“Many of our friends are now being diagnosed and also getting treatment for hepatitis C and now many of our friends have now been cured of hepatitis C.”

Caroline Thomas,
Yayasan Koalisi Satu Hati, Indonesia
Introduction

- Globally, 290 million people are living with viral hepatitis unaware.
- The World Hepatitis Alliance (WHA) first sought to understand the barriers to diagnosis globally. This was achieved via a survey in early 2018 to understand what the barriers to hepatitis diagnosis were, and which populations were most affected by them. 561 responses were received, across 104 countries and a wide variety of stakeholders.

The main barriers to diagnosis were:

- Lack of public knowledge of the disease
- Lack of knowledge of the disease among healthcare professionals
- Lack of easily accessible testing
- Stigma and discrimination
- The out-of-pocket costs to the patients

“Overcoming the barriers to diagnosis of viral hepatitis: the role of civil society and the affected community in Finding the Missing Millions” sets out recommendations for overcoming the existing barriers to diagnosing viral hepatitis B and C. It was put together after an expert stakeholder consultation held in May, 2018. It called on policymakers to recognise those affected by viral hepatitis as vital partners in its elimination.

The Find the Missing Millions in-country advocacy programme aimed to support WHA members to develop and implement effective action plans to overcome the barriers to diagnosis within their community.

The programme brought together five WHA members from different countries across the world to share experiences and learn from one another. These countries and organisations were:

- JAMAICA
  Caribbean Hepatitis C Alliance
- BANGLADESH
  National Liver Foundation of Bangladesh
- ARMENIA
  Positive People Armenian Network
- GHANA
  Hepatitis of Alliance Ghana
- INDONESIA
  Koalisi Satu Hati

A face to face meeting was held in London in July 2019 where all the participants had an opportunity to meet each other alongside expert stakeholders to develop effective advocacy strategies. Sharing knowledge between countries helped members think of new ways to enhance their advocacy plans.
Programme impact

People reached through webinars: 200

No of people tested: over 5,000

Policy impact:
Hepatitis included in parliamentary discussions in Ghana for the first time

No of health care workers trained in Ghana: 800

No of media outlets used: 8

No of people reached via social media: over 2,000,000

No of flyers handed out: 12,000
Country spotlight

Ghana - Hepatitis Alliance of Ghana
Lead member: Charles Ampong Adjei

Hepatitis B screening, vaccination and treatment is not increasingly available in many government and private health facilities in Ghana. Screening can cost 10 Ghanaian Cedis (GHC) ($1) and the 3-dose-vaccination can cost GHC 50 ($5) per dose. For those who test positive, the medication can cost GHC 300 ($30) per month. These costs are not covered by the National Health Insurance Scheme. Thus, these services remain out of reach for many Ghanaians as the minimum wage in Ghana is GHC 400 ($40 per month).

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Hepatitis Alliance of Ghana (HAG) is a non-governmental organisation operating in five out of 16 regions in Ghana to create a society free from viral hepatitis.

Increasing political will

HAG took inspiration from discussions during the kick off meeting in London hosted by WHA. The meeting highlighted how the members could make effective change in their community utilising local Government and patient voices. The Alliance found this very helpful as they began their activities with the creation of a documentary about the lives of those living with hepatitis to generate conversation around viral hepatitis.

The documentary highlighted the difficulties people with hepatitis B encounter after they are diagnosed. Along with the challenges healthcare providers face when looking after patients with hepatitis B and the pressure from family members of patients. The documentary was aired on various social media platforms including Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp. It was also circulated on one TV station before World Hepatitis Day (WHD), which increased the attention hepatitis received in the lead up to WHD.

Charles explained that "using patient voices to carry the message was not something we had thought of doing before working with WHA, however once we learnt of the importance the message would carry, we knew it was necessary."

