INTEGRATING CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING INTO ROUTINE SERVICES:

The Case of Miritini Dispensary
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March, 2014
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Funding for the development of this document was provided by the United States President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under Cooperative Agreement No. AID-623-LA-10-0003. The contents are the responsibility of the LMS/Kenya Program and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.
About Effective Practices

The importance of skilled management and inspired leadership are increasingly evident to those who are working to improve health system performance. Many of the critical challenges facing Kenya’s health system, including scarce resources and the changes resulting from devolution, are exacerbated by weak or absent management and leadership skills. This document, published by USAID’s Leadership, Management and Sustainability Program in Kenya, is the second in a series that highlights effective practices in management and leadership that are making a difference in service delivery in Kenya. Effective Practices are programmatic approaches related to leadership and management that help to improve the health system or health outcomes. Through this series, LMS/Kenya hopes to inspire individual teams and organizations to consider and replicate these practices to achieve their own goals. This publication focuses on integration of cancer screening into routine services, using a case study from Miritini Dispensary, and illustrates how by integrating screening into routine services, Miritini not only increased the number of women screening for cervical cancer, but sustained it.
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A. Success Story

Routine Cervical Cancer Screening Helps Woman to Access Timely Treatment

When Asha Borabu walked into Miritini Dispensary in 2013 to seek treatment for a fever and common cold, she never imagined that she could have other health concerns. Then she was screened for cervical cancer and learned that she had abnormal cells that required further examinations to establish if they were cancerous.

Asha is a beneficiary of the newly implemented cervical cancer screening that Miritini integrated into its routine services in April 2013 through the Leadership Development Program (LDP) offered to them by the Leadership, Management and Sustainability (LMS/Kenya) program, with funding from United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and United States Presidential Emergency Program for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). This followed the realization by Miritini team that of the more than 2,000 women who sought services at the Miritini Dispensary every month, only six screened for cervical cancer through their occasional medical camps. This was in spite of the evidence that showed that regular screening for cervical cancer reduced the chances of developing and dying from it. To increase the number of women screening for cervical cancer and sustain it, the team decided to integrate screening into the routine services of the dispensary.

Following the results of the screening, the Miritini team referred Asha to Port Reis District Hospital for more specialized tests. After these tests, she was put on treatment and referred for further specialized examinations at Coast General Hospital where she underwent biopsy of the abnormal cells for analysis. Asha is currently awaiting the results of this analysis to establish if she has cervical cancer. In the meantime, she is on treatment to manage the cells. Additionally, the Miritini team has continued to follow-up and support her to ensure that she gets the right diagnosis and treatment before it is too late, an aspect that Asha is grateful for.
“As a result of the screening, I was able to discover my status early enough and seek proper medical intervention. If I had not gone through the screening, I may never have discovered this early enough, and perhaps might have died out of complications. Miritini has saved my life.”

Asha Borabu, a beneficiary of the cervical screening service at Miritini Dispensary.
Asha is not the only one who has benefited from the integration of cervical cancer screening into routine services. Some women who screened for cervical cancer were discovered to have gynecological problems, such as urinary tract infections, and were also put on treatment, while others were referred for specialized care for other problems.

The Nursing Officer In-Charge, Rose Chepchirchir Songok, noted, “Many clients who have benefited from the screening services and accessed further treatment are very grateful. They indicate that if they had not been screened, they would not have known that they had a problem and as such would not have sought treatment and might have suffered complications as a result.”

B. About Miritini Dispensary

Miritini Dispensary was established in 2008 with only one health care worker and two support staff, offering only basic services such as child welfare and antenatal clinics. In 2009, the Ministry of Health posted more health workers to the facility, including the current Clinical Officer In-Charge of the dispensary and the Nursing
Officer In-Charge. In 2010, the dispensary expanded services to include outpatient, comprehensive care clinics, deliveries, family planning, HIV and AIDS and TB care, among others.

In 2013, Miritini was recommended by the then District Health Management Team (now Sub-County Health Management Team) to participate in the Leadership Development Program (LDP). The LDP is a six-months program that equips participants with skills to address their workplace challenges, improve performance and achieve organizational goals. Miritini chose to raise awareness of the importance of women being screened for cervical cancer and integrated screening into its routine services to ensure they could sustain it beyond the LDP.
C. Integration of Cancer Screening into Routine Services

The Kenya Health Policy 2012-2030 identified integration of health services as a key strategy to leverage existing and scarce health resources to improve service delivery. As such, the Ministry of Health has mandated public health facilities to integrate services such as HIV and AIDS, family planning, and cancer screening into their routine services.

