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# DEVELOPING QUALITY INDICATORS FOR HIV SERVICES AND TREATMENT IN TANZANIA

## SUMMARY

The Technical Support Services Project (TSSP) worked with the Tanzania Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, the Elderly, and Children (MoHCDGEC) to support and strengthen the Star Rating Assessment (SRA) Tool system. The project integrated HIV/AIDS indicators into the tool to create more comprehensive assessments of the country's health care facilities.

## BACKGROUND

Tanzania had an estimated 1.5 million people living with HIV as of 2017.<sup>1</sup> To mitigate the epidemic, the government began scaling up comprehensive HIV care and treatment services in 2003. Today, 66% of people with HIV in Tanzania are on antiretroviral therapy (ART).<sup>2</sup> However, the rapid scale-up also came with a challenge—ensuring consistent quality of these new services.

For example, the Government of Tanzania is advocating for the universal availability of standard HIV testing services at all health facilities, as per the National HIV Testing guidelines. However, a patient entering a health facility may be unable to get a rapid HIV blood test, depending on the availability and capacity of the laboratory. In addition, the availability of trained staff is uneven across facilities, and some do not have private counseling rooms, thereby compromising patient confidentiality.

In 2014, the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) released its Quality Strategy, which states that a comprehensive quality approach to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and care is necessary to achieve an "AIDS-free generation."<sup>3</sup> The strategy "provides a framework for implementing quality assurance and quality improvement practices while helping to facilitate country ownership and sustainability."<sup>4</sup> Tanzania is one of 22 countries PEPFAR requires to operationalize the PEPFAR Quality Strategy.

1 <http://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/unitedrepublicoftanzania>

2 <http://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/unitedrepublicoftanzania>

3 <https://www.pepfar.gov/documents/organization/224097.pdf>

4 <https://www.pepfar.gov/documents/organization/224097.pdf>

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Recognizing the need to address these challenges—and to comply with the PEPFAR Quality Strategy—Tanzania updated its SRA initiative under the umbrella of country's Big Results Now! (BRN) initiative<sup>5</sup> to include HIV/AIDS components. The SRA Tool is a five-star health care facility performance management rating system, where more stars equals better service quality. Tanzania's home-grown certification system goes beyond clinical quality of care and includes the assessment of facility management and governance.

In 2016, Tanzania conducted its first SRA of all primary health care facilities in the country. Areas assessed include registration, management, use of data to plan and improve services, health service planning, emergency treatment, infrastructure, infection prevention, medical examination, medicine, and surgery. The assessment showed that the majority of health centers needed significant improvement in infrastructure, management, and patient care. Only 2% of health care facilities received three or more stars, indicating much work was needed to meet the 2018 national goal of 80%.

## STRATEGIC APPROACH

Funded by PEPFAR through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and implemented by Management Sciences for Health, TSSP worked with the MoHCDGEC to strengthen three pillars of quality of care, particularly as they relate to HIV/AIDS services:

- Implementing interventions according to established standards that ensure programs are effective and achieve outcomes
- Collecting and using reliable data to measure the level of service quality, identify problems, and make improvements
- Evaluating programs for outcomes and impact

## IMPLEMENTATION

After establishing and coordinating technical working groups (TWGs) within the MoHCDGEC, TSSP helped develop quality indicators, targets, and timelines for priority clinical programs aligned with national HIV care and quality improvement/assurance guidelines and plans, including HIV testing and counseling, adult and pediatric treatment and care, TB/HIV, prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, and nutrition.

TSSP also worked with the MoHCDGEC to integrate HIV-specific quality indicators into the SRA Tool. This process of integration included TWG meetings to advise on updated standards, developing a package of supporting documentation to implement them, updating the SRA database to include the standards, and building the capacity of key technical and managerial staff involved in quality assessment work.

TSSP also developed a monitoring and evaluation plan that includes:

- Integrating the HIV service quality indicators into the District Health Information Software 2 (DHIS 2) platform
- Developing standard operating procedures for HIV service quality data collection, reporting, and analysis through DHIS 2
- Developing training materials for public health institutions
- Conducting training of trainers to facilitate the introduction of quality indicators at all levels of service implementation

Further, TSSP and the MoHCDGEC are developing processes for evaluating and acting on information to improve the quality of HIV services.

