STRENGTHENING HEALTH SYSTEMS TO ELIMINATE HIV & AIDS

Stronger health systems. Greater health impact.
MSH believes that decentralization of HIV & AIDS programming to the most local level possible is critical to increase access to care in resource-limited settings. Decentralization can remove obstacles to care by decreasing travel distance to clinics (and the associated costs) and bringing drugs and commodities closer to those who need them.

MSH brings prevention, care, and treatment to the community and household. For example, through the Sustainable Drug Seller Initiative in Tanzania, MSH works with the government to certify small drug sellers to provide access to quality medicines and commodities in rural areas. Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, MSH has increased access to vital medicines, including antiretroviral treatment (ART), and serves as a platform to introduce other services, such as prevention and adherence counseling.

In Nigeria, MSH supports orphans and vulnerable children whose families and lives have been affected by HIV & AIDS. The USAID PEPFAR-funded Community Support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children project, led by MSH, works with 38 local organizations in 11 states and has reached 50,000 children and 12,500 caregivers with social support and life skills training.

The USAID, PEPFAR-funded Ethiopia Network for HIV/AIDS Treatment, Care and Support (ENHAT-CS) project, implemented by MSH in Ethiopia, is helping scale up comprehensive HIV & AIDS services at health centers and integrating them with family planning, tuberculosis, malaria, nutrition, mental health, and other services. ENHAT-CS supports a continuum of care between health clinics, area hospitals, and communities by working with religious and local leaders and training mother mentors and community support groups.

The USAID-funded STAR-E project, led by MSH, has tested and delivered results to more than 1.6 million Ugandans for HIV, including more than 400,000 pregnant women. More than 14,000 HIV-positive clients are currently receiving ART because of the project's support to the decentralization of HIV services in Uganda.
Strengthening health systems is the core of Management Sciences for Health’s response to the HIV epidemic. We build the capacity of the public and private sector in more than 35 countries to prevent, treat, and manage HIV & AIDS. We integrate HIV care with other disease programming to save more lives and we decentralize care from federal to local levels to increase access to quality services.

**CREATING SUSTAINABILITY**

For our HIV & AIDS response to succeed, decentralized health systems must have the capacity to take over all program responsibilities. That’s why in Nigeria, MSH is working through the US Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Organizational Systems AIDS Care and Treatment (Pro-ACT) project to strengthen the country’s public, private, and community sectors to deliver sustainable HIV & AIDS and tuberculosis services in 41 comprehensive treatment centers in five states. Pro-ACT supports healthcare workers to own and deliver quality services using an integrated approach.

Similarly, Management Sciences for Health (MSH) is helping the US Centers for Disease and Control (CDC) in six of South Africa’s nine provinces to strengthen local capacity to provide sustainable HIV-related care and treatment services through the PEPFAR-funded South Africa Sustainable Response to HIV/AIDS (SA-SURE) project. Through MSH’s Leadership Development Program (LDP), SA-SURE builds the capacity of managers and technical staff to plan, set targets, and evaluate integrated HIV and TB services in accordance with their population’s needs. The project is undertaking the first large-scale assessment of the LDP to determine long-term efficacy of the approach.

And in Uganda, MSH is building the Ugandan government’s capacity to provide consistently available, high-quality HIV and TB medicines by improving the nation’s political, legal, and regulatory frameworks for pharmaceutical supply chain stability and sustainability. The USAID-funded, Securing Ugandans’ Right for Essential Medicines (Uganda SURE) program worked with the Ministry of Health to create a coordinated procurement planning unit that has addressed gaps in funding and initiated warehouse transfers of essential drugs, preventing disruption to health services. SURE has streamlined the antiretroviral supply system, including the development of a transparent, web-based ordering system that allows facilities to place orders more efficiently.
SUSTAINABLE PREVENTION, CARE, TREATMENT, AND MANAGEMENT OF HIV & AIDS

CHILD SURVIVAL AND OPTION B+

MSH, working with UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), and UNAIDS, has taken a leadership role in child survival by developing the Option B+ approach to prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) programming. Unlike traditional approaches, which require a specific CD4 cell count before starting antiretroviral prophylaxis, Option B+ offers all HIV-positive pregnant women lifelong antiretroviral therapy. It is a lifesaver for women in resource-poor settings where access to consistent PMTCT services isn’t available. MSH was an integral partner in the scale up of B+ in Malawi. The approach is now being implemented throughout Africa.

