

Enabling healthcare

Mentor Mothers for pregnant women and children in South Africa



Source: One to One Children's Fund

Highlights from the past year

- 34 Mentor Mothers providing care
- 2,274 pregnant and postnatal women supported, with 374 new clients
- 2,275 under-5 children supported

Ending preventable deaths

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include a target of ending preventable child and maternal deaths by 2030. Bringing primary healthcare to the poorest and most vulnerable populations is key to ending these unnecessary deaths. And community health worker (CHW) programs are one of the most valuable tools to achieve this.

One to One Children's Fund's Enable program in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa is lowering the under-5 mortality rate with paid CHWs, or Mentor Mothers. Mentor Mothers are recruited from the community and trained to provide integrated, door-to-door health interventions and referrals. One to One is using this model to show the Government of South Africa's Department of Health (DoH) how equipping and properly training CHWs can lower

mortality and improve the health of women and children – with the goal of replication and scale up across South Africa.

Supporting woman and children

Phase I of the Enable project piloted the Mentor Mother model with lay community women providing door-to-door maternal and child health services in the OR Tambo district. Phase II expanded this pilot to implement the model with government CHWs. Launched in July 2022, Phase III is deepening the existing work with Mentor Mothers and DoH CHWs by training them to provide maternal and child health services while expanding interventions to address critical gaps identified.

Thanks to your support, Phase II achieved or exceeded seven out of ten key performance indicators (KPIs), with over 99 percent of pregnant women in the catchment area receiving services. In Phase III, Mentor Mothers and CHWs continue to provide a range of preventive, promotive and curative health interventions. The program has expanded into five new villages bringing the total villages in the Enable catchment area to 31. All pregnant women in the catchment area are receiving Enable support services that ensure they attend antenatal care appointments, know their HIV status and adhere to treatment if positive, exclusively breastfeed for at least six months, and access timely medical attention where necessary along with their children under 5 years old.

What's been achieved so far?

- 34 Mentor Mothers trained and providing care to pregnant women and new mothers
- 27 DoH CHWs trained in the Mentor Mother methodology
- 2,274 women and 2,275 children served by the program
- 58% of pregnant women attended at least four antenatal care appointments, below the target of 65%
- 98% of pregnant or new mothers know their HIV status, exceeding the target of 95%
- 94% of HIV-positive pregnant women and new mothers adhering to antiretroviral therapy, exceeding the 90% target
- 91% of babies born to HIV-positive mothers receiving PCR testing, exceeding the 90% target
- 15% of women exclusively breastfeeding for at least six months, hitting the target
- 83% of babies born with low birth weight rehabilitated, exceeding the 60% target
- 80% of children underweight for their age rehabilitated, falling short of the 90% target
- 89% of under-6 children have a full immunization record, exceeding the 77% target
- Only 2% of pregnant women and new mothers scoring >8 on the PHQ-9 screening for depression

What's planned for the coming months?

- Accelerate nutrition support with food gardens, nutrition counseling and food parcels for vulnerable families
- Provide sexual and reproductive health services as well as psychosocial support for adolescents and young people in catchment areas, including the establishment of Youth Advisory Councils and a Career Expo day to guide school-leaving adolescents
- Launch the Mentor Brothers intervention to equip, empower and transform male partners to actively protect, promote and support the health and well-being of themselves, their partners and their children
- Implement strategic partnership engagement strategy to move from ad hoc engagement to a more focused and intentional approach with the Provincial Liaison Manager identifying, engaging and maintaining relationships with partners in various DoH units to make sure they stay updated on the Enable work and impact



Marissa Leffler,
Health Program Director

UBS Optimus Foundation outlook

Phase III of the Enable program has commenced with the launch of additional important interventions to deepen impact in the households supported by One to One. The Enable Play Learning intervention provides early childhood development support to caregivers and children between 2 and 5 years old. The Male Engagement (Mentor Brothers) intervention focuses on the critical role of men in their family's health and their children's growth and development, addressing the gender and other social norms that contribute to poor health outcomes.

The DoH is the key programmatic partner for providing community health services and the path to scale through government adoption remains a key aim. Many DoH CHWs have received training from One to One. But the vast distances and large coverage areas per CHW as demarcated by the DoH have made it challenging for CHWs to reach all areas. One to One therefore collaborated with the DoH to establish an outreach plan to provide transport and extra human resources for monthly home visits for these villages. This will enable CHWs to enroll new women and children in need of health services, including referrals and nutrition rehabilitation.

To further strengthen its partnership with the DoH, One to One is prioritizing strategic engagement with the different units – Maternal & Child Health, HAST (HIV/AIDS, STI & TB), Adolescent Health and Nutrition – within the DoH at sub-district, district and provincial levels. This engagement aims to ensure alignment of program activities with DoH's priorities and create collaborative responses to various health issues.

All programmatic data provided by One to One Children's Fund. The UBS Optimus Foundation is a grant-making foundation that offers UBS clients a platform to use their wealth to drive positive social and environmental change. The Foundation selects programs that improve children's health, education and protection, ones that have the potential to be transformative, scalable and sustainable as well as programs tackling environmental and climate issues.

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