HAG already had good working relationships with the National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme and after returning from London, they strengthened the relationship. They wanted to have a conversation with the National Viral Hepatitis Control programme on the possibilities of working together to get viral hepatitis on a national level and onto the agenda of the Government. Due to the project coinciding with election season, it was vital to generate public interest to then provoke public officials to speak on their policies on how to eliminate viral hepatitis in the country. HAG hoped that by generating enough public interest on the matter, officials would be forced to add viral hepatitis to the national budget. It was decided that the best approach for this would be to collaborate with National Television Stations. Charles, the Executive Director of HAG, and the Director of National Hepatitis Control...
Programmes participated in a live broadcast discussing the necessity of implementing hepatitis B birth dose vaccination as national policy to avert the rate of transmission of hepatitis B from mothers to their children. HAG also utilised press briefings with various media houses including print and TV stations to present the burden of hepatitis and its negative effect on the lives of Ghanaians using research carried out by the members. Some of the popular media outlets used included TV3, GHOne TV, Atinka TV, and Daily graphic. As a result of their efforts, hepatitis issues featured in parliamentary discussions for the first time.

HAG; however, did face some challenges. They were scheduled to meet with the Minister of Health to discuss the implementation of hepatitis into the budget but with the emergence of Covid-19 the plans were paused while the Government of Ghana, much like many countries across the world, focused all their resources on fighting the pandemic. However, the alliance has scheduled another meeting for early next year.

Another challenge faced was the unexpected political reshuffling of key stakeholders that they had already established rapport and started engagement on effort to increase political will. Key among them include the director of Ghana Health services and the deputy minister of health. Navigating around this took a long time because the new appointees required enough time to settle on the job. However, effort is being made to create opportunities to win their attention.

Increasing knowledge among health care workers

HAG partnered with Drive for Health Foundation, who are also members of WHA, to deliver training for healthcare workers in hard to reach areas of the North and South of Ghana. Members of HAG who are experts in their own fields were used to train the health care providers, with those trained including: nurses, midwives, physicians, physicians assistants and biomedical scientists. Accreditation for the programme was gained from the specific regulatory bodies – Nursing and Midwifery Council of Ghana and Allied Health Professional Council. The participants benefitted from training certificates that are accepted by the respective Councils, resulting in a renewal of their professional identification number (pin). Overall, three training/scientific workshops were organised in northern and southern Ghana and 550 Health Care Providers in the South and 250 in the North of Ghana were trained.

As part of the training, members were invited to join Medics Against Hepatitis, a network founded by HAG which is similar to the NOhep Medical Visionaries programme. After joining Medics Against Hepatitis members were expected to go back to the health facilities to be champions and advocates in the fight to eliminate viral hepatitis. The health care providers became critical drivers of elimination; sharing information and going directly into community spaces in order to help those that needed it. One member from the Northern region excelled as a champion taking the knowledge he gained from the training to not only provide hospitals with care but then going into the community to become an advocate. He stated that “he was motivated by the training and its impact”. This led to him providing individuals with hepatitis screening and ensured that people diagnosed with hepatitis were properly linked to care, mothers were supported and babies given the birth dose. His work has been internationally recognised and he was awarded a place on the Mandela Washington Fellowship in the USA. He has since returned to Ghana to continue hepatitis related activities.

150 members signed onto the network, both Drive for Health and HAG provided support through flyers and marketing material and sponsored over 10 organisations on their screening activities.
Increasing knowledge among selected communities

HAG were granted access to some religious institutions (i.e., churches and Mosques) to carry out screening, awareness campaign and linkage to care where necessary. They believed it was important to break the stigma surrounding hepatitis via religious institutions because "[they] found that the majority of stigmatisation comes from the lack of knowledge or inadequate knowledge. Ghanaians tend to be very religious, so [we] decided to go directly into the places that they felt comfortable," stated Charles.

