

ARC East, Central, and Southern Africa Learning Session

Improving the performance of nurses and midwives providing PMTCT, Option B+ and pediatric ART

Kigali, Rwanda
21-23 March 2017

Organized by: Emory University School of Nursing, the Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation, the East, Central and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC), and the ARC Secretariat based in Nairobi, Kenya, with support from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

CONCEPT NOTE

The African Health Professions Regional Collaborative for nurses and midwives (ARC) is an innovative, cross-country initiative, in which national nursing and midwifery leadership teams in the East, Central, and Southern Africa regions work together to improve access to HIV prevention, care and treatment.

ARC operates with the objective of improving the performance of nurses and midwives providing ART services at high volume sites in 15 countries. ARC has worked in East and Southern Africa since 2011. Bringing together nursing and midwifery leadership teams from each country has two aims:

- first, to help break down silos between professional institutions within country and thus empower national level leadership to come together to own and lead improvements to nursing and midwifery in their countries; and
- second, to allow for regional dialogue and technical exchange to help advance context-appropriate and harmonized approaches to nursing and midwifery in the region.

ARC facilitates two regional collaboratives, which are designed to equip national nursing leaders to identify and address critical programmatic gaps and areas for quality improvement in HIV treatment for pregnant women, and children:

- **ARC EAST:** A 15 country nursing collaborative in East, Central and Southern Africa
- **ARC West:** A 3 country nursing collaborative in (Francophone) West and Central Africa

Each country is represented by a national leadership team comprised of representatives from the pillars of nursing and midwifery in their countries, including:

- The Chief Nursing Officer of the Ministry of Health,
- The Registrar of the Nursing and Midwifery Council,
- The President of the National Nursing and Midwifery Professional Association, and
- A senior representative of the nursing and midwifery academic sector.

The approach is adapted from the evidence-based Institute for Healthcare Improvement ‘Breakthrough Series’ model of quality improvement collaboratives. The quality improvement collaborative model utilizes:

- Annual summative congress of all eligible countries;
- Grants of \$5,000 to conduct assessments of the capacity of 1-3 high volume clinical facilities to provide high quality HIV care;
- Grants of \$15,000 for year-long projects that are targeted to improve nurse and/or midwife delivered HIV services at the assessed facilities;
- Two regional multi-country learning sessions during the project year;
- Impact evaluation; and
- Assistance in the dissemination of project results.

The learning sessions provide a platform for technical presentations by experts, for sharing clinical tools, presenting updates on the progress of the funded improvement projects, experiences, and challenges between country teams. The ARC faculty of health and development professionals provides mentorship and support throughout the course of the countries’ year-long projects.

ARC launched its quality improvement focus in February 2016 at the ARC Summative Congress in Johannesburg, South Africa. In September 2016, ARC East countries completed facility assessments to inform project proposals. ARC then awarded project grants to 11 countries to undertake quality improvement projects, ranging from establishing quality assurance protocols to formalizing clinical mentorship programs, and improving provider interactions for pregnant women and adolescents.

The 2nd ARC EAST Learning Session will be held in Kigali, Rwanda, March 21-23, 2017.

The specific objectives for the Learning Session are:

- Provide a regional learning forum to build expertise to sustainably strengthen health system support structures for quality nursing practice in HIV care.
- Strengthen the ability of nursing and midwifery leaders to successfully implement, monitor and evaluate national quality improvement projects.
- Convene country teams to strengthen leadership capacity in project management, monitoring and evaluation, and effective communication.
- Foster collaboration, promote networking, and disseminate tools between nursing and midwifery leaders within each country and across the region.
- Provide a forum for nursing and midwifery leaders to engage meaningfully with technical advisors in health policy and clinical practice to improve the performance of HIV service delivery.

The Learning Session will include presentations on: 1) key results and progress updates from grantee projects; 2) skill-building on project monitoring and evaluation, including the refinement of project indicators; 3) PEPFAR and WHO policy updates; and 4) a panel on HIV implications for adolescent girls and young women. The learning session will also allow time for country breakout sessions to refine project monitoring and evaluation plans and integrate learnings from the expert panels.

The learning session is intended to be interactive and allow for ample exchange and group work. Since 2011, the ARC model has resulted in tangible regulatory improvements that license nurses to provide HIV care; the development of cohesive in-country and regional nursing and midwifery leadership networks; and purposeful expansion of practice for nurses and midwives, leading to the more effective provision of HIV care and treatment.

For more information on the Mach 2017 Learning Session, please contact Muadi Mukenge, ARC Project Director, Emory University, at muadi.mukenge@emory.edu. You can also read summaries of ARC East funded projects on the ARC website: <http://africanregulatorycollaborative.com/>.