

CDS supports South Africa's efforts to promote high-quality HIV rapid testing

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.



RTQII training participants in Limpopo 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 has the largest number of people living with HIV in the world, estimated at seven million people - approximately 12.5% of the population.¹ There are an estimated 270,000 new HIV infections each year.² Since 2010, South Africa's National Department of Health (NDOH) has implemented large-scale HIV rapid testing campaigns to ensure that all South Africans are aware of their HIV status. These efforts have contributed to more than 10 million people testing for HIV each year.

The rapid expansion of the country's HIV testing services (HTS) has been driven by the implementation of rapid diagnostic tests performed by either healthcare workers or lay counsellors. In using new cadres of health workers to scale up services, it is critical to ensure quality provision of the HIV testing. In response to this need, South Africa has implemented the HIV Rapid Test Quality Improvement Initiative (RTQII).

In 2016, Maserame Mojapele was seconded to the NDOH under the USAID-funded Capacity Development and Support (CDS) program as an HIV Testing Services Technical Advisor to support this initiative. The RTQII seeks to build the capacity of testing providers to ensure that the client receives the correct HIV test results, and facilities and personnel are fully capable of providing quality services. The NDOH provides training to strengthen quality management systems, increase uptake and coverage, and contribute to achievement of the UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets.

¹ Let Our Actions Count: South Africa's National Strategic Plan for HIV, TB and STIs 2017-2022

² Ibid.

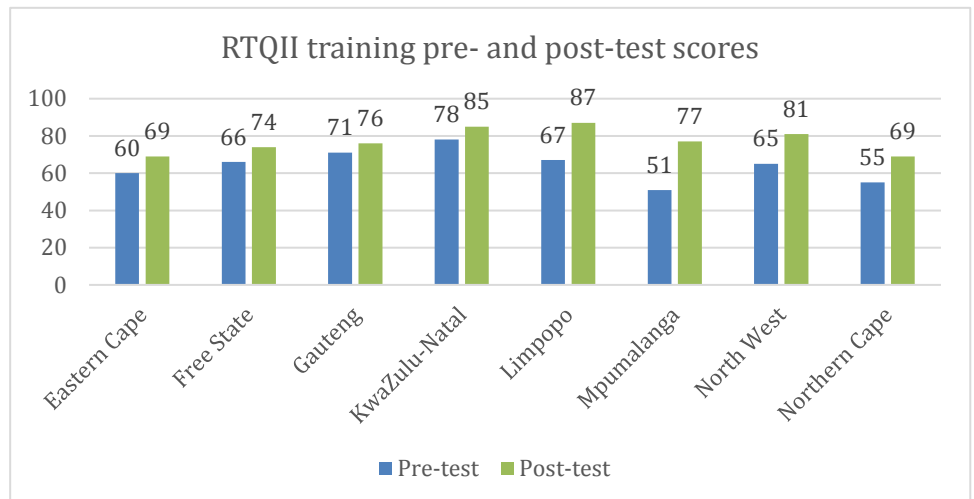
About FHI 360

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.

IMPROVING HTS QUALITY THROUGH SKILLS BUILDING

Maserame and her colleagues conducted 11 RTQII trainings with 372 participants in a six-month period (October 2016 to June 2017). The three-day training sessions were conducted in eight provinces, covering 29 districts.³ Participants included clinic and laboratory personnel, as well as HTS counsellors, managers and mentors.

The participants were engaged in practical HIV testing and recording exercises to demonstrate how to ensure quality HTS. The training also defined the activities and tasks that mid- to high-level professionals must perform to ensure and monitor the accuracy and reliability of HIV results in all HTS settings, using tools and job aids to adequately address quality-related issues as they arise. The training reinforced correct procedures for finger pricking, interpretation of the test results, recording and record-keeping. There was an average knowledge increase of 11 percentage points after the training, as measured by pre- and post-test assessments.



Training participants plan to apply the knowledge and skills gained by conducting the Stepwise Process for Improving the Quality of HIV Rapid Testing checklist to prepare for implementation of the proficiency testing and internal quality control programs in their facilities, and by holding in-service training with other staff. Regional Training Centers will support this process by providing mentoring and support.

Participant voices

“From now on, I will wait for the required time to give people their results...I’ve been giving them their results immediately and not waiting for 15 minutes. In some cases, I was doing parallel testing because I could tell that the client was positive.”

“While I’ve done finger pricking, I realized that there are so many things that I have been doing wrong. I am happy to have attended this training.”

³ 10 of these districts are PEPFAR priority districts, which have the highest HIV prevalence in the country

This publication is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of the Capacity Development and Support project and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

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