

## Expanding provision of HIV testing services in priority districts in South Africa to ensure universal awareness of HIV status and access to treatment

*“I feel that the program is making a big difference.”*



Bongisa (left) and Society for Family Health counsellor tester Hlengiwe (right)

“I am happy to be HIV-negative,” said Bongisa, a 24-year-old mechanical engineering student at a technical college in eThekweni district, KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. Bongisa previously tested HIV-negative, but wanted to test again to confirm the result and ensure the first test was not conducted in the “window period,” during seroconversion.

Bongisa was tested in her community of Clare Estate by Society for Family Health (SFH), a civil society organization implementing the *Accelerated Targeted Community-based HIV Testing Services (ATC-HTS)* program under the USAID-funded Capacity Development and Support (CDS) project. The program seeks to increase uptake of community-based HTS among high-risk and undiagnosed HIV-positive individuals, and link individuals diagnosed as HIV-positive to care and treatment services.

SFH outreach teams are comprised of mobilizers and counsellor testers to provide convenient, home-based and mobile HIV testing services. One of the counsellor testers working in eThekweni, Hlengiwe Ngcobo, has been with SFH for six months, but her interest in HIV began much earlier, in 2002. “During this time, many people were sick and I wanted to help our community to understand that we can live a normal life like a person who is HIV-negative,” Hlengiwe shared. “I wanted to help them understand that there are pills they can take every day in order to get well.” Hlengiwe previously worked for Old Mutual, but jumped at the opportunity to work in the health sector under SFH.

“I really enjoy what I am doing,” Hlengiwe said. “I like to meet new people and help them. I feel that the program is making a big difference. If we find people who are HIV-positive, we refer them to the clinic and they get treatment and get well. People appreciate the testing in homes: some people stay far from the clinic and don’t have money to get there. Others are looking after children during the day so don’t have

### CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT (CDS)

The CDS project (2014-2019), funded by USAID/South Africa, contributes to the goal of mitigating the impact of HIV, STIs and TB by providing capacity strengthening to civil society organizations and the South African Government, increasing their effectiveness in achieving expanded and high-quality services.



## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

For more than 25 years, FHI 360 has been working as a strategic partner to the Government of South Africa and South African civil society. We have implemented a wide range of technical assistance projects at national, provincial and community levels to strengthen policies and programs that prevent the transmission of HIV, provide high-quality HIV care and treatment, strengthen nutritional assessment and counselling and support, improve reproductive health, increase access to family planning, and strengthen partners' technical and organizational capacity.



Partners for  
a healthier nation

Learn more about SFH at:  
<http://www.sfh.co.za/>

## About FHI 360

FHI 360 is a nonprofit human development organization dedicated to improving lives in lasting ways by advancing integrated, locally driven solutions. Our staff includes experts in health, education, nutrition, environment, economic development, civil society, gender, youth, research, technology, communication and social marketing – creating a unique mix of capabilities to address today's interrelated development challenges. FHI 360 serves more than 70 countries and all U.S. states and territories.

time to go to the clinic. People accept our support, and we follow up with them to ensure they have accessed treatment.”

## HOME-BASED TESTING IN CLARE ESTATE, ETHEKWINI DISTRICT

Hlengiwe carries a backpack with everything she needs to provide home-based HIV testing. SFH mobilizers guide her through a labyrinth of densely-populated, one-room homes constructed mostly of corrugated tin sheeting. She pulls a stool out of her backpack and sits down, spreading her materials out on the flat surface of the bag. Hlengiwe carefully arranges the testing kit, including a confirmatory test if the first test yields a positive result, waste bag and small sharps container. Her movements are precise as she pulls on her plastic gloves. Hlengiwe cleans and pricks the client's finger, squeezing out a single drop of blood and placing it on the testing kit, followed by two drops of buffer solution. She covers the test to wait for the result, and engages the client in conversation, asking the client to explain what s/he knows about HIV. Hlengiwe addresses topics such as screening for tuberculosis and sexually-transmitted infections, and the benefits of voluntary medical male circumcision. She pulls out a diagram of a sexual network to explain how HIV spreads and offers HIV testing to the client's other sexual partners. Hlengiwe promotes condoms to prevent HIV transmission, and demonstrates their use with a wooden model. She explains that if the client tests HIV-positive, it is important to begin anti-retroviral treatment immediately. Hlengiwe delivers the HIV results professionally, and provides additional relevant information and counselling based on the outcome.

The dedicated efforts of people such as Hlengiwe, supported by organizations such as SFH and programs such as ATC-HTS, are contributing to South Africa's achievement of the UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets – starting with ensuring that all people know their HIV status, and that those who test HIV-positive access treatment.

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

CDS is implementing the *Accelerated Targeted Community-based HIV Testing Services (ATC-HTS)* program in collaboration with two partners in priority districts in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provinces in South Africa. As of September 2017, these partners have reached more than 194,800 people with HIV testing services.



Society for Family Health counsellor tester Hlengiwe in Clare Estate, eThekweni district

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## CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT PROGRAM

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