



INTERNATIONAL HEALTH CARE CENTER

Healthy Mother Equals Healthy
Baby Annual Report
2022-2023



Healthy Mother = Healthy Baby

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The Healthy Mother Equals Healthy Baby Project supports and educates pregnant and lactating women living with HIV on topics beneficial to their HIV and pregnant/lactating status. Specifically, the project educates the women on pregnancy related health and nutritional topics beneficial to women living with HIV such as hidden hunger, food hygiene, complementary feeding, exclusive breastfeeding, anemia and weaning. During the reporting period, the project continued successfully with various sessions throughout the year, supported by funding from Gladstar Ministry and coordinated by the International Health Care Center (IHCC) and West Africa AIDS Foundation (WAAF).

METHODOLOGY

The women are enrolled in the project based on their monthly income and the initiated needs. During 2022-2023 with the help of WAAF, the project received a grant from Star Ghana Giving for Change Matching fund. This enabled us to enroll additional twenty more women to benefit from the Healthy mother equals healthy baby project. These women were selected using the same criteria as IHCC from sister health facilities with the Ga East



District, which is the same district in which IHCC operates. We had professionals like a nutritionist and a psychologist who had several sessions with the women. The women were educated on a range of topics elaborated below.

TOPICS

Nutrition

The nutritionist's education covered a wide range of topics, from enhancing the nutritional quality of meals to addressing micronutrient deficiencies and ensuring that the food mothers and their families consumed was safe and hygienic. This comprehensive approach aimed to promote the well-being and health of both mothers and their children.

- Education on nutritional enhancement packages and micronutrient deficiency
- Information provision regarding food hygiene and safety.
- Produced and distributed food and nutritional commodities to participants for healthy living.

Antiretroviral drugs

Participants in the program were educated on the proper use and potential risks of antiretroviral drugs, and their progress was closely monitored to ensure the drugs effectively prevented the transmission of HIV from mother to child

- Participants were counseled on the use and abuse of antiretroviral drugs.
- Monitored the efficacy of the drug for the prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV.

Mental awareness and support

A psychologist was involved to not only educate participants about the mental health challenges associated with pregnancy but also equipping them with practical knowledge and skills to recognize, manage, and seek help for these conditions. The participants were also introduced to effective strategies for reaching out for help when needed, fostering a network of support and guidance during the challenging phases.

- The psychologist educated participants on mental awareness and the challenges that women face during and after pregnancy, such as postpartum depression, anxiety and mood disorders.
- Conducted an engaging workshop that covers important topics such as the signs and symptoms of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders, self-care strategies and how to seek help.
- Also helped mothers identify sources of support, such as friends, family members and community resources and develop strategies for reaching out for help when needed.



TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT AN HIV STATUS

Breaking the news of one's HIV status to a child can be an emotionally challenging task. Yet, vital steps to maintain trust and transparency within a family when disclosing HIV status to a child is possible. Reasons some individuals may hesitate to disclose their HIV status to their children are concerns about the child's age or their ability to understand what being HIV positive means. However, research indicates that involving the child in the process of HIV disclosure is crucial to preventing gradual erosion of trust over time.

Key steps that individuals should consider before sharing their HIV status with their child:

