



CapacityPlus Contributions to the Medical Education Partnership Initiative

The [Medical Education Partnership Initiative](#) (MEPI) is funded by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). MEPI supports African medical schools to improve the quantity, quality, and retention of their graduates and to strengthen health systems. The program has three stated aims: increase the number of health care workers trained in sub-Saharan Africa; retain those workers over time and in areas where they are most needed; and support regionally relevant research. MEPI is led through the work of 13 African medical schools and includes a network of more than 30 schools educating health professionals in 12 countries. CapacityPlus collaborated with the schools, MEPI Coordinating Center (MEPI-CC), Principal Investigators Council, and Technical Working Groups (TWGs) to conduct a set of activities to build the capacity of MEPI-supported schools in three technical areas: graduate tracking, eLearning, and community-based education (CBE).

GRADUATE TRACKING

A well-educated health workforce is vital to achieving an AIDS-Free Generation, supporting family planning goals, and ending preventable child and maternal deaths. Good-quality information about health workforce educational output is necessary for evidence-based decision-making, allowing professional councils and ministries of health to better understand the production and deployment of health workers within their countries. Moreover, the concept of the "educational home"¹ for health workers highlights the need for schools to stay connected with graduates, particularly where there are severe health workforce shortages. CapacityPlus collaborated with MEPI-supported schools to increase their ability to communicate with their graduates, in order to follow their progress into and within the workforce.

MEPI schools are investing heavily in strategies to retain graduates where they are most needed. A platform to connect with alumni allows them to gauge their strategies' effectiveness. Working with the Physician Tracking TWG, CapacityPlus developed and helped schools to operationalize [MEPI Connect](#), software capable of gathering data from graduates including their employer, place of residence, specialty, and further education. MEPI Connect is interoperable with CapacityPlus's iHRIS human resources information systems software, so data gathered by MEPI schools can be immediately useful to policy-makers as well as to schools. CapacityPlus and the

TWG support nine country-led initiatives to develop graduate tracking at 18 medical education institutions, five of which have successfully implemented customized MEPI Connect software.

ELEARNING

The eLearning collaboration aims to develop a wider understanding of the existing and potential uses of eLearning within MEPI institutions, increase their skills in the use of digital learning methods, and improve their ability to integrate eLearning into academic programs. *CapacityPlus*, in collaboration with the eLearning TWG and MEPI-CC, assisted 11 MEPI schools as they developed eLearning strategic plans and outlined their specific way forward toward using context-relevant eLearning programs. *CapacityPlus* also provided a forum for school representatives to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the frameworks developed and the challenges of implementing an eLearning strategy at a school. A 2015 workshop included an overview of a number of models and good practices for eLearning applicable in the African context, and provided participants with hands-on practice using eLearning tools for curriculum mapping, blended learning, student engagement, and recording or podcasting of lessons.

COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION

Through an extensive literature review, *CapacityPlus* and the Center for Rural Health, University of the Witwatersrand identified a number of [approaches, good practices, and tools](#) for evaluation of CBE programs that are applicable in the African context. *CapacityPlus* and the MEPI-CC hosted a workshop in 2014 to share the identified tools; and to guide representatives of MEPI schools through the development of individualized, specific evaluation frameworks for use in their own institutions. The collaboration also led participants from four MEPI institutions in an evaluation of the University of Zimbabwe College of Health Sciences's CBE program. The review served two purposes: to provide a practical training experience in the peer review process; and to explore the strengths and weaknesses of the UZCHS field attachment program.

RESULTS AND LESSON LEARNED

Key achievements from *CapacityPlus*'s collaboration included: implementation of eLearning strategic plans by schools in 10 countries; incorporation of eLearning into the standard infrastructure and approaches for instruction at some schools; incorporation of evaluation into 11 schools' CBE programs; and implementing MEPI Connect at schools in five countries. Each of these achievements could not have been reached without reliance upon the key attribute of the MEPI program—its facility to bring together a team of stakeholders including local leadership, the "Network" of MEPI-supported schools, the MEPI CC, multiple US Government agencies with complementary goals, and outside technical assistance such as that provided by *CapacityPlus*, carefully targeted to locally-identified needs. *CapacityPlus* support was most effective when it most actively engaged this network, for instance through community calls that enabled peer-to-peer technical support for eLearning and graduate tracking implementation and through the peer evaluation CBE activity.

¹Frenk J et al. 2010. Health professionals for a new century: transforming education to strengthen health systems in an interdependent world. *The Lancet* 376:1923–1958.