

Improving services to key populations in High Transmission Areas in the Northern Cape, South Africa

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.



Nomvuyiseko Maduna, High Transmission Area Technical Advisor, presents the HTA orientation session in the Northern Cape province

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.

South Africa's HIV prevalence is estimated at 17% for those aged 15-49 years.¹ However, specific groups of people at greater risk of HIV infection, termed "key populations," have significantly higher rates of HIV prevalence. These include sex workers (60%), men who have sex with men (30%) and prisoners (44%).² While key populations urgently need health services, issues such as stigma and discrimination create barriers to the access to and uptake of these services.

To address these challenges, South Africa is implementing a High Transmission Area (HTA) program to reduce HIV among key populations, providing tailored prevention services through mobile and fixed intervention sites. HTA Guidelines were developed in 2014 to standardize program management across provinces, promoting a full package of clinical and non-clinical services appropriate for key populations.

ENSURING A COMPREHENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION PACKAGE

Nomvuyiseko Maduna, the Technical Advisor on High Transmission Areas and Key Populations seconded to the National Department of Health (NDOH) under the USAID-funded Capacity Development and Support (CDS) program, presented an orientation session to 44 provincial and district HIV managers, as well as non-governmental organizations supporting the program, to better understand their implementation roles. The training addressed programmatic gaps such as inadequate understanding of program terms and indicators, resulting in incorrect reporting and

¹ South Africa's National Strategic Plan on HIV, STIs and TB 2012-2016.

² Ibid.

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.

provision of an incomplete service package. For example, the provision of peer educator services requires utilization of people who belong to the same key population sector, as they are better positioned to understand the sector circumstances and lifestyle. An inaccurate understanding of peer educators may result in utilization of general community health workers, and less effective programming.

The orientation session, held June 14-15, 2016, in the Northern Cape province, was part of a nationwide HIV Testing Services (HTS) workshop, organized by the HIV Counseling and Testing sub-directorate of the NDOH and sponsored by the World Health Organization. Other sessions presented by both national and provincial staff included the new HTS policy and guidelines, HIV prevention strategies, the condom program, and HIV and mental health. Nomvuyiseko introduced the HTA program, including its aims and goals, definitions of important terms and the complete package of services for intervention sites. This includes:

- HIV counseling and testing
- Education, screening, diagnosis and treatment of sexually-transmitted infections and tuberculosis
- Sexual and reproductive health and family planning
- Community engagement, including health dialogues
- Risk reduction counselling and skills building
- Distribution, demonstration, and promotion of condoms and lubricant

The session also addressed program monitoring and reporting, including indicators and templates for quarterly and annual reports, the distinction between hotspots and high transmission areas and how the sensitization training of health care providers should be cascaded. Discussion included data flow from the HTA sites to the NDOH, persons responsible for reporting at the different levels and the reporting pathway of key populations seen at non-HTA health care facilities.

Nomvuyiseko highlighted the value of collaboration among the various levels and units of government at the workshop. “What stood out for me was a presentation by one of the provincial managers on the integration of mental health into the HIV prevention program,” she said, “The level of provincial staff engagement was an indication of the province’s commitment to improve the HTS services.”

WORKSHOP OUTCOMES: ONE YEAR LATER

More than a year later, and following a series of support visits, Nomvuyiseko is observing positive program outcomes, including three provinces conducting stock-taking of intervention sites and reporting the correct number of intervention sites linked to key populations’ hotspots, as well as the correct number of peer educators. The program is shifting its focus from the number of sites to their functionality and quality, and Nomvuyiseko spearheaded the expansion of an HTA intervention site assessment tool to support the mapping of sites, guide quality improvement and evaluate the readiness of new sites to implement services.

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333 Grosvenor Street, Hatfield Gardens Office Park, Block B,
Gauteng Province 0083 South Africa
T 012.762.4000 | E cds@fhi360.org | www.capacitydev.org

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