Miritini Dispensary not only stands out because it was, in just six months, able to raise the number of women being screened for cervical cancer from an average of six per month to an average of 124 per month, but because of the way it has successfully integrated screening into its routine services. In this section, we discuss the steps that Miritini took to scale up and integrate cervical cancer screening into their routine services.
1. Understanding both their internal and external environments

Miritini team reviewed their facility service data to determine the extent to which women were being screened for cervical cancer at the facility. They discovered that not only were they only screening approximately six women per month, but that these were all being screened through random stand-alone programs. None were though routine services even though more than 2,000 women visit their facility every month. They also assessed the environment to determine the reasons why women were not screening for cervical cancer. By enlisting the support of their community health workers (CHWs), and engaging with the community through chiefs’ barazas they established that the main reason women did not screen for cervical cancer was due to lack of information on the benefits. Additionally, as the screening services were not available as part of the routine services of the dispensary, women had to wait for the occasional medical camps to get screened.

2. Crafting their strategy and planning appropriately

Realizing that they would not be able to scale up and sustain cervical cancer screening if they were to rely on donor-supported ad hoc stand-alone medical camps, Miritini recognized the importance of integrating cervical cancer screening into their routine services. Before commencing cervical cancer screening as part of the routine services of the dispensary, the team got together and planned how they would reach their goal. They decided on the priority actions to take and identified the resources - staff, money, equipment and supplies – that they would need to achieve their goal.

a) Securing funding, equipment and supplies for cervical cancer screening

The Miritini team, led by the Clinical Officer In-Charge of the facility, identified sources of funds and designed strategies to access them. As a first step, they assessed their environment to identify the stakeholders that might finance their activities and then pinpointed these stakeholders’ specific interests to determine which aspects they might agree to support. Armed with this information, the Miritini team then approached them to discuss the areas of support and reached an agreement. As a result, Miritini obtained funding from in-

1 Public meeting held by the area administration to discuss development issues and other issues affecting the community
ternational non-governmental organizations - World Vision and the Jhpiego-led, Gates-funded Tupange project - to support training activities and to provide the dispensary with equipment and supplies to conduct cervical cancer screening. World Vision also provided the dispensary with reagents to last for a period of one year, while Tupange provided additional reagents and speculums. The Ministry of Health, through the District Reproductive Health Team provided Miritini with supplies such as cotton wool and speculums.

To ensure sustained financing of the cervical cancer screening activities, Miritini included this as a budget item in their quarterly implementation plan that they submitted to the Ministry of Health for consideration. This was approved and Miritini was authorized to use the finances for screening activities.

b) Acquiring the right skills to conduct screening

When Miritini decided to integrate cervical cancer screening into their routine services, they only had one staff member trained to conduct screening. Recognizing the need for additional trained staff to be able to scale up and integrate cervical cancer into routine services, the Miritini leadership sought the support of the then District Health Management Team (DHMT) to provide on-the-job training for staff on cervical cancer screening. This equipped the staff with requisite skills to not only advocate for and raise awareness of the importance of cervical cancer screening but also to conduct the screening itself.

The Miritini leadership team also asked the Ministry of Health, through the DHMT, to provide the facility with additional staff to tackle the increased workload that was anticipated with integration of cancer screening into routine services. To convince the DHMT that they deserved the additional staff, the Miritini team shared with the DHMT their vision, strategy, expected results and progress. This impressed the DHMT members who, within two months of the request, provided the dispensary with two additional staff.

“We planned in advance so as to have everything we needed to integrate screening services. This way, we did not get stuck in the course of implementation,”

Clinical Officer In-Charge Nasibo Sarbo
3. Aligning and mobilizing the team and stakeholders to support the integration goal

Integrating screening services into routine services required the support of all staff and stakeholders. Led by the Clinical Officer In-Charge of the dispensary, the Miritini leadership team met with all service delivery units staff – laboratory, pharmacy, nursing and public health – to set desired targets, discuss strategies and define roles and responsibilities. The leadership team tasked every service delivery unit within the facility to counsel and refer any female client who sought services. They added cervical cancer to the list of services on their existing referral forms and encouraged use of them when referring clients for screening.