HAG collaborated with the Municipal Health Directorates in one of the municipalities in Accra (Lekma) to hold a community durbar to raise awareness and conduct hepatitis screening for the residents. Music was being played for the participants, while their team of specialists went into the community, with a van broadcasting relevant information to educate people about hepatitis. The Directorate provided HAG with space to carry out their work. Those who tested positive for hepatitis were immediately linked to the LEKMA hospital for care and treatment if eligible. Those who tested negative were linked to the Disease Control Centre or areas of the hospital to receive vaccination. The event was able to reach over 1,387 + of community members of Lekma with all being screened and linked to care if necessary.

As part of their World Hepatitis Day activities in 2020 HAG set up a call centre for anyone that had issues or questions regarding viral hepatitis. Health experts responded to the concerns of the callers and those that required clinical monitoring were referred to the appropriate health facilities where hepatitis related services could be accessed.

HAG also utilised awareness campaigns on various media platforms including radio and television. They also used other social media platforms such as Facebook, and WhatsApp to share hepatitis resources provided by WHA.

Impact on the organisation

HAG believe that being part of the FMM programme enhanced their organisations performance and made them more visible to policy makers and healthcare providers in Ghana.

Through the programme, they were able to build healthy and longstanding relationships with healthcare providers. This made it easier to initiate testing and linkage to care for any individual who needed it.

Collaborating with other NGOs and government agencies who share their vision helped strengthen their project and project outcomes.

Charles believes that through the programme, himself and the organisation have become more confident in their work and its impact. Being associated with WHA made it possible for them to gain access to certain stakeholders, such as the Deputy Minister of Health. Resources provided by WHA meant that the organisation was equipped with knowledge that they later used to have important conversations with external stakeholders.
Indonesia - Yayasan Koalisi Satu Hati
Lead member: Caroline Thomas1 (April 2019-June 2020) / Edo Agustian (June 2020-December 2020)

Indonesia is the home of 265 million people and it is estimated that the prevalence of hepatitis C in Indonesia is 1.1%. Since the establishment of the Hepatitis Sub Directorate in October, 2016 in the Ministry of Health, the high-risk community that are being targeted are mostly referred to diagnosis and treatment. However, up until August 2018, only 53,850 people had been tested, 2,970 people had positive viral load tests and from that, only 2,432 people had started treatment.

According to an invested case for HCV scale up in Indonesia, reaching elimination by 2030, meant that Indonesia has to treat 600,000 people by 2024. So far, the number of people that have been tested and treated is far below target.

Yayasan Koalisi Satu Hati is a non-profit organisation for people living with, and affected by, viral hepatitis and HIV. The organisation was formed to increase awareness of viral hepatitis and HIV in Indonesia and to educate the general public about the disease and the treatment options available in Indonesia.

For the project, Koalisi Satu Hati had three objectives:

- Working on a national strategic and action plan for viral hepatitis
- Increase awareness of viral hepatitis to both the general population and key populations
- Reduce out of pocket expenditure on diagnosis and care

National strategic and action plan for viral hepatitis

Koalisi Satu Hati met with an expert panel for the first draft of the strategic and action plan. The panel included members from the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Bureau of Planning (within MoH), Hepatologist Association, HIV Sub directorate and the Ministry of Law and Justice.

Ahead of this meeting, Koalisi Satu Hati gathered nine community members representing nine different organisations to understand what the issues regarding hepatitis were and to collectively advocate to the Government about them. The members at the provincial level (nine provinces at the project period) were encouraged to speak to their local health office and hospitals, with support from WHA. As a result of that all nine organisations have communicated the need for access to hepatitis C treatment to the local government and stakeholders. Since the project, only one community organisation had issues accessing treatment, however this was not because of the price but because the people they work with do not have national health insurance.

The Ministry of Law and Justice had prioritised hepatitis in the five-year strategic plan, which incorporated budget planning for hepatitis screening in prisons; however, it was postponed due to Covid-19.

The Indonesian government also made viral hepatitis one of the priority focus areas in the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan. This was an important achievement as previously only HIV and TB have been the two focus areas of communicable disease in the National Plan.

