

# Community engagement: A tool to increasing utilisation of HIV services

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## Health Systems Trust Conference 2016

### Background

Department of Health accreditation is necessary before a facility may initiate clients on antiretroviral (ARV) treatment.

Mabuela Clinic only started initiating HIV-positive clients on ARVs following its accreditation on 3 December 2014.

Prior to this date, the clinic's HIV testing rate was poor, as clients who tested HIV-positive were referred to the nearest accredited clinic for inclusion into its pre-ART wellness programme or for initiation onto ARVs.

Prior to accreditation, the clinic only issued ARVs to clients down-referred from the hospital or nearest accredited clinic.

### Aim

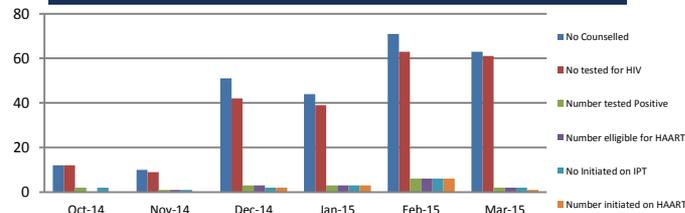
To strengthen HIV testing, nurse-initiated counselling and testing, and management of ARVs at Mabuela Clinic

### Methodology

In this quality improvement project, HIV counselling and testing (HCT) registers and the TIER.Net database were audited to identify factors contributing to low HCT uptake.

In addition, community and stakeholder engagements were conducted in December 2014, with support from HST mentors, to discuss how HIV services are delivered in the facilities and to identify gaps requiring improvement.

### Results



The results illustrate Mabuela Clinic's marked rise in the delivery of HCT services and initiation of HIV-positive clients onto ARV treatment following accreditation in early December 2014, together with community and stakeholder engagements in the catchment area.

### Lessons learnt

Maintenance of the increased rate of HCT requires that HIV testing kits are ordered on a timely basis. If stock-outs occur, the facility manager should initiate a short-term solution by borrowing kits from nearby clinics.

Both approaches will promote access to HIV care and treatment.

### Conclusion and recommendations

While recorded performance was enhanced following accreditation of the facility in question (partly due to the facility treating its own patients) HCT and initiation onto ARV treatment rates also responded positively to stakeholder and community engagement on the issue. Experience on the ground suggests that stakeholder and community engagement holds potential for addressing gaps in many cases where uptake of a health services is low.

### Acknowledgements

- Department of Health – Waterberg District
- Department of Health facility staff, Mabuela Clinic
- Health Systems Trust – SA SURE Project team
- Red Cross