“These service delivery units provided a perfect way to capture the women for screening.”
The Nursing Officer In-Charge, Rose Chepchirchir Songok

Further, the Miritini team sensitized community members on the benefits of screening for cancer and also informed them that the dispensary was offering screening as a routine service.
“Each community health worker is in charge of 20 households. We educated members of the households about the benefits of cervical cancer screening and where to get the service. We also worked with churches, mosques and participated in Chiefs’ barazas where we communicated these messages. As a result of this, many women turned up for screening at the facility. This sensitization also made it easier to convince those who sought other services at the facility to consider screening for cervical cancer,”

Public Health Officer, Francis Kinyata
4. **Inspiring staff to work towards the goal**

Successful integration of cervical cancer screening into routine services required committed staff. The leadership team continuously inspired and rallied Miritini’s staff to work towards the desired goal. One of the ways they achieved this was through publicly acknowledging staff efforts. The leadership also encouraged teamwork by clearly communicating and sharing their vision with all staff and defining their responsibilities towards achieving it. They held monthly staff meetings where they openly discussed any challenges and together found ways to overcome them. These meetings fostered accountability and provided an opportunity for staff to embrace team spirit.
The team here is inspiring. We work together to achieve targets by supporting and encouraging one another. We give each other a helping hand to ensure that we accomplish a given task."

A new member of staff

I created a committed team because I realized that it was the only way to improve our performance and achieve our targets."

The Clinical Officer In-Charge, Nasibo Sarbo

5. Working towards continuous improvement

The Miritini team regularly monitored their progress towards their desired result using the indicators of success that they had developed. For example, on a monthly basis, they consolidated the data on the number of women who had screened for cervical cancer and compared this with the targets they had set. This gave them an
indication of whether they were on the right track or not. In order to determine the extent of effectiveness of their strategies, they met as a team and discussed whether the use of service delivery units as screening referral points was working. They found this to be an effective strategy to capture women for screening. Further, the leadership team analyzed the referral forms issued by each department referring clients for screening to determine the unit that issued most referral forms. They then used this information to set new targets for each unit.

Another method to monitor performance was through client exit interviews to assess whether the increase in the number of women seeking screening services compromised service delivery. When the Miritini team established that the increase was resulting in longer patient waiting time, they enlisted the support of community health workers to identify women within the community requiring screening services and schedule appointments for them. This made it easy to manage the increased number of women seeking screening. The facility also designated a staff member and room for screening services.
D. Enabling Environment

The immense trust and support of the DHMT was one factor that facilitated the successful integration of cervical cancer screening into routine services. The DHMT assisted Miritini to identify partners that supported them with funds, equipment and supplies to offer screening as a routine service. This trust also made it easy for Miritini to get additional staff and conduct on the job training for its staff to offer screening services.

“We have a lot of respect and confidence in Miritini because of the impressive results that they have posted over the years. This has inspired us to support them with whatever they need because we know they can achieve even greater results,”

DHMT member, Imani Gwiyo Baraka

However, it is important to note that environment itself is not destiny; it is how you take advantage of it. Miritini took advantage of the good relations it had with DHMT to mobilize funds to finance its activities, obtain supplies and equipment and get additional staff to successfully integrate cervical cancer screening into its routine services. They continue to strive to live up to the expectations of the DHMT.

E. Personal and Team Leadership

Improving performance and achieving organizational goals requires leaders and managers with necessary skills and competencies and a sense of connection with those around them. Additionally, it requires leaders and managers to be able to influence teams to work towards a shared goal by setting and clearly communicating a vision, creating positive peer pressure towards shared, high performance standards, fostering an atmosphere of trust and team spirit, and driving successful collective action and results.

Miritini Dispensary’s leadership is a clear manifestation of successful personal and team leadership. Led by the Clinical Officer In-Charge of the dispensary, the leadership not only rallied its team towards achieving a shared goal, but inspired them to
surmount the challenges in their way no matter what.

“To create a team, we clearly communicated our goal to form a common understanding of what we wanted to achieve. We then defined the responsibilities of each staff towards achieving this goal. We publicly acknowledged those who demonstrated exceptional performance, while encouraging others to aim higher. We emphasized the importance of working as a team by encouraging staff to support each other. This way, we created a committed team that delivered our goal. We knew from the onset that the only way to realize this was through teamwork,”

Clinical Officer In-Charge, Nasibo Sarbo.
Yet, this attribute is not confined to the Miritini leadership, it is manifested in the staff as well. This is apparent from the zeal with which they perform their tasks and the sense of pride that they derive from belonging to the team and contributing towards its goals.

"I feel encouraged every day to work even harder to contribute towards achieving our goals. This is because of the appreciation of my work by our leader and the team spirit among us; this is like home to me,"

Staff member.
A laboratory Technician, Everlyn Amina Munyoto at work.