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1 At the time of recording the FMM videos, Caroline was the founder of Peduli Hati Bangsa, a WHA member organisation
2 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335435025_Hepatitis_C_virus_elimination_in_Indonesia_Epidemiological_cost_and_cost-effectiveness_modeling_to_advance_advocacy_and_strategic_planning
Increase awareness of viral hepatitis for general and key populations

A lack of awareness of viral hepatitis is a significant barrier to diagnosis and community groups also played a vital role in addressing this. Koalisi Satu Hati used social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and YouTube to share information and videos regarding hepatitis updates.

Continuous community education for hepatitis B and C both on a National and Provincial level was important to reach the acquired aims of the project, so Koalisi Satu Hati developed two videos on liver and the function of the liver and the importance of getting tested. These were disseminated through WhatsApp groups and contacts within the hepatitis community.

Reduce out of pocket expenditure on diagnosis and care

Through the campaign Koalisi Satu Hati wanted to work on reducing the out-of-pocket expenditure but this was a major issue for hospitals as they struggled to decide on registration fees and budgets for diagnosis and treatment. Since the decentralisation of health services, all fees related to health services were to be decided by hospitals. On a larger scale, the provincial budget would be determined by the Provincial Health Office.

So, although treatment is provided for free by the National Government, extra expenditure is needed to cover screening, additional lab testing and registration fees. In order to carry out this objective, Koalisi Satu Hati created a forum for both Provincial health care officials and members of the community to come together to discuss the challenges face and more importantly how to address and tackle the out-of-pocket expenditure.

Despite their efforts, due to Covid-19, DAAs were out of stock. The majority of drugs that come into Indonesia are imported from India. People were allowed to travel to hospitals but because all the hospitals were committed to Covid 19, patients were reluctant to go them. Face to face meetings also had to be postponed.

Additionally, the use of webinars and social media platforms also increased the number of people reached. Each Facebook post would reach up to 5,000 people and webinars between 100 to 200 people.
As there are no official channels for members of the hepatitis community to share information, the organisation also wanted to create a space where members could share any updates on DAA shortages. This meant the group was also used to hold the Government accountable, because Government hospitals would claim that there was medication available but when community members checked this was not the case, so individuals would inform Koalisi Satu Hati who then inform the Ministry of Health about the shortage.

**Impact on the organisation**

Koalisi Satu Hati believed that being a part of the FMM programme strengthened their organisation’s confidence in advocating for hepatitis. The knowledge gained from WHA helped their organisation approach Ministers and have fruitful and successful meetings. As a small organisation they appreciated the encouragement and resources WHA provided.

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The government of Armenia considers hepatitis B and hepatitis C to be an urgent public health issue, with the prevalence of hepatitis C varying from 0.5% (among migrants) to 81.8% (among people who inject drugs (PWID)), with a median of 11.1%. Testing for hepatitis B and hepatitis C is not easily accessible to more than 50% of the population. It cannot be accessed anonymously or confidentially and testing is not available free of charge to any citizens. However, testing is compulsory for some groups. These include some healthcare workers, medical professional, pregnant women, blood and organ donors and staff of service organisations who provide hepatitis related services or are at risk of acquiring the infection and an array of patients with different conditions. These are usually carried out once the need and symptoms arise and it is not common for people to get periodical tests out of precaution and that is due to the lack of public knowledge of the diseases.

Positive People Armenian Network (PPAN) is an NGO working towards improving the quality of life for those living with HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and hepatitis. They aim to make sure they are given the same courtesy as other members of society and are able to disclose their status without fear of discrimination.

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**Armenia - Positive People Armenian Network**

Lead member: Anahit Harutyunyan

PPAN collaborated with the National Centre for AIDS Prevention to develop plans for a combination testing initiative, which provided testing and psychological support as a collaborative service.

For this project, PPAN had two objectives.

