

Improved PrEP uptake among Adolescent Girls and Young Women through focused site support: lessons learnt from Matabeleland North Province in Zimbabwe from October 2023 to September 2024

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BACKGROUND

- Adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) are at high risk of HIV, yet uptake of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) remains low in the four Determined Resilient Empowered Aids-free Mentored Safe (DREAMS) districts in Matabeleland North, Zimbabwe.
- Between October and December 2024, PrEP access was hindered by stock outs, poor documentation, inadequate use of electronic Logic-Management-Information-Systems (eLMIS), and community stigma.
- Despite health care workers (HCW) efforts to mobilize AGYW for PrEP, uptake remained suboptimal, highlighting the need for expert support from district teams.

DESCRIPTION

- From October 2023 through September 2024, district officers from Pangaea Zimbabwe (PZ) and Ministry of Health and Child Care conducted support visits to 50 facilities.
- Experts in pharmacy and community health trained HCWs on eLMIS to address supply-chain issues.
- Capacity building for HCW focused on clinical-community-linkages and service delivery; experienced clinicians provided mentorship through one-on-one coaching and quality improvement initiatives.



District Nursing Officer, District Health Information Officer & PZ Program Officer conducting HCW site support and mentorship at Sesemba clinic in Nkayi district

RESULTS

From October to December 2023, monthly AGYW PrEP users between the age of 16 to 24 years increased from 4 to 350, sustained throughout the year by community education and public campaigns to boost knowledge.

Support led to significant service improvements: Integrating PrEP services into existing health programs (immunizations, family-planning, antenatal and postnatal care) and repackaging PrEP into more user-friendly formats such as drug envelopes.

In addition, door-to-door deliveries were conducted for clients who missed appointments or were not due for HIV testing and conducting community awareness sessions to reduce stigma and increase support for PrEP.

Monthly quality-improvement visits, performance reviews, and use of evidence-based strategy adjustments allowed for continuous improvement.

Improved eLMIS utilization led to improved stock status, continuous quality-improvement, streamlined PrEP ordering, stock management and documentation facilitated open communication supporting higher uptake among AGYW.

Addressing supply chain issues, expanding PrEP service delivery points, and providing ongoing mentorship to HCW assisted with sustaining progress.

NEXT STEPS

- Our experience demonstrated that facility support and use of eLMIS improved continued PrEP uptake, maintaining external support could continue to enhance prevention outcomes.
- PrEP literacy sessions can be used to reduce stigma and gaining support from the sexual partners and in-laws of young women, contributing to greater uptake and improved social acceptance.
- The program in Matabeleland North plans to continue with community engagement and public awareness campaigns to reduce stigma among AGYW and expand to other districts with high new HIV infections among AGYW.



District Pharmacists providing mentorship on eLMIS at Zenka clinic during a site support and mentorship visit in Nkayi- Matabeleland North

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