A staff member at work.
**F. Possible Steps for Replication**

The successful integration of cervical cancer screening into routine services which has led to an increase in number of women undergoing screening at Miritini Dispensary is a clear indication of what health facilities can do to scale up and sustain services through integration. By integrating other stand-alone services into routine services, facilities can achieve better results. In order to attain the same results that Miritini Dispensary achieved, here is a list of steps along with proposed activities which we encourage you to use as a guide. Please note that while each of the steps is necessary for achieving results, the activities will likely vary depending on your particular facility and situation.

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<th>Steps</th>
<th>Possible activities</th>
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| 1. Examine both your internal and external environment to determine the situation | • Check your records to determine how you are faring on the indicators of the service that you seek to integrate. For example, Miritini staff checked the facility’s records to determine the number of women who were being screened for cervical cancer  
• Compare this with set targets for these indicators to understand the gap  
• Meet with community health workers, participate in public forums like chiefs’ barazas, churches, and mosques to discuss the situation and the causes for low uptake of the service |
| 2. Craft your strategy and plan appropriately | • Determine the financial resources, equipment and supplies that you will need to achieve your goal and where you will get them  
  o Examine your environment to identify the stakeholders that might fund your activities  
  o Identify specific areas that they could support  
  o Approach them to discuss the areas that require funding and the amounts needed  
  o If you are a public facility, you could include this request for funds in your work plan and present it to the Ministry of Health for consideration  
• Obtain the right skills to provide the service  
  o For example, you could train your staff to equip them with skills  
  o You could also recruit new staff to provide the services, especially if you realize that you require additional staff. One way to do this is to partner with a stakeholder who could offer on the job training to your staff  
  o In addition, you could request that the Ministry of Health provide you with additional staff or recruit straight from the market place |
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| 3. Mobilize team and stakeholders to support your goal | • Examine your internal and external environment to determine the team members and stakeholders whose support you require to realize your goal  
  ○ For example, you may establish that you will require the support of the various departments or service delivery units to integrate the particular service into the routine of the facility. In this case, hold a meeting with the heads of these departments and staff to discuss the goal, define roles and responsibilities and the expected results  
  ○ You may also decide that you need the support of the community to get them to utilize the particular service that you aim to integrate. In this case, sensitize them on the benefits of the service and inform them of the availability of the service. You could enlist the support of community health workers, and use other community structures like public forums, churches, and mosques, etc. to get the message to the community  
  ○ You may also determine that you require the support of donors, the government, private sector and other players in the health sector. Approach them to discuss your activities and the expected results. Also discuss areas of collaboration including roles, responsibilities and benefits. Formalize your agreement through a memorandum of understanding or some other written document, in order to clearly guide the collaboration |
| 4. Inspire your staff to commit towards realizing your goal | • Explain how each staff member is integral in contributing towards the achievement of the goal  
  • Publicly acknowledge and reward exceptional performance  
  • Openly discuss areas of concern with staff and make sure they know where they went wrong and how they can rectify them  
  • Serve as a role model by being the epitome of commitment and dedication to realize the goal  
  • Encourage staff to assist each other to accomplish a task. This encourages team spirit  
  • Encourage communication among staff by creating channels such as staff meetings, etc |
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| 5. Work towards continuous improvement | • At the outset, develop indicators for success to guide your intervention  
• Continuously monitor the progress made on these indicators by assessing the number of people benefiting from your intervention against the targets that you had set. Use this information to refocus your approach and set new targets  
• Evaluate the strategy to determine if it is effective in leading you to achieve your goal. One way to do this is by meeting as a team and getting the views of the team members and conducting exit interviews of the clients utilizing the service. This can help you to determine whether to change the strategy, or improve on what you already have to achieve even better results  
• Based on progress made, set new targets and design new strategies to achieve them |

G. Reflection Questions

After learning about the Miritini Dispensary’s experience, reflect on your own situation by answering the following questions:

1. What service delivery area would you like to introduce or scale up?
2. What might you do to scale up or improve the performance of this service delivery area?
3. Is this service among those that you offer as routine or as a stand-alone, one-off intervention?
4. If it is a stand-alone, one off intervention, might integrating it into your routine services help you scale up and improve performance?
5. Which resources do you need to achieve your goal?
6. Whose support might you require to help you achieve your goal?
7. How might you rally your staff and other stakeholders to support your goal?
8. How might you inspire your staff to commit towards achieving your goal?
9. What do you need to do to sustain and improve your outcome?
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