Partnering with Livingstone General Hospital to Scale-Up Male Circumcision Services in Zambia

Livingstone General Hospital (LGH) is a 2nd level referral hospital situated in the southern provincial capital of Livingstone, approximately 475 kilometers from Lusaka. The hospital maintains a staff of 355, including 15 doctors, 13 clinical officers, 152 nurses, 38 paramedics, and 137 administrative and support staff. It caters for an immediate population of about 97,000 and serves as a referral hospital for most of Southern Province. In addition to offering curative and preventive services, the hospital also runs a nursing school and a physiotherapy training program.

Male circumcision (MC) services were first introduced at LGH in May 2005 as an element of a staff-initiated workplace HIV/AIDS program. One of the primary objectives of the program was to promote MC among health workers and the greater Livingstone community. Early on, the organizers recognized that, if clients were charged a minimal fee for MC services, the program could become self-sustaining. The initiative began successfully with an average of 12 clients seen per week, however, further expansion of services at the hospital and in the community was hindered by many challenges, including lack of instruments and surgical space, and a small number of trained providers.

At the request of LGH, in August 2006, Jhpiego, with funding from the U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, formed a partnership with the facility in order to provide support in expanding the reach and quality of MC services. After an initial needs assessment, Jhpiego and LGH rolled-out a multi-pronged program that focused on: procurement of surgical instruments and equipment; orientation of managers; MC clinical training for healthcare providers and; training of MC/HIV counsellors. These efforts led to the development of a more holistic MC service delivery program, with a stronger emphasis on HIV testing and counselling, and a doubling of client numbers, with a of total of 1,526 circumcisions carried out to-date. Today, Jhpiego continues to provide supportive supervision and mentorship to the LGH staff and is in the process of refurbishing a larger site that will be specifically designed for and dedicated to male circumcision and other reproductive health services.

The gains made at LGH have, however, extended beyond the facility and the Livingstone community. Five LGH providers now partner with the Jhpiego MC team, training and supervising MC providers throughout the country, as well as at LGH, itself, which serves as a MC provincial training site.