

Increasing capacity to provide high-quality clinical management of COVID-19 cases in Maldives

The United States Government (USG), through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), provided the Government of Maldives with a donation of 60 ventilators for intensive care units to assist in its fight against COVID-19. The donation delivered on the USG's pledge to provide these critically needed supplies and support Maldives' ongoing efforts to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. **From June 2020 through June 2021, the Meeting Targets and Maintaining Epidemic Control (EpiC) Maldives project, supported by USAID through the U.S. President's Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), provided technical assistance (TA) and capacity strengthening in critical case management to health care providers and facilities.**

EPIC'S KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Supported installation of 60 mechanical ventilators at 60 health facilities
- Conducted 60 facility-level assessments to confirm hospital capacity and identify technical assistance needs
- Trained 789 clinicians in COVID-19 clinical case management

EpiC collaborated closely with the Ministry of Health (MOH) to strengthen the capacity of the government to receive, install, and use the ventilators. EpiC then led a facility assessment of TA needs and provided clinical TA to improve the provision of care for COVID-19 patients.

Activities and Accomplishments

COORDINATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

From the project's inception, EpiC Maldives has sought to strengthen and leverage relationships with the MOH to ensure alignment of EpiC activities with national priorities. EpiC also worked closely with MedTech — the local agent for Vyair — which installed the ventilators and provided follow-up on maintenance as per their service agreement with USAID. To kick-start the project, EpiC held extensive discussions with both partners and collaboratively planned the project activities. Ongoing communication and collaboration with the MOH and the health facilities that received the ventilators provided a foundation for successful program implementation.

FACILITY-LEVEL ASSESSMENTS

The 60 ventilators donated by the USG were transported and placed in 60 health facilities across Maldives, including six regional hospitals, 13 atoll hospitals, and 41 island health centers. In order to prioritize and focus TA activities for the sites, EpiC conducted assessments of all 60 health facilities. The assessments examined facility readiness to use the ventilators in the care of patients with COVID-19 and included information on experience in caring for ventilated patients, infrastructure and supplies, and human resource availability and capacity.

The facility-level assessments revealed the need to strengthen infrastructure, fill gaps in emergency equipment and essential medications, increase the availability of additional trained professional staff, and conduct training of health care staff, especially at the island health centers.



Photo credit: EpiC Maldives

A Vyaire ventilator donated by USAID was set up for a training session.

TRAINING ON COVID-19 CLINICAL MANAGEMENT

EpiC conducted several training activities, including training health care providers in COVID-19 adult case management, the care of ventilated patients, and the care of ventilated patients during transport. EpiC trained 16 master trainers in adult case management of COVID-19 patients. Those master trainers then trained 789 health officers (consisting of 712 doctors, 68 nurses, two biomedical engineers, two community health workers, and five laboratory technicians).

Following the delivery of ventilators, trainings were conducted for facility-level staff on the effective and safe use of the ventilators. Two batches of trainings on the use of ventilators were organized on January 9 and January 15, 2021. The trainings were attended by 191 staff from 19 regional-and atoll-level health facilities, as atolls are responsible for equipment maintenance in island health centers.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ON PATIENT TRANSFER PROTOCOL

The portable ventilators can be used for the transport of sick, ventilated patients from island health centers to regional and atoll hospitals. The MOH already had the Patient Transfer and Retrieval Guideline and a document detailing procedures for patient transfer by air or sea ambulances, which were developed under Aasandha (the state-financed universal health insurance scheme). The MOH requested EpiC Maldives to provide TA on strengthening the process of patient transfer from island health centers to higher-level atoll and regional hospitals. EpiC also shared a checklist for interfacility COVID-19 patient transfer which was included as an additional resource in the national guidelines and supported the strengthening of protocols for ventilated patient transfer in Maldives.

Conclusions

Over the past year, the EpiC project in Maldives increased the country's capacity to provide high-quality clinical management of COVID-19 cases and to use the donated ventilators. The facility-level assessment identified gaps in infrastructure, emergency equipment, essential medications, staffing levels, and training needs in 60 facilities. By addressing some of these gaps in collaboration with the Government of Maldives, EpiC has left behind a stronger health system with the capacity to provide high-quality emergency care for its citizens, including the transport of sick and ventilated patients from lower-island facilities to higher regional and atoll hospitals.



Photo credit: EpiC Maldives

Health facility staff receive training on how to use the USG-donated ventilators.

Meeting Targets and Maintaining Epidemic Control (EpiC), a five-year global project funded by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is dedicated to achieving and maintaining HIV epidemic control. EpiC is led by FHI 360 with core partners Right to Care (RTC), Palladium, Population Services International (PSI), and Gobe Group. EpiC and its consortium members are implementing COVID-19 activities in more than 20 countries on three continents. In 13 of those countries, EpiC is providing technical assistance (TA) to governments and specific health facilities that received U.S. Government (USG)-donated ventilators and to health providers on COVID-19 clinical case management.

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