

Rwanda

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The Cost of Case Management in Orphans and Vulnerable Children Programs: Findings from Rwanda

INTRODUCTION

Interventions for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) are socioeconomically driven, community-based services for children under age 18 who have lost one or both parents to AIDS (United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief [PEPFAR], 2012). OVC programs aim to improve children's resilience to meet their basic needs of health, safety, stability, and schooling, by providing such services as case management (CM), psychosocial support, early childhood development, and household economic strengthening. The end goal of OVC programming is to reduce vulnerability to HIV and AIDS, contribute to HIV prevention, and bolster access to and retention in treatment among children in high-prevalence communities (PEPFAR, 2015).

Little is known about how much it costs to implement these OVC intervention services. When cost estimate data are available, ranges for unit expenditures are strikingly wide, and



comparisons across programs or intervention service areas are difficult (Santa-Ana-Tellez, DeMaria, & Galárraga, 2011). The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)- and PEPFAR-funded MEASURE Evaluation project conducted a six-country study for insight on current approaches to case management delivery and the cost of those approaches. The study also explored the context of caseworker (CW) experiences, to inform the cost data. The study was guided by the Coordinating Comprehensive Care for Children definition of CM, which encompasses the CM process from start to finish: identification, enrollment, assessment, case plan development, case plan implementation, monitoring, and case closure (Catholic Relief Services, 2017).

PROGRAM CONTEXT

This brief outlines the findings from the Turengere Abana program, in Rwanda. Implemented by FXB Rwanda, the project is expected to run from September 2012 to September 2020, and the OVC component is entirely funded by USAID. Approximately 28 staff and 163 volunteers contribute to the project's OVC component. Turengere Abana is implemented in 15 sectors across seven districts in the north, east, and south of the country. The project serves 600 to 700 beneficiaries in each sector.

Case management in Turengere Abana is carried out by volunteer CWs called para social workers (PSWs), who are also project beneficiaries. Their role is to conduct monthly home visits to households identified and enrolled in the project, to support household economic strengthening and internal savings and lending groups (ISLGs) for caregivers; provide educational support; provide healthcare insurance support for families; make referrals and linkages to healthcare; and offer HIV prevention, treatment, and support services. The PSWs also provide education to their assigned households, on such topics as home gardens, nutrition, sanitation in the home, and gender-based violence. The PSWs are directly supervised by FXB staff, called field facilitators.

Smiling boy, Rwanda. Photo: Adam Cohn, Flickr.

METHODS

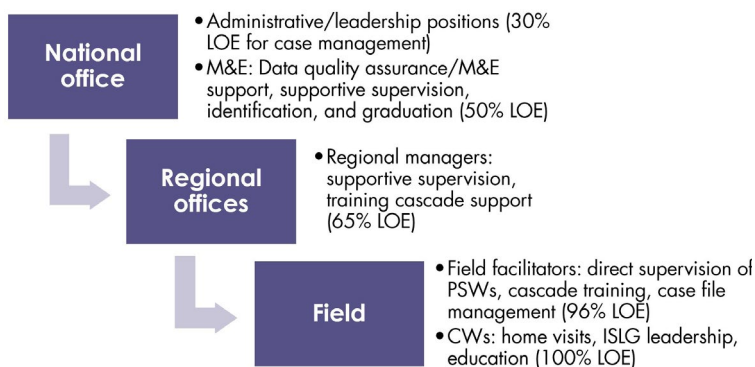
Data collection took place from June 25, 2017, to July 10, 2017, in the Kigali, Burera, and Huye Districts, in Rwanda. Retrospective financial costs and beneficiary data were collected simultaneously with the implementation of in-depth qualitative interviews with project staff and PSWs. Staff self-reported their level of effort (LOE) spent on case management. The interviews explored a wide range of experiences related to CM delivery, capacity, and quality. Key CM themes that emerged revolved around training, caseloads, compensation, and perceived quality.

RESULTS

Mapping the Program Structure and Government Involvement

The Turengere Abana project has three levels of staffing, through which information is reported and the project is managed. Staff at the national office support administrative activities. Some also support the cascade of supportive supervision that informs service delivery at the field level. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) staff are specifically involved in the identification of new beneficiaries and case closure/graduation. Regional managers provide indirect supervision of the PSWs, conduct supportive supervision visits to the field, and provide training for the field facilitators. The field facilitators provide direct supervision and training to the PSWs, manage case files, and liaise with local government officials, school administrators, and other relevant community stakeholders. Figure 1 presents the supervision cascade.

Figure 1. Turengere Abana case management supervision cascade



Caseworker Attributes

Turengere Abana PSWs manage an average of 21.7 households (ranging from 10 to 30 households), with an estimated caseload of approximately 50 beneficiaries. The PSWs are selected by their peers in the ISLG to lead their group and provide CM for those eligible in their community. The PSWs must be able to read and write. Most PSWs have a primary level of education, with about six years of schooling and 1.6 years of experience. They receive training from their supervisors on a wide range of

topics, including how to visit homes, complete forms, provide referrals, and other CM-related activities. Table 1 presents some of the attributes of the 12 PSWs and four field facilitators interviewed. The PSWs are required to visit households once per quarter, with the goal of visiting monthly. The PSWs reported spending two hours per week walking to their assigned households for home visits.

