

Track/Category:Track D 57: Integration of HIV services rather than stand-alone services; and services which bond the community care with the health facility services

Title: Integrating PMTCT into Maternal, Neonatal, and Child Health Services: from Policy to implementation

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BACKGROUND

Lesotho, with an HIV prevalence of 27.7% among antenatal care attendees, requires robust prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT) services to ensure universal coverage. In 2005, PMTCT service coverage in Lesotho was 5%. In 2008, the Lesotho Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOHSW) began implementing a strategy to expand coverage of PMTCT services through integration of PMTCT into maternal, neonatal and child health (MNCH) facilities.

METHODS

Starting at the national level, the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation began supporting the MOHSW in November 2008 to integrate PMTCT into MNCH through roll-out of an integrated training package, mentorship, supportive supervision and quality improvement programs. This was further strengthened in the recently released “strategic plan for elimination of mother to child transmission of HIV and for pediatric HIV care and treatment”. At the district level, nurses have coordinated MNCH and PMTCT integration at MNCH facilities. At the facility level, MNCH and PMTCT services are offered in the same room, by the same nurses, and are coordinated by one manager.

RESULTS

National PMTCT coverage increased from 35% in 2007 to 89% in 2011. In 2010, previously separate Lesotho national guidelines on MNCH and PMTCT were combined. All MNCH strategies (e.g., biomedical interventions for HIV prevention, behavior change communication, tracking of discordant couples) are fully integrated into the national strategic plan for elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and pediatric care and treatment, which was launched in December 2011.

CONCLUSION In Lesotho, starting with integration of national policies, followed by systematic translation of these policies into action by multiple stakeholders was found to be an effective approach to achieving MNCH and PMTCT integration.

. Lesotho's experience can benefit other countries hoping to achieve integration of MNCH and PMTCT.