

Meeting summary of Strategic Review Workshop- Reconvened

December 18, 2023

Present were:

Online:

Mr. Joan Tallada
Ms. Gloria Meredith
Dr. Alisha Robb-Allen

In person

Mr. Ivan Cruickshank
Ms. Yolanda Paul
Dr. Nicola Skyers
Mr. Gregory Thomas
Ms. Serene Joseph
Mr. Richard Amenyah
Ms. Rushell Bryce
Mrs. Amoy Douse-Mullings
Ms. Althea Spence
Mr. Jumoke Patrick
Ms. Nickiesha Barnes
Ms. Audrey Brown
Mr. Jevon Hamilton
Mrs. Rahanah Khan-Francis

Treatment Program Status and Future Plans

Dr. Robb-Allen presented an overview of the Treatment Program, with a focus on retention, linkage, and uptake challenges within the 20 to 39 age group. Proposed solutions included expanding health facilities, implementing training for prevention and treatment staff, and establishing more facilities for parallel testing.

Priority areas for the treatment group were identified, emphasizing the need to expand access points, increase mental health service availability, and address human resource needs for non-government organizations.

Dr. Robb-Allen also discussed eligibility criteria for Global Fund interventions, potential expansion beyond public-private partnerships, and the cost-effectiveness of additional staff and interventions.

The presentation concluded with insights into progressive sustainability efforts, integration into primary healthcare renewal, social contracting initiatives, and plans for expanding access points through government funding and partnerships, improving mental health services, providing HR support, and integrating cartridges for the Gene Expert machine.

Retention, Data Discrepancies, and Treatment Challenges

Dr. Robb addressed the concern of retention in care, particularly among the 20 to 39 age group, highlighting challenges with maintaining adherence to antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) and achieving viral suppression.

Discrepancies in the data were also noted, emphasizing the necessity to verify the actual number of diagnosed individuals.

The team delved into program challenges related to testing and treatment, emphasizing the impact of delayed test results on patient outcomes.

There was a collective call to better understand the demographic and regional profiles of their patients and to articulate a unified narrative about the program. The idea of a treatment gap analysis was suggested, though it remained unclear whether it had been previously discussed.

Government, Non-Government, and Access to Services

The meeting addressed the distinctions between government and non-government entities, emphasizing access to services and acknowledging the unique situations of various individuals. Concerns were expressed regarding the effectiveness and equity of current strategies, prompting calls for greater clarity on specific interventions.

Public-private partnerships were highlighted as crucial for improving access, with Dr. Robb-Allen underscoring the importance of understanding the current model and demonstrating its impact, especially in terms of increased access.

Challenges related to enhancing access to health facilities and the need for interventions to address retention issues in treatment were also discussed. Additionally, the meeting emphasized the significance of considering linkage information from the last 10 years and the importance of disaggregating data between males and females.

Improving Diagnosis and Testing Efficiency

Dr. Robb-Allen emphasized the challenge of late diagnosis and suggested enhancing diagnostic methods to facilitate timely linkage to care. Mr. Amenyah concurred on the critical need for a seamless connection between diagnosis and treatment, emphasizing the importance of understanding the profile of individuals diagnosed late with a specific condition.

The team also expressed concerns about individuals testing under multiple names, highlighting the necessity for a system to prevent duplicate entries. Additionally, the team explored the possibility of utilizing recent testing to enhance data and surveillance mechanisms.

Pandemic Response and Rebranding Efforts

This aspect of the meeting primarily focused on pandemic response, prevention, and community engagement efforts. The role of the Secretariat in rebranding efforts and the involvement of primary actors were also discussed.

Future Initiatives and Challenges in Public Health Sector

The team outlined future initiatives, including the integration of stigma and discrimination education into pre-service training and the proposal of courses for continuing education. Plans were presented for the development and implementation of a public health sector anti-discrimination operational policy to enhance accountability.

Discussion revolved around challenges faced in the community setting, with a proposal to collaborate with treatment sites for the implementation of peer-led family and friends social support interventions.

Emphasis was placed on the significance of collecting and analyzing data to inform decisions and referrals. The team stressed the importance of co-billing, establishing family and friends support systems, and fostering collaboration with treatment sites.

The discussion centered on sales strategy, with a suggestion to narrow the scope of interventions. Topics included potential changes in television and facilities for individuals, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions. The importance of broad-based support for individuals and communities was underscored, along with the necessity to articulate their needs and the value of the support they receive. Stigma and discrimination were prominent concerns, with a focus on addressing these issues through support groups and sensitization efforts. The need for a strategic approach to tackle these problems, reaching out to the entire population and utilizing various media spaces was also highlighted. Additionally, the importance of addressing programmatic issues, particularly late initiation, and the need for interventions to encourage early attendance were discussed.

Midline Study Recommendations: Improving Healthcare Quality

The team was awaiting recommendations from a midline study and finalizing the end line. The consultations suggested improvements in the quality and access of care, more integration within the healthcare system, and continuous conversation and partnership between community groups and healthcare workers.

Promoting Mental Health and Inclusivity for LGBTQ+ Community

There was a discussion on promoting mental health, inclusive laws, and addressing challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community. Discussions highlighted the necessity for safe spaces, post-training support, and empowerment specifically for transgender individuals.

The Forum's role in partnering with other stakeholders to enhance service delivery was emphasized, stressing the importance of collaboration and coordination among relevant stakeholders for seamless referral processes and holistic care. The overarching goal was to improve access to healthcare, social services, and equal opportunities for all key populations.

Additional topics included the significance of dialogue and alignment within different committees, the absence of a strategic plan for building institutional capacity for sustained civil society engagement, and the need for access to technical services and treatment and prevention in subsequent actions.

Community Capacity Building for Health Services

Discussions centered on the importance of community capacity building for health service delivery. Key points included the significance of coordination, support, and sustainability for delivering quality health services, emphasizing active community engagement. The role of civil society and the concept of governance were discussed, stressing the need for a comprehensive report from consultation activities. The conversation also covered process improvement, responsibility, and challenges, with a focus on the necessity for better training and strengthening certain aspects. A referral system was mentioned, underlining the importance of data.

The meeting concluded with a discussion about scaling down the current living support and planning for a future one. There was also consideration of reporting outcomes from the living support intervention and the potential for an assessment program.

Next steps

- Consider implementing retesting to better understand recent HIV infections in the population.
- Continue to promote the patient charter and find innovative ways to increase awareness.
- Strengthen the Jamaican anti-discrimination system and improve data collection.
- Implement community-based monitoring to track the implementation of recommendations.
- Consider collaborating with treatment sites to implement peer-led family and friends support interventions.
- Work with community-based actors and organizations to address stigma and discrimination in communities.
- Consider different CLM modalities for interventions at the community level.
- Continue building awareness of human rights and work on changing the narrative around HIV.
- Consider asking for honing on some specific human rights issues for advocacy purposes.
- Share the updated individual series report with Audrey.