The Constellation for AIDS Competence

connecting local responses around the world

SALT
a positive mindset

3rd Quarterly Learning Report 2007

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SALT, a positive mindset

SALT is the DNA of the Constellation.

In this report you will find a synthesis of lessons learned from coaches and facilitation teams on various elements of the AIDS Competence Process with a focus on SALT.

"SALT brings out the confidence in people" (participant, PNG)

S **Share, stimulate, support**

A **Appreciate, acknowledge, analyse**

L **Learn, link**

T **Team, transfer**

Over the last quarter, Constellation coaches have had the opportunity to practice SALT with NGOs and CBOs in 12 countries from Asia and Africa. This report presents what we have learned about SALT: what it means, how it permeates all what we do and how to conduct SALT visits and SALT teams.

A: We have been learning about what SALT means to us and how it integrates our values and beliefs about people:

"SALT helps communities to identify their own strengths" (PNG participant)

The key belief underlying SALT is that people/communities have strength to respond to the issues in their lives.

A SALT visit in Papua New Guinea, February 2007

Strengths exist within people and the community. The AIDS Competence process emphasises that while there are many strengths, the key strengths which can be explored and drawn out of people include the strength to **care** for one another "When people tell stories others get encouraged and challenged".

Through caring, people have the strength to **change** "through SALT people gain courage to face reality".

Care and change are supported by the strength of **community** and the relationships within a community "SALT brings involvement in communities and people become willing to take action".

Leadership is there to support and encourage this process.

Within all of these strengths is the ability to have **hope**, hope that things can change, that there is something more.

Personal and community strengths are discovered and utilised through **ongoing conversations** "To help the communities address the real issues surrounding HIV, they need to be able to acknowledge their concerns, share/talk about it and would need support / persuasion / encouragement. Communities taking action against these issues in incremental steps follow - when the communities are ready to do it" Bobby Zachariah, India.

SALT visit in India, July 2007

B: We have been learning about applying the values and beliefs inherent to SALT so that it permeates all aspects of the AIDS Competence Process:

We believe that strengths exist in any person encountering any life situation. Sometimes people need help to recognise the strengths they have within them. We have found that as relationships deepen it is easier to draw out the strengths.

SALT provides a framework, a mindset in which coaches and communities can work together explore these strengths, and apply them.

SALT visit in Burundi, at the road station in Bujumbura, September 2007

That is, individuals and communities make their own response to their issues. It is a way of thinking, a way of working and a way of being.

SALT permeates all aspects of the AIDS Competence process within SALT teams, through SALT visits and through the tools that are applied. In this sense every encounter is an opportunity to apply SALT. "It's an approach to interacting with people, a mindset that you apply every time you relate to someone, keeping interactions natural, but deliberate" Matt Campbell, Australia.

1. SALT teams

A SALT team is formed when several people come together with the purpose of exploring the strengths that exist within people and/or a community. After coming together the team explores strengths in a consistent and systematic way through facilitation. Over time, SALT teams form as people with a common vision and goals are drawn together with a desire to do something.

An in-depth discussion around the role of facilitation SALT teams took place during the first learning event held in Cambodia. One participant reflected "Facilitation is good for applying in the field, because the meaning of facilitator means we can solve a problem together – stimulate information through participation" Bong, Cambodia.

The SALT team can work together to plan visits and learn from the interactions. "The SALT visit began by the team gathering together to reflect on the previous visit actions in relation to the team behaviour. This also helped to deepen the way of thinking and working as a SALT team" Onesmus, Kenya

2. SALT visits

SALT gives the framework for looking for, and capturing the strengths and positive behaviours we see developing through relationships. SALT visits make the exploring of strengths deliberate and intentional. It focuses the SALT team and community to look for a shared vision and pathway to change.

In every visit a SALT team looks for the strengths. A SALT team appreciates the people and responses. A SALT team learns from the interaction and relationship. The SALT team transfers what they have learnt to others.

SALT visits can have a specific objective and be strategic to supporting a community response to their issues:

- **SALT visits as a way of supporting others and helping them find their strengths:**

An example from Sierre Leonne:

"SALT visit as we know the name is really meant to support, it is meant to appreciate, assists and creates an environment for learning and transfer of skills and knowledge. And that is the essence of why we go to communities, groups that we want to work with, so that at least we can have first hand experience and information on what they are doing, that is positive, that we can together build upon and improve their situation". Ibrahim Kamara.

SALT visit at EC Association, Rwanda, September 2007

An example from a participant in the GLIA process:

"**It changed my life.** I lost my two wives of AIDS and I felt totally lost and confused. The people from the Constellation came to see me in my small health centre in the middle of nowhere and called me 'Sir;…Sir they said…nobody had called me Sir in a long time…They then highlighted all my achievements which I could no longer see and reminded me of my value, of my dignity. I remembered that I was a 'Sir' and that I had achieved important things in my life and still wanted to achieve more. I managed to raise 1,000 $USD and set up a small but functioning VCT center; and we now provide ARVs amongst other activities"

An example from Rwanda:

The SALT team met 12 women members of the EC Association, an association of spouses of truck drivers. The purpose was to introduce the AIDS competence process and to listen to, appreciate, and encourage the members of Association and what they do.

After having explained the context of the visit, spontaneous discussions occurred. The women came up with following steps to improve their own situation:

- Talk with their husbands about HIV/AIDS
- Ask their husbands to join the association and also be part of the solution

• Be conscious of the reality of the work of truck drivers, and to supply their husbands with condoms when they leave for a job

• To talk with other women and encourage them to join the association

The four resolutions which these women took show a very important thing: the community can change and progress towards AIDS competence. People only need to be stimulated and encouraged. Valens, Rwanda

➢ **SALT visits as a way of moving a conversation and local response forward in a strategic way:**

"The first SALT visit should focus on the "strengths" first. Then the other areas like concerns, hope and ways forward can be explored in subsequent visits" (Coaches in PNG).

3. SALT gives flavour to the tools and approaches applied

The tools and approaches used by the Constellation reflect SALT.

The Dream: Together we explore the hopes and vision of the community and to work together to achieve this vision: "When the facilitator asked to draw my dream, it was a small one, and then when joined together I realized that I need to learn more because the dream of the community is much bigger" Savy, Cambodia.

Self Assessment: Identifies key areas for action, explore possible solutions and motivates concrete steps to be taken: "This approach (self assessment) helps us to stop and think about what we have been doing, why we have been doing it, and what the next steps can be," PNG participant, first learning event.

MATT'S TOP TIPS

1. The number of people in the SALT Team should NEVER outnumber the people you are visiting. As a general rule, three people to a team is preferable

2. Take as little with you as possible. Especially don't take notebooks and take notes. The people you talk to become suspicious of what you are writing and it acts as a barrier between you and them

3. Dress and talk appropriately. Be aware of what is appropriate for the community you are visiting. Use simple language.

4. Don't over analyze. Go with an open mind, and be ready for anything. Anything is possible.

5. Listen, listen, listen. Don't talk more than the people you are visiting. Listen for when is right to talk, when is right to be quiet and when is right to leave.

"Be with people. Be among them. Be one of them. Share a journey that is mutually meaningful" , Matt Campbell, Australia.

SALT visit in Indonesia, July 2007