

Track E: Implementation science, Health Systems and Economics

Category: AIDS National Programs and Responses

Title: Mobilizing Community Engagement in the Elimination of new HIV Infections in Children through Capacity Building of Media Practitioners

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Background: Zimbabwe's national goal to eliminate new pediatric HIV infections by 2015 will require active community engagement and support. Zimbabwe's high literacy rate of 90% presents an opportunity to use mass media as one approach to community mobilization. Building the capacity of media practitioners to accurately report on progress towards elimination of new pediatric HIV infections and how people can contribute to this goal is elimination national priority.

Methods: The Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF) supported the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare to hold a two-day national capacity-building workshop for 30 health correspondents from print and electronic media in June 2011. The objective of the workshop was to generate greater awareness among participants about ways to promote prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT) through mass media. Session topics included how to access PMTCT services, the global elimination plan, and key components of the revised 2010 WHO PMTCT guidelines adopted in Zimbabwe.

Results: After the workshop, the country's three main daily newspapers and top-rated weekly published features on elimination of new pediatric HIV infections, reaching an estimated three million people. Stories included a testimonial from a workshop attendee and a PMTCT beneficiary on PMTCT effectiveness (published in the country's top-selling paper, the *Sunday Mail*, with an estimated readership of approximately 1.1 million). Two TV and four radio broadcasts also occurred. A popular radio health program focused on HIV elimination for four weeks following demand for information from its audience sparked by newspaper articles. This trend has continued to date. Effective partnerships have been formed between members of the media and key HIV program implementing organizations, resulting in three follow-up trainings for media practitioners on the elimination agenda.

Conclusion: Educating media practitioners on national HIV program goals can support broader awareness raising and community engagement through dissemination of accurate, up-to-date health information.

Key words: community engagement, PMTCT, Zimbabwe, capacity building, media, children