Scaling up Access to Misoprostol at the Community Level to Improve Maternal Health Outcomes in Ethiopia, Ghana, and Nigeria

Findings from an Evaluation of Different Models

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Review of Models

Nigeria:
- Community systems for education and advance distribution of misoprostol
- Involvement of TBAs and community leaders

Ethiopia:
- Lay youth mentors and CHEWs worked together to raise awareness
- Misoprostol brought to women during home deliveries

Ghana:
- Lay workers did home outreach and education
- Advance provision of misoprostol by midwives during ante natal care visits
Misoprostol for PPH at the community level

- Practical approach to a real problem
- Recognizes that many women still give birth at home
- Successfully moves beyond conventional medical paradigm
- Important “safety net” on the continuum of care
Challenge: Mistrust of women

- Reluctance to give to women in advance
- Doubt that women can safely store and use drug
- Fear that women would use for abortion

*I support giving women the tablets because things do not go as planned, they go God’s way.*

- *Ethiopian Woman*
Challenge: Involving lay workers

- Both an obstacle and an opportunity
- Mistrust between levels of providers
- Concern about use for labor induction
Challenge: Product issues

- Packaging
- Consistent supply
- Product quality
Key elements of success

- Advance distribution
- Incorporating into existing systems
- Involving and educating lay providers
- Champions
Recommendations: Framing

- Misoprostol as “safety net” in Continuum of Care
- Move from a health framework to a rights-based framework to generate demand for community-based access to the drug
- Advance distribution of misoprostol as a harm-reduction strategy
Recommendations: Policy

- Secure WHO endorsement for advance distribution
- Allow trained lower level health and lay workers to educate about and distribute misoprostol
- Allow greater access to and marketing of misoprostol for postpartum hemorrhage through the private sector (including through patent medicine vendors)
Recommendations: Product

- Include misoprostol in national drug supply chain with mechanisms for access at the community and facility levels
- Consider single-dose product to facilitate advance distribution and correct use
- Continue efforts to ensure product quality
A drug as important as miso should be accessible by all and not just in specific communities. We want scale up now because the drug saves lives.

―Queen Mother, Amansie West District