Impact of Efficiencies in Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision Services

Rationale for the Studies
As little precedent exists for delivering a surgical intervention for public health impact at as large a scale as voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC), adoption of practices designed to improve surgical efficiency in the operating room is a key element of achieving performance targets. However, it is important to document whether these efficiencies compromise quality when programs expand quickly during scale-up. Three studies examined efficiencies in relation to primary providers’ time spent with clients and total elapsed operating times. In addition, the studies explored provider perceptions of efficiencies and VMMC scale-up, with relation to burnout and job fulfillment.

These studies were organized as part of the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through USAID Research to Prevention’s Systematic Monitoring of the Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision Scale-up (SYMMACS), which was designed to assess VMMC scale-up in four priority countries: Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe, with two rounds of data collection (in 2011 and 2012).

Key Findings
- In countries where task-shifting is not authorized, there was some evidence of task-sharing reducing total elapsed operating time.
- Quality of surgical technique was not significantly related to operating time, except in one country, where higher quality was associated with shorter operating time.
- Providers expressed some frustration that certain efficiencies were not provided for in national policies (e.g., task-shifting in South Africa and Zimbabwe).
- Many providers reported work fatigue and burnout among themselves and their colleagues. Burnout was highest in Kenya, the country with the longest-running VMMC program.

Implications for the Future
While the high degree of concordance between country policies and provider attitudes bodes well for compliance, it will be important to consult providers and open a dialogue to ensure greater understanding of the rationale underlying certain policies to ensure effective implementation of VMMC efficiency elements.