EGPAF IN LESOTHO

HIV/AIDS is Lesotho’s leading cause of death and almost a quarter of the population is living with this disease. Lesotho also suffers from high prevalence of tuberculosis (TB); TB is the second leading cause of death and is a dangerous opportunistic infection for the many infected with HIV (TB/HIV co-infection stands at about 74%). Women are disproportionately affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, with prevalence exceeding those of men in almost every age group under 40 years. The Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF), which seeks to end pediatric HIV and AIDS and enhance maternal, neonatal and child health (MNCH) through implementation of HIV prevention, care and treatment programs, advocacy, and research, began collaborating with Lesotho’s Ministry of Health in 2004 to eliminate the epidemic.

Through leadership from the Government of Lesotho and support from the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), Lesotho significantly scaled up access to comprehensive HIV services. EGPAF has used a district-focused approach to deliver HIV services and provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Health. EGPAF currently supports more than 120 sites in five districts to implement a comprehensive HIV package of services, advocates at the national level to inform health policies, and conducts research to inform improved HIV and AIDS programming.

EGPAF-LESOTHO PROGRAM GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

Since 2004, EGPAF-Lesotho has supported the Ministry of Health to:

- Conduct over 641,000 HIV tests resulting in the identification of 48,000 HIV-infected individuals
- Start more than 161,000 individuals on antiretroviral therapy (ART), including more than 9,300 children (0-14 Years)
- Provide prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission (PMTCT) services to more than 242,000 women
- Screen more than 6,000 women for cervical cancer
- Currently support 119,000 HIV-positive individuals on ART in EGPAF-supported districts
- Train over 3,200 medical staff to provide high-quality, integrated health services

COUNTRY PROFILE*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>1,876,633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people living with HIV</td>
<td>310,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult (15-49 years of age) HIV prevalence rate</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women 15 years and older living with HIV</td>
<td>170,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children (0-14 years of age) living with HIV</td>
<td>13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS-related deaths in 2014</td>
<td>9,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence of TB/HIV coinfection</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of women diagnosed with cervical cancer</td>
<td>66.7 per 100,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KEY PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

* Sources: Lesotho Demographic and Health Survey, 2014; Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS); Lesotho 2015 HIV and AIDS estimates and projections; USAID, Lesotho Country Fact Sheet, 2015; UNAIDS, Global Tuberculosis Report, 2015; and MOHSW, Baseline study of the crude incidence of cervical in Lesotho, 2007

** Data as of September 2016
EGPAF is also expanding HIV testing and counseling to a wide range of service delivery points and ensuring subsequent linkages to appropriate services. EGPAF supports the Ministry of Health to scale up and strengthen the integration of HIV and TB services to better identify and treat those infected with TB and/or HIV/TB co-infected. TB and HIV screening and treatment are integrated services in all supported health facilities.

**Advocacy**

EGPAF works hand-in-hand with Lesotho’s Ministry of Health to develop informed policies supporting all persons affected by HIV. By advocating for implementation of informed, globally-recommended policies through the active participation in all national HIV-related technical working groups and advisory committees, EGPAF provides technical assistance and serves as a key partner to Lesotho’s government. EGPAF recently played a central role in supporting Lesotho to become the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to implement the World Health Organization’s ‘Treatment for All’ guidelines.

**Research**

EGPAF-Lesotho is dedicated to advancing basic and operations research to strengthen the effectiveness of the global HIV and AIDS response. EGPAF’s ongoing research activities include:

- Evaluating the effectiveness of the PMTCT program post-implementation of Option B+ by measuring HIV sero-incidence, and HIV transmission and HIV-free survival rates among cohorts of HIV-negative and HIV-positive pregnant women and their infants, respectively (PEA-WIL Study).
- Determining the population based 18-24 month HIV-free survival among HIV-exposed children, as well as factors associated with child HIV infection, death, or HIV-free survival through community-based surveys.
- Piloting point of care early infant diagnosis
- Assessing the feasibility, acceptability, and costs associated with very early infant diagnosis (VEID-study) through the addition of birth HIV testing for infants born to HIV-positive women.
- A community-focused intervention to increase service uptake and retention among a cohort of HIV-positive and HIV-negative women in pregnancy through 18 months postpartum (IMPROVE study).

**Prior Research Conducted and Published**

- Pregnant and Postpartum Women’s Experiences and Perspectives on the Acceptability and Feasibility of Copackaged Medicine for Antenatal Care and PMTCT in Lesotho (AIDS Research and Treatment, 2015)
- The association between HIV status and antenatal care attendance by pregnant women in rural hospitals in Lesotho (JAIDS, March 2015)

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