Tanzania is also updating the SRA Tool for dispensaries, health centers, and regional hospitals to include HIV/AIDS-specific questions for analysis and integration into performance standards, including:

- Availability of national guidelines and standard operating procedures for the management of HIV/AIDS
- Availability and use of medical/patient registers
- Personnel training
- Quality of HIV testing
- Performance of HIV index testing
- Referral of HIV positive patients to care and treatment
- Early initiation of ART
- Implementation of target service delivery models
- HIV viral load monitoring for clients on ART

With this update to the SRA Tool, Tanzania can systematically assess health facility compliance with its national HIV/AIDS program and case management standards and use the results to inform corrections and subsequent progress assessments. This is a major contribution toward complying with PEPFAR Quality Standards and achieving the national 95-95-95 goals:

- Diagnosing 95% of HIV-positive persons
- Providing ART to 95% of those diagnosed
- Reaching viral suppression for 95% of those treated

5 The Big Results Now! (BRN) Program aims to achieve significant development outcomes to reach the Tanzania Development Vision 2025. BRN is based on the Big Fast Results methodology that helped Malaysia achieve significant development progress. [http://www.tzdp.org.tz/fileadmin/documents/dpg\\_internal/dpg\\_working\\_groups\\_clusters/cluster\\_1/agriculture/3.\\_Ag\\_BRN/Annual\\_report\\_release\\_-\\_docs/2.\\_BRN\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.tzdp.org.tz/fileadmin/documents/dpg_internal/dpg_working_groups_clusters/cluster_1/agriculture/3._Ag_BRN/Annual_report_release_-_docs/2._BRN_brochure.pdf)

Funded by the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), TSSP provides support to the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, the Elderly, and Children (MoHCDGEC) and public health institutions in monitoring and evaluation, health information systems and information and communications technology, quality assurance and quality improvement, and human resources for health in order to increase coverage of essential HIV services.



TANZANIANS AND AMERICANS  
IN PARTNERSHIP TO FIGHT HIV/AIDS



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## PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Reassessments of all health facilities took place in 2018. Eighteen months after baseline assessments, 21% of facilities were scoring three stars or more, with only 4% zero-star facilities.<sup>6</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

TSSP will advise Tanzania on applying the SRA Tool to undertake the following quality improvement activities for HIV/AIDS services and overall health systems strengthening:

- Advise and oversee the nationwide administration of the SRA Tool in partnership with the MoHCDGEC to produce accurate, timely facility assessment data using the DHIS 2 platform to inform facility-level quality improvement plans and strategic planning at the subnational and national levels
- Design and integrate a new data set to monitor health facility quality improvement plan implementation success
- Develop DHIS 2-based dashboards to automate data analysis for easy data access, visibility, and decision making
- Provide ongoing support for using DHIS 2 data to inform national quality improvement strategies
- Document results of quality improvement activities and national HIV program improvement through sharing and implementation of best practices across HIV/AIDS sites at all levels
- Share data at the national, subnational and local level, with evidence that data are used to identify quality gaps and initiate corrective activities
- Establish a knowledge management platform and peer learning opportunities
- Develop an SRA Tool training manual and user guide for the national Center for Distance Education e-learning platform
- Review national, subnational and clinical outcome data to identify and prioritize areas of improvement and to link quality data with health outcomes for key diseases
- Adapt a result-oriented leadership development program for specific and practical quality improvement/assurance challenges and needs and advise on how to build health institutions' leadership capacity
- Advise on integrating SRA data into the national vision and plans for health facility accreditation

TSSP will continue to collaborate closely with the Government of Tanzania to ensure that the SRA Tool is a priority initiative to motivate changes at the facility level and strategic national and subnational planning and resource allocation.

The approach is vital to ensure the provision of quality HIV and other health services, particularly given the increasing demand; local ownership; a sustained commitment to monitoring and improving HIV epidemic control; and a self-reliant health system.

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(18\)30348-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(18)30348-6/fulltext)