



SUCCESS STORY

Extending HIV/AIDS Services to Homes

Village health workers deliver HIV/AIDS services to families at home.



ICAP-Lesotho

M'e Malillo Moeketse takes notes during one of her training sessions.

“[The] training we received helps me to provide support to not only women, but to their whole family.”

– M'e Malillo Moeketse

In Lesotho, a country of almost 1.9 million people, HIV prevalence among women aged 25 to 29 attending antenatal clinics is 38 percent. Without intervention and follow-up, HIV-infected mothers run a higher risk of transmitting the virus to their children during pregnancy, delivery, or breastfeeding.

Columbia University's International Center for AIDS Care and Treatment Programs (ICAP) has helped keep HIV-infected women healthy and their children free of infection since 2004. With funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, ICAP strengthened family-centered HIV/AIDS care beyond the health facility. Its activities included training village health workers (VHWs) to follow up and support HIV-infected pregnant women and HIV-exposed infants.

With training and mentoring support from ICAP's multidisciplinary team, VHWs such as M'e Malillo Moeketse have developed skills to provide services, such as safe infant feeding guidance, counseling for HIV-infected mothers and caregivers, treatment adherence and psychosocial support, and referrals to local health facilities. M'e Moeketse noted, “[The] training we received helps me to provide support to not only women, but to their whole family.” She and other VHWs now can offer comprehensive community-based support services to women and families affected by HIV/AIDS.

M'e Moeketse shared an example of her work: In observance of cultural tradition, Teboho,* an HIV-infected pregnant woman, had planned to use a traditional birthing attendant to deliver at home. M'e Moeketse visited Teboho's home several times to discuss delivery options and explain how delivery at a health facility under the care of trained health workers would reduce the risk of Teboho transmitting HIV to her infant. After the visits, Teboho decided to give birth at a hospital and delivered a healthy, HIV-free baby boy.

M'e Moeketse still visits Teboho's home regularly. She helps monitor the baby's growth and development, and counsels Teboho on safe infant feeding. After seeing how well his wife and son were doing, Teboho's husband decided to get tested. Now, both parents are enrolled in HIV/AIDS care and treatment and, during home visits, the importance of care and treatment adherence is discussed.

**Name has been changed.*