A leader in the development of and advocacy for Option B+, MSH has been one of the first organizations to support the roll-out of its implementation throughout Africa. MSH coordinates our PMTCT efforts with our work in pediatric HIV and TB and with orphans and vulnerable children. Through representation and leadership on numerous global pediatric initiatives, MSH is helping develop the standards and strategies that will bring us closer to elimination of vertical transmission of HIV and mitigate the consequences of HIV exposure in infants and children.

SAFE MEDICAL CIRCUMCISION

In 2007, data from three randomized controlled studies showed that circumcision reduces men’s risk of acquiring HIV through heterosexual intercourse by 60 percent. To scale up access to this lifesaving service, the Strengthening TB & AIDS Response-Eastern Region (STAR-E) project in Uganda has trained five mobile teams of ten medical personnel each, who travel with all necessary supplies and equipment and set up temporary operations at lower-level facilities that do not offer safe medical circumcision services. In just four years, the USAID-funded project, implemented by MSH, has provided safe medical circumcision services to over 146,000 men between the ages of 15 and 49 and, as a result, 7,684 new HIV infections have been averted.

PHOTO: MSH

over 146,000 Men between the ages of 15 and 49 received safe medical circumcision services.

7,684 New HIV infections have been averted, as a result.
MSH believes multiple parallel systems for prevention, community outreach, clinical services, and medicines and supplies for HIV-related programs are unsustainable in resource-poor settings. MSH integrates HIV & AIDS services with family planning and reproductive health, tuberculosis, malaria testing, treatment of chronic diseases, and cancers and malignancies associated with HIV. Our efforts, aligned with recommendations by the WHO, increase access to lifesaving treatment and make interventions more cost-effective.

- In Uganda, MSH projects are leveraging existing infrastructure for HIV & AIDS to provide cervical and breast cancer screening to HIV-positive women. Since March 2011, STAR-E has screened more than 4,800 women for cancer. Approximately 600 of these women were diagnosed and treated for sexually-transmitted infections or other reproductive health conditions, and 83 were diagnosed with precancerous lesions and referred to Mbale Regional Referral Hospital for cryotherapy. Uganda is also using existing immunization programs to provide HPV vaccines for cervical cancer.

- Since its launch in July 2011, the USAID-funded project, Help Ethiopia Address Low TB Performance (HEAL TB), implemented by MSH, has trained and mentored 2,148 health workers to care for patients co-infected with TB and HIV and improved patient referrals throughout 10 zones in Amhara and Oromia states. As a result, the proportion of TB patients tested for HIV rose from 70 percent in 2011 to 93 percent by December 2013 in project-supported zones. Referrals and close follow-up of TB and HIV co-infected clients has helped more than 7,000 Ethiopians access the treatment they need.

Proportion of TB patients tested for HIV in project-supported zones.

- 2011: 70%
- 2013: 93%
MSH believes that an AIDS-free generation is within our reach. But to achieve that goal, the international community must address the epidemic from every angle possible—including some that we may not yet know of. To this end, MSH actively participates in the scientific dialogue surrounding new approaches to prevention, care, and treatment.

Recent scholarly publications include an analysis of a novel approach to estimating HIV-free survival in children perinatally exposed to HIV in Malawi, a program to address health care worker stigma towards sexual minorities in Guyana, and an enumeration study of the number of male sex workers in Northern Nigeria.

In 2013, MSH’s HIV Global Technical Lead was guest editor and a contributing author to a twelve-paper series in the journal *AIDS*, discussing issues across the pediatric HIV spectrum, including identifying HIV-positive children and keeping them in care, challenges concerning nutrition for HIV-positive children, and holistic care for HIV-exposed and infected children, including psychosocial support.

In August 2013, MSH and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) began a four-year evaluation of Malawi’s Option B+ program to determine HIV-free survival following B+ initiation. The study will follow 37,000 mother-infant pairs to measure the rates of mother-to-child transmission in HIV-exposed infants at 4 to 12 weeks, 12 months, and 24 months of age, and HIV-free survival at 6 to 12 weeks, 12 months, and 24 months of age.

Management Sciences for Health (MSH) works to save lives by closing the gap between knowledge and action in public health. Since 1971, we have worked with policymakers, health professionals, and communities in over 150 countries to improve the quality, availability, and affordability of health services.

http://www.msh.org/our-work/health-area/hiv-aids

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**FINDING THE WAY TOWARD AN AIDS-FREE GENERATION**

**PHOTO: MARK TUSCHMAN**

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