

## Maternal Health and Maternity Services in the Context of the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Kisumu, Kenya

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**Project Description:** We conducted a pilot study in Kisumu, Kenya to explore: 1) how concerns related to HIV/AIDS affect uptake of maternity services and 2) the effects of HIV/AIDS on maternity workers, obstetric practices, and the quality of care. In-depth interviews with 17 health workers, 14 pregnant or postpartum women, 4 male partners, and 2 traditional birth attendants, as well as structured observations of 22 births, were conducted at four health facilities. The study was a collaboration among researchers at the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI), the Kisumu City Council, and UCSF.

**Significance:** In sub-Saharan Africa, women carry the greater burden of HIV infection and AIDS, with women comprising approximately 60% of adults living with HIV. In addition, African women suffer from alarmingly high levels of unsafe pregnancy and childbirth. Basic maternity services—including antenatal care (ANC), skilled delivery attendance and postpartum care—are key interventions for improving maternal health for all women, and are especially important for HIV+ women, who may be at greater risk for maternal and infant complications. Although policies exist to promote safe motherhood in sub-Saharan Africa, the available evidence indicates that maternal health has not improved, and may be deteriorating in some countries. We hypothesized that the adverse effects of HIV/AIDS on maternity services may contribute to poor maternal health. Little previous research has examined how HIV/AIDS is affecting the use and provision of essential maternal health services in high HIV prevalence areas.

**Interesting Findings:** Results suggest that considerations related to HIV/AIDS adversely affect both uptake and provision of maternity services in Kisumu. Participants reported that fears of HIV testing, involuntary disclosure of HIV status to others including spouses, and HIV/AIDS stigma are among the reasons that women avoid delivering in health facilities. HIV/AIDS also negatively affects service provision, including deaths and illness of maternity workers, increased workloads, discriminatory practices based on HIV status, and difficulties dealing with disclosure. On the positive side, health workers have received training and infection control has improved.

**Project End Date:** June 2007