- Advocating for combination testing to be implemented at NCAP (National Centre for AIDS Prevention)
- Ensuring micro-elimination of hepatitis C among those living with HIV
PPAN continued their work to provide free combination testing and STI tests on World Hepatitis Day 2020. PPAN also utilised informative materials and resources from the FMM website to hand out to passers-by. This was deemed to be difficult at first, as stigma associated with hepatitis is still prominent. However, the partnership with the National Centre of Aids helped drastically and testing became regular throughout the day with PPAN providing informative materials for individuals to read to help them understand the need to get tested. The event was a success with over 1,000 people getting tested on the day for hepatitis C. Anahit, the project lead, was very pleased with how the event went and was shocked at the amount of people who showed up and go tested. She stated, “we were not anticipating the number of people that would get tested but we are very happy with the result.”

As PPAN were making progress with their project, the 2021 Armenia-Azerbaijan border crisis meant that PPAN and NCAP had to stop their collaboration as Armenia went into full lockdown.

Initially, PPAN planned to achieve micro elimination of hepatitis C in people living with HIV. PPAN chose this method because in 2020, the Ministry of Health was planning to start providing free hepatitis C treatment for those who were co-infected with HIV. This would make it easy to identify those who have hepatitis C and link them to the right care. However, the impact of the border crisis and Covid-19 meant that free treatment was no longer available and so micro-elimination in the co-infected population was no longer a possibility within the timeframe of this project.

These external factors were difficult to overcome but PPAN persevered and worked closely with WHA to continue the project by focusing on raising awareness.

After some thought and re-planning PPAN decided to develop a Public Service Announcement (PSA). This was decided due to the success of the first PSA they developed at the beginning of the programme. The initial PSA, released for European Testing week in 2019, was an interview with Arman Avchyan, a colleague who was living with HIV, TB and hepatitis C and was the first person to openly talk about their experience. The PSA highlighted his lived experience and emphasised the importance of integrated/combined testing and early detection of the viruses. This was groundbreaking in Armenia and had mixed reactions as expected.

The second PSA focused more on information sharing and the steps needed for screening and diagnosis. PPAN chose to target the Shirak region with the PSA as it is one of the largest regions in the country and it has a high prevalence of HIV which is a result of high rates of migration. The PSA was shown all over the Shirak region but could be seen by anyone online due to the network having a digital platform. PPAN had previously worked with one of the largest networks in the region and so the network understood the importance of the PSA and the work that PPAN carries out and decided to play the PSA during primetime TV programming.

Unfortunately, they were unable to monitor the reach of the PSA but were assured from the network that it was shown across majority of TVs in Armenia as a repeat advert.

**Impact on the organisation**

Anahit’s organisation received a number of challenges that hindered their project objectives, nonetheless, PPAN believe that being a part of the FMM programme has added new vision to their organisation and allowed them to spread awareness about hepatitis.

Anahit stated that WHA was very helpful in the implementation of the project, every step of the way. This was important when changing some of their activities because of the situation in Armenia.
Bangladesh - National Liver Foundation of Bangladesh

Lead member: Zunaid Paiker

Bangladesh is in the intermediate prevalence zone of hepatitis B virus with an estimated prevalence of 5.5% in the general population. Multiple risk factors for the transmission of hepatitis B in Bangladesh have been identified. Mother-to-child transmission, perinatal and childhood transmission are the primary modes of transmission.

There is limited data about the prevalence of hepatitis C in Bangladesh. However, it is generally accepted that the prevalence of hepatitis C in the country is estimated at 0.6%. Hepatitis C in Bangladesh can be contracted through similar routes of transmission as hepatitis B, specifically through, blood transfusions, medical equipment and fraudulent health care providers.

National Liver Foundation of Bangladesh (NLFB) is a not-for-profit organisation established in April, 1999 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The organisation is the first of its kind in Bangladesh and is dedicated to prevention, treatment, education and research on liver diseases with special emphasis on viral hepatitis.

