

**Presenting Author:** Mengistu Asnake

**Mailing Address:**

Pathfinder International/Ethiopia  
c/o Pathfinder International Headquarters  
9 Galen Street, Suite 217  
Watertown, MA 02472 USA

**Telephone:** +1 617.924.7200 x206

**Fax:** +1 617.924.3833

**Email:** tcolton@pathfind.org

**Abstract Option:** 2

**Abstract Title:** Approaches to balance “A,” “B” and “C” when working with faith-based organizations: Challenges and solutions from three African countries

**Issues:** Faith-based organizations (FBOs) play a crucial role in HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support throughout Africa. While it is widely believed that working with FBOs increases program reach and sustainability and builds upon trusted community structures, there is often tension on balanced approaches to abstinence, fidelity and condom use.

**Description:** In Ethiopia, Pathfinder partners with the Kale Hiwot Church and the Muslim Development Association, among other FBOs, to deliver holistic HIV/AIDS services, which in some cases includes condom distribution. In Ghana, Pathfinder overcame initial challenges in engaging the Christian Health Association of Ghana (CHAG) to provide youth-friendly RH and HIV/AIDS services by eliciting the support and understanding of the CHAG Board on their importance. Pathfinder’s home-based care and youth work in Tanzania rely heavily on partnerships with six FBOs, including the Lutheran Church. While initially the Church only supported condom use among married couples, the Bishop has since stated that youth who cannot listen to God about “A” and “B” should protect themselves from HIV/AIDS.

**Lessons Learned:**

- Sensitization with FBO leaders is an entry point to quality HIV/AIDS programs. At the community level, it is useful to establish a coalition involving all denominations.
- Involvement of FBO leaders, who are often themselves affected by HIV/AIDS, in selection of health workers and in program monitoring increases acceptability and reduces stigma.
- While some FBOs will not promote condom use directly, many are open to linking with organizations that provide condoms. Further, national policies on controversial issues are not always strictly implemented at the community level.

**Recommendations:** Partnerships with FBOs are best achieved through well-planned, open and participatory process. NGOs should work with FBOs on message development related to HIV/AIDS to ensure that religious teachings do not promote stigma and discrimination.

**Additional Authors:**

Emmanuel Kofi Essandoh, Pathfinder International/AYA, Ghana  
Emmanuel Boadi, Pathfinder International/AYA, Ghana

Nelson Keyonzo, Pathfinder International/Tanzania  
Gottlieb Mpangile, Pathfinder International/Tanzania

**Applied for a Conference Scholarship: Yes**

**Track Category: E18**