ELIZABETH GLASER PEDIATRIC AIDS FOUNDATION

FACT SHEET

photo: Olivier Asselin

Together We Can: The Worldwide Efforts of the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation to Achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals

The Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation works to eliminate pediatric AIDS through programs that significantly improve the health and well-being of children and families around the world. This work supports the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), eight core benchmarks adopted in 2000 by the international community to improve global health and decrease global poverty in all forms by 2015. Our support of HIV prevention, care, and treatment programs in 16 countries directly contributes to the achievement of MDGs 4, 5, and 6.

Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality

Some 280,000 children under the age of 15 died from AIDS-related causes in 2008 (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS [UNAIDS], AIDS Epidemic Update 2009). Preventing HIV infection is a crucial first step toward ensuring a child's long-term health and survival, and is a fundamental part of the Foundation's work around the world. Antiretroviral medicines (ARVs) given to HIV-positive women during pregnancy and to their infants during breastfeeding can significantly reduce the potential of transmission of HIV to their infants. By March 31, 2010, the Foundation had provided close to 10 million women with access to these critical services, preventing millions of new HIV infections in children.

Without medical treatment, almost half of all HIV-positive infants will die before their second birthdays (UNAIDS, Towards Universal Access, 2010). ARVs, together with comprehensive care and support, directly improve the health and well-being of children living with HIV and increase their chances of leading longer, healthier lives. The Foundation is a global leader in HIV care and treatment, placing particular emphasis on provision of services to children: By March 31, 2010, more than 82,000 children had been enrolled in Foundation-supported care and treatment programs and more than 43,000 children had begun life-prolonging antiretroviral treatment.

Additionally, the Foundation promotes child health programs among new mothers to ensure that their infants receive immunizations and other essential well-child services. These services also provide an important opportunity to identify children whose mothers are living with HIV and provide timely care and treatment to those who need it.

At Foundation-supported programs in the Kilimanjaro region of Tanzania, when children visit hospitals, well-child clinics, or attend routine medical visits with their mothers, health care workers at all levels are trained to ask one simple question: "Has your child been tested for HIV?" This approach has elicited impressive results: 99 percent of all children attending these facilities are tested for HIV, and virtually all of those testing positive are enrolled into HIV care services.

Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

AIDS-related illness is the leading cause of death and disease among women between the ages of 15 and 44 (World Health Organization [WHO], Women and Health 2009). Ensuring that HIV-positive women receive appropriate prevention, care, and treatment services is integral to reducing maternal mortality and improving the health of mothers and their children worldwide. The Foundation is dedicated to supporting care and treatment to secure the health of HIV-positive mothers, having enrolled more than 562,000 women into Foundation-supported care and treatment programs by March 31, 2010.

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The Foundation promotes healthy pregnancies and safe deliveries by working to increase the number of women who deliver in a health care facility. This includes strengthening referral networks and promoting facility-based delivery, working to reach more people in underserved rural populations, and providing supplies (including plastic sheeting, disinfectants, and gloves) to ensure safe delivery at maternity units.

The Foundation also strives to ensure that pregnant women accessing antenatal care have access to a comprehensive package of services, including HIV prevention counseling, screening, and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, family planning, nutrition support, and malaria prevention. It also works to improve the quality of antenatal care through training of health workers and infrastructure improvements to encourage greater service uptake and retention.

In Rwanda, the Foundation's programs are focused on supporting the Ministry of Health and health facilities to strengthen services that promote healthy pregnancy and safe delivery. Since 2009, there has been an increased emphasis on training health care workers in a range of maternal and child health services, including: family planning, reproductive health, emergency obstetric and neonatal care, prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, care and treatment for women living with HIV, maternal nutrition, infant and young child feeding, and malaria prevention during pregnancy. Hospitals and health centers are improving their ability to manage pregnancy, deliveries, and neonatal care through methods such as the provision of additional delivery beds, delivery kits, incubators, and manual and electric aspirators. These improvements have contributed to improved care and support for women and children acessing these facilities, regardless of HIV status, and to lower rates of maternal mortality.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and Other Diseases

For every individual put on treatment in 2007, three new people were infected with HIV (United Nations, Millennium Development Goals Report 2009). While it is essential to provide lifesaving treatment to those already living with HIV, preventing transmission of HIV from mother to child is the most effective method for halting the spread of HIV. Through its strategic partnerships with national governments, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the WHO, the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID), and others, the Foundation is working in 14 African countries, as well as India and China, to effectively prevent new HIV infections in children.

The Foundation is one of the largest providers of services to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV under PEPFAR and is an internationally recognized leader in this field. Working at more than 5,000 sites around the world, by March 31, 2010 the Foundation had provided HIV testing for more than 8.5 million women through its supported programs. In 2008, more than one quarter of all HIV-positive pregnant women worldwide who received medicines to prevent transmission of HIV to their infants did so through Foundation-supported programs.

While the global community has made progress in reaching more pregnant women with services to prevent HIV transmission to their infants, only 53 percent of pregnant women around the world have access to these services (UNAIDS, Towards Universal Access, 2010).

The Foundation also works to provide lifesaving HIV care and treatment to those living with HIV in direct support of Millennium Development Goal 6 and its specific target to provide universal access to HIV treatment. By March 31, 2010, Foundation-supported programs had provided more than 1 million individuals, including nearly 82,000 children, with HIV care and treatment.

The Foundation also combats HIV-tuberculosis (TB) co-infection by testing patients living with HIV for TB and providing HIV testing and counseling to TB patients. In addition, we work with partners to make sure that patients accessing our programs also have access to insecticide-treated bed nets and malaria medication when needed.

Through the programs implemented in Lesotho with U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), UNICEF, and Johnson & Johnson funds, the Foundation is proving it is possible to reach a variety of diverse populations—the type of scale-up needed to truly halt the spread of HIV. In 2009, the Foundation supported the Ministry of Health and Social Work to substantially expand PMTCT services in Lesotho in 103 sites, sometimes even using an innovative horseback delivery program to reach populations in rural and remote areas with services, drugs, and lab tests. By September, the Foundation supported the provision of PMTCT services in 100 percent of the health facilities in five districts, meaning women in those communities now have access to services that can prevent HIV vertical transmission and lead to healthy babies.

Progress is possible, and by working together to reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, and combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and TB, we can help women around the world lead longer, healthier lives—and in the process, move closer toward eliminating pediatric AIDS.

Elizabeth Glaser acquired HIV through a blood transfusion and unknowingly passed the virus on to her daughter, Ariel, and her son, Jake. Following Ariel's death in 1988, Elizabeth joined with two close friends with one goal: to bring hope to children with AIDS. The Foundation that now bears Elizabeth Glaser's name has become a global leader in the effort to eliminate pediatric AIDS, working in 17 countries and at more than 5,000 sites around the world to prevent the transmission of HIV to children and help those already infected with the virus. The Foundation's global mission is to implement prevention, care, and treatment; further advance innovative research; and give those affected by HIV and AIDS a voice to bring dramatic change to the lives of millions of children, women, and families worldwide.