The assessment found that—

In November 2002, RPM Plus conducted a baseline assessment of the VCT program in 33 sites to better understand financing, management support, supply and inventory management.

The Zambian Government has incorporated voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) as an important part of its efforts to prevent HIV/AIDS transmission and control the epidemic. VCT gives people an opportunity to learn their serostatus in a confidential environment, with counseling and referral as needed for ongoing emotional and medical care. At the request of the Zambian VCT centers and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)/Zambia Mission, the Rational Pharmaceutical Management Plus (RPM) Plus Program is helping the Government of Zambia improve service quality and coverage by strengthening the VCT information and commodity management system.

Activities

Assessment

In November 2002, RPM Plus conducted a baseline assessment of the VCT program in 33 sites to better understand financing, management support, supply and inventory management.

The assessment found that—

• The monitoring and commodity management systems were inadequate in providing information to make decisions on human resources, service quality, and inventory management.
• The district- and provincial-level health administration units were not integrated.
• The supply and management of test kits were erratic.
• The quality and consistency of supervision needed improvement.
• Service data were underutilized in most of the facilities.

Post-Assessment Implementation Plan

RPM Plus is helping the Zambia VCT program strengthen its information and commodity supply system and improve confidence in the service through—

• Assisting with the collection and analysis of program data, enhancing VCT capacity in programming and implementation, to support scaling up services
• Developing a database for the VCT information and commodity management system
• Providing training and support in data gathering, entry, analysis, use, and dissemination, including the new, user-friendly software package
• Ensuring that information is feedback to the VCT centers

Current Status

• The new VCT commodity management information system consists of a set of standards, indicators, forms, and procedures that facilitate VCT-related data management.
• RPM Plus and stakeholders trained trainers from all nine provinces, who in turn trained their colleagues from 72 districts countrywide.
• Nearly 200 VCT centers are currently using the redesigned information and commodity management system.

Lessons Learned

Establishing an inclusive process to facilitate coordination, communication, and collaboration among stakeholders was essential in strengthening VCT services in Zambia. It was important to include all stakeholders: the national government, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, the private sector, U.N. agencies, and international donor agencies. A process that relies on partnerships and collaboration has strengthened VCT services by—

• Identifying key stakeholders and mapping roles in providing or supporting VCT services
• Identifying key gaps and implications in process and services
• Allowing stakeholders to build on their strengths
• Identifying opportunities for harmonizing and streamlining roles and approaches
• Enabling stakeholders to plan for collaborative action

Next Steps

1. Pilot the extended VCT information system for use in PMTCT activities
2. Modify the software package to cover new requirements
3. Integrate information management systems for all HIV/AIDS programs, especially antiretroviral therapy pharmaceutical and laboratory services
4. Ultimately, integrate the VCT/PMTCT system into the Zambian national health management information system, to ensure its sustainability

For more information

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Central Board of Health/Zambia

Zambia Ministry of Health

Zambia Voluntary Counseling and Testing Services

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The Zambian Ministry of Health and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) have worked collaboratively to integrate the provision of antiretroviral treatment for opportunistic infections and selected preventive services within the public health service system. As a result of this activity, clinics across the country have been able to provide a broader range of services to people living with AIDS, improving patient outcomes and saving lives.