For this project, NLFB chose to focus on two objectives:

- Address the lack of awareness and misconceptions surrounding viral hepatitis among rural and urban populations
- Advocate for testing facilities in hard-to-reach communities for an affordable price

Addressing the lack of awareness and misconceptions

The NLFB worked on tackling the misconception of viral hepatitis within urban and rural populations by actively targeting areas and platforms visited by the community.

NLFB organised a two-day awareness raising drive with volunteers across the country coming to help with the event. The event consisted of the distribution of leaflets and screening for hepatitis B and hepatitis C and linkage to care. NLFB used the event not only to educate individuals who attended but also to create young advocates among the volunteers who would then go back to their regions across Bangladesh and inform their communities on viral hepatitis. The event successfully screened over 2,000 individuals in the Gazipur district.

Cricket is very popular within Bangladesh and so NLFB held screenings at cricket matches, which enabled them to interact with the diverse group of people who attended. One of the cricket events in Chittagong had over 80 people take a hepatitis survey created by WHA to understand how much people knew about hepatitis. As expected, their understanding of hepatitis was influenced by misinformation and stigmatisation. Individuals were then given flyers with basic information to take back to their cities. Continuing the use of cricket to spread hepatitis awareness, NLFB secured a partnership with a well-established cricket website Cricket97, this enabled NLFB to share information, links to videos, events and WHA related posts, onto the website with an audience of over 1,000,000 people.
Additionally, NLFB were able to secure a hepatitis awareness advert from a well-known Youtuber, which was viewed by over 920,000 people. NLFB did this by working closely with stakeholders and community leaders highlighting the importance of hepatitis awareness.

In total NLFB distributed over 12,000 leaflets and also created branded masks during the pandemic. This was a great incentive and awareness campaign because even when the masks had finished people still gathered to receive leaflets.

NLFB also carried out screening programmes in Madrasa’s (Islamic Schools) which tend to be unaware of hepatitis. Through this 2000 people were screened during this event and linked to care if needed.

NLFB had a screening event for mothers to be screened for hepatitis B and raise awareness through the distribution of flyers – 100 mothers were screened and linked to care if necessary.

They also carried out one webinar for the youth with four different youth organisations in attendance.

COVID was a major challenge in this project because awareness raising was a major part of this campaign, so frequent and unexpected lockdowns made it very difficult to carry out events and meet with important stakeholders.

NLFB also noticed that people were afraid to get tested because they were anxious about what the result would be and the stigma and discrimination they would face if they were diagnosed with hepatitis.

Testing facilities in hard-to-reach communities

NLFB’s aim was to advocate to the government to increase testing facilities, especially in rural and disadvantaged populations and to decrease the cost of testing so that it was affordable for those who need it. Specifically, they urged the Government to use the more than 18,000 community clinics of the Government of Bangladesh across the country as viral hepatitis control centres in rural Bangladesh. This would decentralise the viral hepatitis control strategies to reach the community at grass root level throughout the nation.

Covid-19 made this very difficult to complete, due to social distancing and the Ministry of Health focusing its efforts on combating the pandemic. However, NLFB persevered and changed their approach as they were unable to meet ministers to discuss affordable testing during the pandemic period.

They distributed letters to Ministers and District Officials to describe the situation of hepatitis B and hepatitis C in the country and called on the District Officials to implement a comprehensive hepatitis elimination policy.

Distributing letters resulted in the district administration of Nilphamari organising and inviting NLFB for viral hepatitis awareness and vaccination programme at the district headquarter. NLFB conducted a one-day event called ‘Nilphamari Viral Hepatitis Awareness Campaign 2021’.

Free hepatitis B and C testing and hepatitis B vaccines were provided to 346 orphans at a government run orphan children’s home in Nilphamari, 34 children at Shishu Kalyan Primary School and 162 children at Haora Shishu Kalyan Primary School on the same day.

