERCHA to utilize CDAP of the church database in the country. There are 2826 number of churches on the CDAP database which is now the organization baseline. Below is the number of church in each region on the CDAP database;

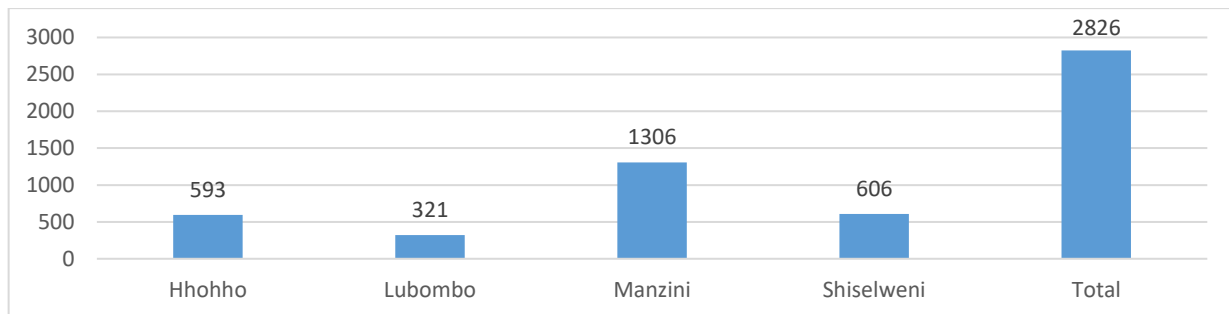


Diagram 1: CDAP Church Database

The database was helpful in the estimate of the number of church in the country but the database on CDAP does not have information on churches that have HIV programs, OVCs programs and gender based violence programs. NERCHA has added the variables on CDAP but the information is yet to be added by their data collectors. The database has been very helpful for Church Forum because now the organization will be able to develop a central database, the number of churches reached by the organization and the number that still need to be reached.

Results show that 3.2% churches have OVC support, 18.3% churches have HIV programs and 1% have economic strengthening programs (savings and credit groups). The database has been shared with the regional committees who have been helpful in identifying churches that have not been included in the database. The database update is an ongoing process

Network Analysis

There was a network analysis conducted for the organization which was supported by FHI 360. Support started by the development of 2 questionnaires (one for the Church Body and the other for denominations) to be used for the interviews. The questionnaires were then translated to SiSwati for easier use during the interviews. The 5 Church Bodies were then engaged to provide the list of churches to be interviewed at denominational level. The President and General Secretary/CEO from each Church body were also interviewed. The organization was supported with transport to conduct face to face interviews and communication to conduct phone interviews. Due to other commitments not all the intended target audience were reached.

Strategy Meeting

In 2020 the organization developed a Strategic Plan for 2020-2025 which has been in draft form for a long time. FHI 360 supported the organization to finalize the strategy and major changes were made which are good for the organization. On the 23rd of September 2022 a consultant was engaged to help the organization to review and adopt the strategy. Major changes made were;

- The vision was changed from focusing on HIV to all health issues
- The mission was updated to no limit church forum programmes
- A SWORT analysis for the organization was done
- Timeframe of the strategy should be reviewed in three years

Church Forum was encouraged to review its policies every 2 years, review & amend the constitution, develop a resource mobilization strategy, acquire land to build office, buy a new car and build up more human resource.

Church Forum and Church Bodies Information sharing meetings

FHI 360 has also supported the organization to revive and form planning, information sharing and coordination platform for Church forum and the Church bodies. On the 30th of August there was a meeting at Open house Boutique for Church forum and the Church bodies to present on their programs. All the 5 Church bodies were represented. The resolution was that the Church forum and the Church bodies should meet on a quarterly basis. The next meeting was scheduled for November 2022.

Successes

- Board Induction and orientation
- Church Forum Network Analysis survey
- Church Forum Strategic Plan Finalization
- Establishment the church database
- Church Forum and Church Bodies Information sharing meetings revived
- Availability of HIV testing services in churches and HIV prevention services in churches
- Distribution of messages of hope in churches
- Formation of new savings and credit groups
- Identification and Training of savings group supervisors on reporting tools.
- Baseline survey on Covid-19 conducted in 9 communities
- Training of church leaders on Covid-19
- Distribution of face mask to children and the youth in 9 communities
- Capacity building of Faith leaders on HIV and PSVAC
- Availability of CHCs in churches to assist congregants on HIV testing services

Challenges

- Not all CHCs in the FCI project attend monthly reporting meetings to share reports.
- Some clients did not provide correct HIV results after HIV self testing
- Having the same messages of hope over years.
- Low uptake of HIV prevention services
- Not enough resources to host more faith leaders in IEC Messages development.