- **Addressing Personal Feelings:** Before discussing the HIV status with a child, it's essential for the individual to manage their own emotions and thoughts concerning the condition. They should take time to reflect on their feelings, including any anger, sadness, confusion, or blame, and work towards achieving a level of acceptance.
- **Building a Strong Relationship:** Understanding the child's strengths and weaknesses in handling sensitive information is important. The individual should take steps to strengthen their parent-child relationship to establish a foundation of trust and open communication.
- **Seeking Support:** Both the individual and the child may require emotional support throughout this process. Seeking assistance before, during, and after disclosing the HIV status is essential, as this can be a challenging journey. It's important to recognize that it may take the child more than a year to fully comprehend and accept the situation.
- **Assessing the Child's Readiness:** Considering how the child might react to the news is crucial. Some children may become confused, worried about the parent's health, or even refuse to discuss the matter. Being prepared for a range of responses is important.
- **Gathering Information:** Equipping oneself with accurate information about the HIV condition is vital. Finding a quiet and distraction-free environment to converse with the child is recommended. Approaching the conversation with a relaxed and positive mindset can help build trust.
- **Understanding It's a Process:** Disclosing the HIV status is not a one-time event but rather a process that often involves several conversations with the child. It's important to remember that children are often stronger and more resilient than they may appear.
- **Continuous Education:** Understanding HIV is an ongoing journey for the child. The individual should aim to keep the child updated on the different phases of the condition and what to expect at each stage. Encouraging the child to ask questions when they don't understand is essential.
- **Maintaining Confidentiality:** Emphasizing the importance of keeping the HIV status confidential between the two of them is key. Depending on their relationship with the child, this should be a gradual and manageable process.

Stigma and discrimination deter individuals from having this conversation with their children. Fear of backlash from communities and concerns about the impact on family dynamics can also lead to secrecy about the HIV status. However, open, and honest

communication is essential to combat stigma and promote understanding of HIV within families and communities.

POSITIVE MINDSET FOR THE FUTURE

In emphasizing the importance of maintaining a positive mindset for individuals living with HIV/AIDS, One key aspect is the acknowledgment that HIV/AIDS is not a death sentence. With the right interpretation of their status and a positive outlook, individuals can lead long and healthy lives. Crucially, having both long-term and short-term goals is essential to keep their dreams alive and aspirations intact.

Long-term goals

While they may seem challenging to achieve in the present, offer a sense of purpose and direction. These goals encompass desires such as owning a business, becoming a distributor, or providing a bright future for their children through education.

Short-term goal

These are the practical, regular activities and plans that individuals engage in to work steadily toward their long-term objectives. It's important to recognize that no goal is easily attainable; determination and consistency are the keys to success. The importance of maintaining a schedule and sticking to it cannot be overstated.

To begin this journey, individuals should carefully consider their aspirations, seek guidance from those with experience in their chosen field, and meticulously plan the steps required to launch their endeavors. Documenting plans, setting alarms for daily activities, and forming supportive groups with friends are additional strategies to stay committed. While it may not be an effortless path, it is crucial to remember that achieving these goals is indeed possible.



With determination, consistency, and a positive mindset, individuals living with HIV/AIDS can look forward to a future filled with accomplishments and fulfillment.

MENTOR MOTHERS

Identification and training of Mentor Mothers. The project team identified five (5) mothers who were proactive and had the potential to serve as mentor mothers to their peers and a training was held to improve the capacity of these 5 selected mothers. A consultant was engaged by WAAF/IHCC to facilitate the training.

RESULTS

An average number of 10 participants made up of both pregnant and lactating HIV-positive mothers benefitted during each session.

The table below details the number of participants from September 2022 to September 2023.

DATE	NUMBER OF MOTHERS PER SESSION
Sep 2022	10
Oct 2022	10
Nov 2022	10
Dec 2022	10
Jan 2023	10
Feb 2023	10
Mars 2023	10
April 2023	10
May 2023	10
June 2023	10
July 2023	10
Aug 2023	10
Sep 2023	10

CONCLUSION

The project continues to benefit participants immensely. All the women on the project are doing well and all those who have given birth, have given birth to bouncy and healthy babies. Nutritional status of both mother and child continues to be of satisfactory level and HIV viral suppression rate amongst women is at 95%. On behalf of the women benefiting from this project and IHCC/WAAF, I want to acknowledge the Glad Star Ministry for the continuous support and donation to make this project a success. This report highlights the importance of discussing one's HIV status with their child for trust and transparency. It emphasizes a positive mindset, setting long-term and short-term goals.

GALLERY