Table 1. Attributes of case management staff

	PSWs (n=12)	Field facilitators (n=4)
Pay	Unpaid + materials	Not applicable
Education level*		
Primary (1–7 years)	8	0
J. secondary (8–9)	0	0
Secondary (10–12)	2	0
Certificate/assoc.	0	4
Bachelors	0	0
Households	21.7 (range: 10–30)	438 (range: 340–630)
Beneficiaries	49.2 OVC	700–1000 OVC
Supervisor ratio	NA	17.8 PSWs (range: 14–21)
Experience	1.6 years	3.7 years
Travel time	1.9 hours per week	0.5 hours per visit

*Two PSWs did not report their educational background.

Cost of Case Management

The total cost of CM for the 2.7 years of the current project phase was \$360,120, which averages to \$134,489 annually. This figure constitutes 22 percent of Turengere Abana's total OVC project costs. With 16,401 beneficiaries served by the project during this period, the cost per beneficiary comes to \$21.96. This cost does not account for the opportunity cost of the PSWs' time and labor, donated village office spaces, and any out-of-pocket expenses the PSWs incur for cell phone use or travel.

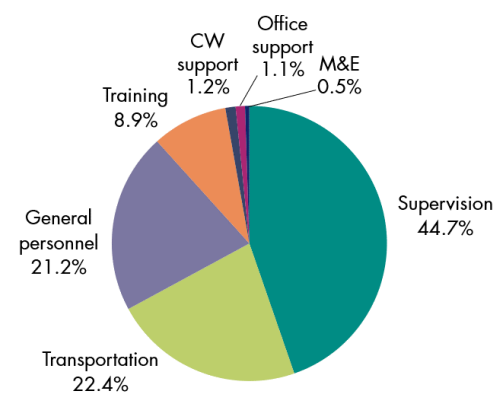


Figure 2. Case management cost breakdown

The cost of CM in the Turengere Abana project is heavily driven by the supervision cascade and staffing to oversee, support, and provide on-the-job training to the PSWs (44.7%) (Figure 2). The other major cost driver is transportation-related costs (22.4%), because the field facilitators are provided motorbikes,

and regional managers use vehicles to get to the field offices and local communities. Turengere Abana has conducted a lot of in-service training for paid staff over the life of the project. The training costs related to CM concerned beneficiary selection criteria and tailoring services to needs, FXB Rwanda's data collection tools, and conducting meetings and managing the PSWs (8.9%). CW support—a category that captures the costs of CW stipends, printing of household visit and other CM forms, monthly meetings, CW transportation, and communication—constitutes a small proportion of CM-related expenses (1.2%). The other cost categories consist largely of allocated costs for general personnel (21.2%), office support (1.1%), and M&E (0.5%). Table 2 summarizes the subcategories in each cost category.

Table 2. Breakdown of costs attributed to case management, by categories and subcategories

Expenditure category		Total	%
Supervision		\$ 160,948	44.7%
	Direct supervision	\$ 100,504	
	Supervision cascade	\$ 60,444	
Training		\$ 32,092	8.9%
	CW training	\$ 28,907	
	Staff training	\$ 3,185	
	Training support	0	
Travel/transportation		\$ 80,682	22.4%
	Field staff and CWs	\$ 19,851	
	Other travel/supervision cascade	\$ 47,642	
	M&E travel	\$ 13,189	
CW support		\$ 4,144	1.2%
	CW stipends and materials	0	
	Printing of tools	\$ 4,144	
	Monthly meeting costs	0	
	Communication costs	0	
	Other costs	\$ 82,255	22.8%
	M&E support	\$ 1,776	0.5%
	Labor and personnel, general	\$ 76,366	21.2%
	Non-case management-specific office support	\$ 4,113	1.1%
	Total cost of case management	\$ 360,120	
	Annual case management cost (2.7 years)	\$ 134,489	
	Cost per beneficiary	\$ 21.96	
	Proportion of total project costs		22%

CONCLUSIONS

Case management was viewed as an integral part of programming, and the high estimates from staff on the proportion of their time spent on CM reflect this finding. Apart from staff time, the project was challenged to define the costs and activities that were related to CM. FXB Rwanda's Turengere Abana CM approach relies heavily on the time and supervisory

capacity of project staff. The PSWs, who are also project beneficiaries, do not receive extensive financial support for their role, but they reported having capacity and motivation to give back to their communities.

Assessing the cost of a single component of OVC programming is easier to do with a mixed-methods approach, bolstering the quantitative cost data with qualitative research methods. The parallel approach of collecting both quantitative and qualitative data allowed the researchers to better understand the costs as they related to CM, increasing both the validity of the results and the level of detail that can be seen in the data. Further research should consider the quality of CM as it relates to cost, to better understand the benefits and drawbacks of supervision-driven CM, such as the approach found in the Turengere Abana project.

The complete study report—The Cost of Case Management in Orphans and Vulnerable Children Programs: Results from a Mixed-Methods, Six-Country Study—is available at <https://www.measureevaluation.org/resources/publications/tr-19-327>.

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