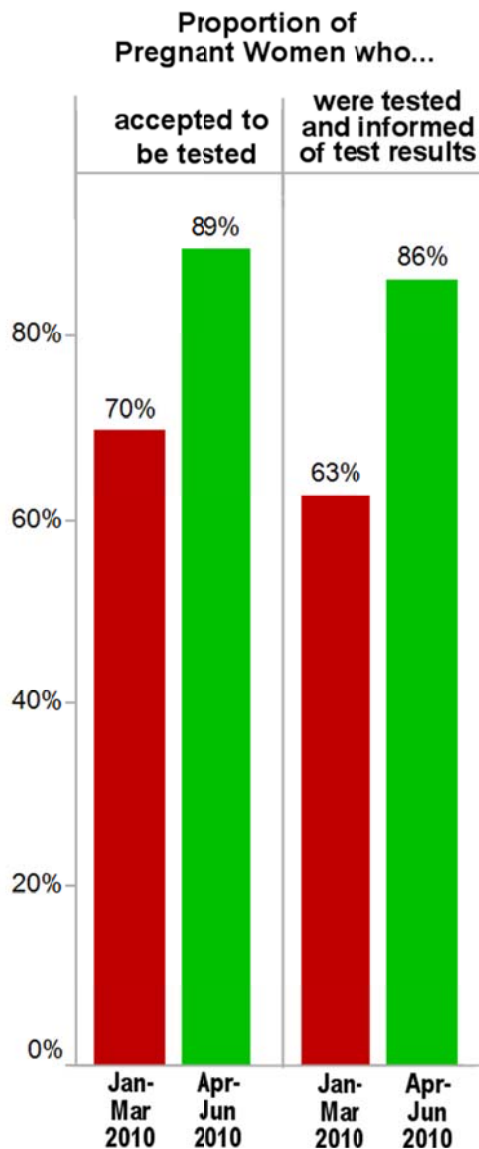




SUCCESS STORY

Improving Compliance for PMTCT Testing



Note: Calculations based on 92% reporting completeness

More than 100,000 pregnant women receive HIV counseling each year at PMTCT sites supported by Project AXxes. The services include HIV counseling and testing, and for those who are positive, the provision of free treatment. It was noted that up to 30% of pregnant women deferred that potentially life-saving testing and treatment. We asked ourselves why?

It is known that some women refuse testing due because of fear of needles, stigmatization, and inconvenience. However, those factors would be expected to occur across all PMTCT sites. PMTCT supervisors noted that 21 of 130 clinics had acceptance rates for treatment of 97% or greater while 23 clinics had rates 55% or lower. Was the problem site-specific?

To study this problem, and more importantly to improve compliance in the lower performing sites, Project AXxes undertook a comparative study of the ‘top twenty’ and ‘bottom twenty’ sites to investigate factors related to compliance with testing and treatment.

Three variables were found to have a strong positive influence on compliance: 1) Existence of a private counseling area; 2) HIV testing done as a routine ‘opt out’ procedure; and 3) HIV testing available during all clinic days.

These findings suggested that improvements in confidential counseling, opt-out testing, and offering of testing outside of PMTCT clinic days might significantly improve uptake of PMTCT services in low performing sites. During the past three months PMTCT coordinators gave special attention to the lower performing sites to ensure that all three factors were applied.

The results show significant improvement in uptake of services. In the past quarter changes in the cohort of twenty low performing sites increased the proportion of women who accepted testing from 70% to 89%, and those who received counseling, testing and results from 63% to 86% (see chart at left).

Thanks to this very practical research agenda, and the prompt application of research findings, more than 700 additional pregnant women were tested and received tests results during the past three months at AXxes-assisted PMTCT sites.