A seminar was held on ‘Viral Hepatitis and Our Responsiveness’ at the conference room of the Deputy Commissioner’s Office. Representatives of the Government administration,
municipality, eminent doctors, teachers from schools and colleges, journalists, renowned persons of the society and social workers participated. More senior participants included the Deputy Commissioner of Nilphamari, Civil Surgeon Nilphamari, the Mayor Municipality, Additional Superintendent of Police, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General), Vice President of Bangladesh Medical Association, Representative of Principal Nilphamari Medical College and Nilphamari Social affair, Govt.of Bangladesh. Professor Mohammad Ali, Founder of NLFB and NOhep Medical Visionary delivered a keynote speech urging the district administration of the government to come forward and join the viral hepatitis elimination movement. He requested the civil society and dignitaries to be a part of the campaign to initiate grass root activation and advised everyone to learn about hepatitis and teach their families, friends and communities.

The FMM campaign was included in the official World Hepatitis Day message from the President, Prime Minister and Health Minister, this is usually reserved for World Health Organization alone but this year included the FMM campaign, which was a soft message, encouraging people to get tested.

Impact on the organisation

NLFB reported that being part of the FMM programme helped increase the organisation’s knowledge of viral hepatitis and helped develop skills to communicate with others regarding hepatitis. They learnt how to conduct viral hepatitis awareness and testing campaigns, even during the pandemic.

Impact on the organisation

Jamaica has a suspected low prevalence of hepatitis C, which means that Jamaica could achieve hepatitis C elimination but this can only be done through advocating for a national response.

Caribbean Hepatitis C Alliance aims to be the leading patient-oriented hepatitis organisation in the Caribbean, eliminating the incidence of acute hepatitis and reducing the disease burden from chronic hepatitis C infection.

Their mission statement outlines their desire to provide effective services through education, screenings and advocacy. Through their activities they aim to address the significant lack of knowledge from both the public and health care professionals about hepatitis C in Jamaica and the resulting negative effect on the testing landscape.

Caribbean Hepatitis C Alliance had three objectives through this project:

- Establishing a national response to hepatitis C
- Integrating hepatitis C screening with HIV services
- Increase knowledge of hepatitis C through public awareness and sensitization programmes
Establishing a national response

The Caribbean Hepatitis C Alliance created an in-depth presentation for key stakeholders within the country explaining the prevalence of hepatitis in Jamaica and a detailed plan on how to work towards elimination. The success of the presentation resulted in the coordination of a strategic planning meeting to discuss the national response to eliminate viral hepatitis.

This meeting included the Minister of Finance, Minister of health and Chief Medical Officer and was an important first step in establishing a national response to hepatitis in the country.

The Caribbean Hepatitis C Alliance also worked on the educating other stakeholders to incorporate them in the meetings.

Integrating hepatitis C screening with HIV services

Jamaica has a strong and well-established HIV programme which could be leveraged to increase testing and linkage to care for those who are co-infected. Integration with HIV services will mean that more individuals from an at-risk population can know their status and be linked to treatment.

Working with clinics that serve people living with HIV the Caribbean Hepatitis C Alliance carried out surveys amongst people accessing the services to determine their understanding of hepatitis C. This not only provided valuable insight into knowledge on hepatitis C within this community, it was also an opportunity to raise awareness and increase education.

They also met with the HIV/STI national programme, the private sector and other organisations that work with people living with HIV to discuss an integrated approach to hepatitis and HIV.

Increase knowledge of hepatitis C through public awareness and sensitisation programmes

The lack of hepatitis awareness among healthcare professionals has slowed the process of hepatitis awareness programmes being implemented on a nationwide basis.

Caribbean Hepatitis C Alliance created posters and send them out to businesses and parishes around Jamaica. They held educational workshops for health care professionals in six different parishes and are looking to create educational booklets for future workshops.

Impact on the organisation

Shelly stated that being a part of the FMM programme has helped raise awareness about viral hepatitis in Jamaica.
WORLD HEPATITIS ALLIANCE

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