

Title: Pre-conception support for couples living with HIV: A strategy to reduce mother-to-child HIV transmission (MTCT) at Senkatana antiretroviral therapy (ART) clinic in Maseru, Lesotho

Track and Category: B68

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Background: Senkatana is an ART clinic with more than 4000 women on treatment, of which, 50% are young adults who require reproductive health services. Sexual and reproductive health services are an integral part of comprehensive HIV services, yet many clinics do not offer integrated reproductive health and HIV services. In 2012, EGPAF introduced integrated sexual and reproductive health into HIV service delivery to reduce MTCT.

Description: As part of the HIV services, counseling on reproductive health services was provided to all HIV infected young adults. This included discussion on the desire to have children and contraception. Preconception care included: health education on intended and safer pregnancy, safer sex, ART adherence counselling, couples counselling. Couples that desired to have children had close monitoring of their CD4, and Viral load. They were given folic acid and Multivitamins. Antenatal, postnatal, early infant diagnosis (EID) and child welfare services are offered at the center.

Lesson learned: From October 2012-September 2015 there were 230 pregnancies and 116 deliveries. The mean age of mothers was 30.65 years and mean duration of treatment was 2.86 years. The mean gestational age at enrollment to antenatal care was 18.81 weeks. The mean CD4 at time of conception was 506.63; 95% were on first line regimens, while 5% were on second line regimens. Viral loads were undetectable in 88% of cases. Table 1 below shows DNA-PCR and antibody results at different time point for the infants born into this program.

Table 1: Results of Early Infant Diagnosis of infants born at Senkatana Centre program

| Infant age | Number of HIV tests (DNA PCR or rapid tests) | HIV-negative infants | HIV-positive infants | Total |
|------------|--|----------------------|----------------------|-------|
| 6-8 weeks | 105 | 105 | 0 | 105 |
| 14 weeks | 87 | 87 | 0 | 87 |
| 9 months | 59* | 59 | 0 | 59 |
| 18 months | 7** | 7 | 0 | 7 |

*The 59 children had a rapid test and 4 tested HIV-positive but were HIV-negative on DNA PCR

**All 7 children were tested by rapid test.

Next Steps: Integration of HIV treatment program and reproductive health is essential for meeting the reproductive health needs of families affected by HIV. These results further support the importance of lifelong ART for women of reproductive age in the prevention of MTCT. This approach will be scaled up while sustaining the current activities at the center.