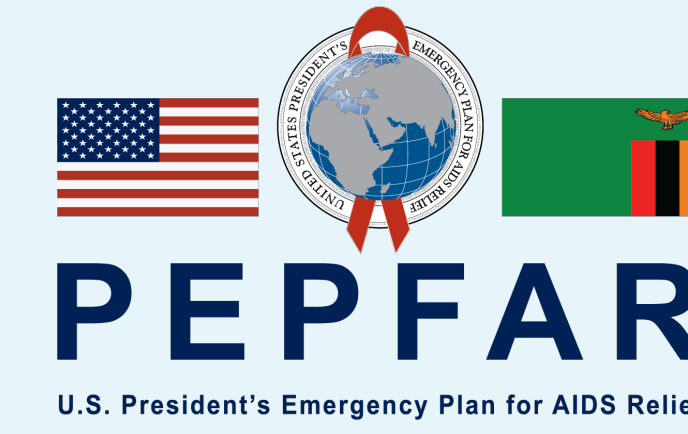


Improved Access to Cervical Cancer Screening and Treatment for Women Living with HIV in Central Zambia



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Problem

Cervical cancer is preventable and curable if detected early and managed effectively. In Zambia, it is the fourth-most common form of cancer among women ages 15-49 years. Women living with HIV (WLWH) are six times more likely than those who are HIV negative to develop cervical cancer, and should be targeted for screening and treatment (Dryden-Peterson S, et al, 2016:34).

The USAID Supporting an AIDS-Free Era (SAFE) program supports the Ministry of Health (MOH) in conducting cervical cancer screening and treatment services targeting WLWH in 21 program-supported sites in the Central Province.

Response

USAID SAFE increased cervical cancer screening and treatment through two main strategies: enhanced screening and treatment of precancerous lesions through outreach activities in hard-to-reach and hardly reached facilities, and enhanced support for the same-day treatment of precancerous lesions. This included training and mentoring service providers in visual inspection with acetic acid and loop electro-surgical excision.

Results

The initial focus of cervical cancer screening and treatment provision was in static facilities. In October 2018, only 5 of 127 USAID SAFE-supported facilities in Central Province provided cervical cancer screening for WLWH, which led to the achievement of only 40% of the 18,798 target. By September 2021, USAID SAFE had expanded service provision to additional 16 facilities. This, in conjunction with outreach activities in rural and hard-to-reach areas, led to 94% of the targeted 23,836 WLWH being screened in 2021. It also led to an improved treatment rate, from 62% in September 2020 to 87% in September 2021.



Talking to a patient about cervical cancer screening and treatment. Photo: Jason Mulikita for JSI

Conclusion

Integrating cervical cancer screening and treatment into HIV services and promoting same-day screening and treatment through static and outreach services improves access for eligible women. Instead of focusing only on static services, MOH and implementing partners should identify women in hard-to-reach areas to increase access to these services.