

Regional Update 2017

East Africa region



#thepowerofmany

When perspectives unite

For our East African region, 2017 was a year of strengthening relationships.

Marking close to a decade of operating in East Africa, the team of 80 people spanning three countries, namely Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, continued to develop internally, as well as externally, contributing to the national agenda of health for our client groups.

In Kampala, Uganda, the team opened a new one-year project for outreach service delivery focused on long distance truck drivers, taxi men, sex workers and drivers of public vehicles. Since the launch of the project in April 2017, the teams conducted ten outreach events each taking six days per month and reaching more than 10,000 people – nearly all of whom were tested for HIV. Of these, more than 6,000 people were treated for various illnesses, and all those who tested HIV positive were referred to other health facilities in Kampala.



Together, we can change the world.

As part of the Southern Africa region's Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Phase II contract, two Blue Box clinics were opened in Tunduma and Kasumulu, Tanzania, in 2017. In line with the grant sub-agreement, the region will hand over the clinics to the local Ministry of Health (MOH) in 2018.

All the Blue Box clinics in Kenya were accredited to offer HIV treatment (Anti-Retrovirals (ARVs), along with Malaba Blue Box clinic in Uganda and Tunduma Blue Box clinic in Tanzania. The Blue Box clinic in Katuna, Uganda received accreditation in late 2017 and expects to commence provision in 2018. The addition of Anti-Retroviral therapy (ART) provision from our clinics majorly improved the linkage of HIV positives to ART care, especially for those who prefer not to be referred to a local governmental facility.

At the same time, North Star's Kenyan Blue Box clinics began providing index testing services through partner notification, meaning the clinicians reach out to sexual partners and children of clients who test HIV positive, or clients already on ART with HIV testing services. All partners or children of our index clients testing HIV positive were linked into care and treatment services, helping to work towards the UN's 90-90-90 goal.

North Star's Star Driver Programme continued to thrive across the region. Launched as a joint initiative by Johnson & Johnson and North Star, the programme was built to create client loyalty for the long-distance truck drivers in accessing health care from our clinics, alongside improvement of health-seeking behaviour and awareness of road safety. In 2017, the programme benefitted from the appointment of a locally-based programme manager, tasked with improving uptake and relevancy of the programme.

A review and production of recommendations has strengthened this objective to increase the health care services uptake by truck drivers. The newly developed software aimed at efficiently capturing Star Driver data at a clinical level, continues to be adapted into the work plans, and while the programme remains active across Kenya, plans are underway to roll out the same in Tanzania soon.

North Star's East African regional leadership strongly believes in continued staff development for better quality delivery of its mandate. As such, and with deliberate planning and collaboration with partners, staff benefited from various training events across the year, from sensitisation, through to innovation in healthcare.

The region worked closely with FHI 360 in the Cross-Border Health Integrated Partnership Project (CB-HIPP), where our Katuna and Malaba Blue Box clinics were included as one of five cross border health units (CBHU) participating in the project. Ten cross border peer educators received specialised training, and five other staff participated in continued medical education that covered more than 200 health workers at five health facilities.

Our network-wide partner, Aids Fonds, has continued to partner with the East Africa region in supporting sex work projects, adding value for a nearly a decade in the region. The funding has seen sex workers benefit from services offered in the Blue Box clinics without stigma, gaining access to capacity-building workshops that have transformed sex workers to become effective peer educators. In addition, the programme has increased the sex worker's knowledge in material development, that has in turn produced tangible material that can be leveraged to be used by the partnership between North Star Alliance and the National AIDS and STIs Control Programme (NASCO) in the Ministry of Health in Kenya.

In Uganda, Aids Fonds supported a training event including 37 participants from sex worker groups/organisations including WONETHA, North Star Alliance, Ministry of Health, and the Uganda Aids Commission. The training aimed at developing sex worker-focused information materials for use in Uganda, and was followed by a series of three workshops that saw the development of messaging. Final messages were pretested and finalised in November, to be reviewed by the Aids Fonds communication department before printing and dissemination across the country in 2018.

The region's work with Hope World Wide Kenya saw the M&E manager participating in an M&E workshop, followed by the whole staff being brought together for an induction meeting to review and set expectations on the project. Across one week, presentations were given to address the project scope, indicators, monitoring and evaluation, and other HR issues that together will guarantee successful project implementation.

Following the success of the network-wide senior management meeting in Mombasa, Kenya, the East Africa regional leadership made the decision to take the shared themes of trust, transparency and unity a step forward within the region. Bringing together the entire regional team in Mombasa a few months later, the group focused on removing any traces of mistrust and replacing this with trust and sealing a strong regional bond. This resulted in a sense of openness within all regional staff, and a good understanding that North Star's regions are singular and the same, operating with the same main objective of serving our target population. Taking advantage of having the whole region together, the Utrecht office commissioned staff portraits within the same week, creating some valuable images depicting the regional team.

North Star's Tanzanian peer educators and outreach coordinators received job-specific training, followed by paralegal training for peer educators, later in the year.

The region's inaugural road safety day event was held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, with the aim to remind key actors in the transport industry and road users the importance of road safety to the industry, trade and economy of the nation. Attracting more than 130 attendees from various transport companies and other organisations, alongside a range of representatives from regional stakeholders, media houses and ministries of health, including guest of honour, the District Traffic Police Officer, the event was largely a success.



Overall, as regional road safety education sessions gain traction, the team expect to see numbers of attendees at the road safety day events grow, and the impact of these be felt in terms of flow-on attendance at Blue Box clinics and increased safety awareness by drivers.

With a commitment to ensuring that regional partners are kept abreast of the development agenda of the organisation in the region, a partners' forum was organised in Nairobi, Kenya. Our executive director shared North Star's accomplishments and launched the Strategic Outlook 2017 – 2022. Much emphasis was made on the value that North Star places on partners, and the call to continue cherishing the parties working relationships going forward.

Overall, the team remain committed to implementing the Strategic Outlook, in line with the wider network, and see the potential of many regional initiatives beginning to flourish as they grow in impact or are supported by complementary partners and activities. An influential actor in the regional fields of health and development, as well as in sex worker and truck driver related activities, the East Africa region embodies North Star's drive to become the leading and preferred health-care provider for mobile workers, and the communities they interact with, in Africa.