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## BACKGROUND

- Approximately 9,000 children are infected with HIV in Zimbabwe annually, 90% from mother to child transmission of HIV.[1]
- Zimbabwe Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) program advocates for male partner attendance and HIV testing and counselling in antenatal care settings (ANC). [2]
- In 2013, fewer than 15% of male partners HIV tested with pregnant women in ANC settings in Mutare District, well below the national target of 20% in 2013.[3]
- Men's Health Days (MHDs) initiative was developed collaboratively with Ministry of Health and Child Care and community stakeholders as a strategy to mobilize male partner participation in PMTCT and increase uptake of HIV testing among male partners of women in ANC.

## OBJECTIVE

- To assess changes in male partner HIV testing and counselling in ANC settings at health sites in Mutare district following implementation of "Men's Health Days".

## METHODS

- Held at health sites in Mutare District, Men's Health Days activities were one day events, divided into three sessions:
  1. **Community dialogue on maternal and child health:** led by midwives to discuss pregnancy, child birth and PMTCT and the role of men.
  2. **Men's health needs:** discussion primarily focussing on men's perceptions on family health issues.
  3. **Provision of free HIV testing and counselling (HTC):** doctor's consultations and health planning for men in the community.
- We used routinely collected quantitative and qualitative data from MHD activities and health facility registers to evaluate reach, HTC outcomes and important findings from dialogue sessions with men.

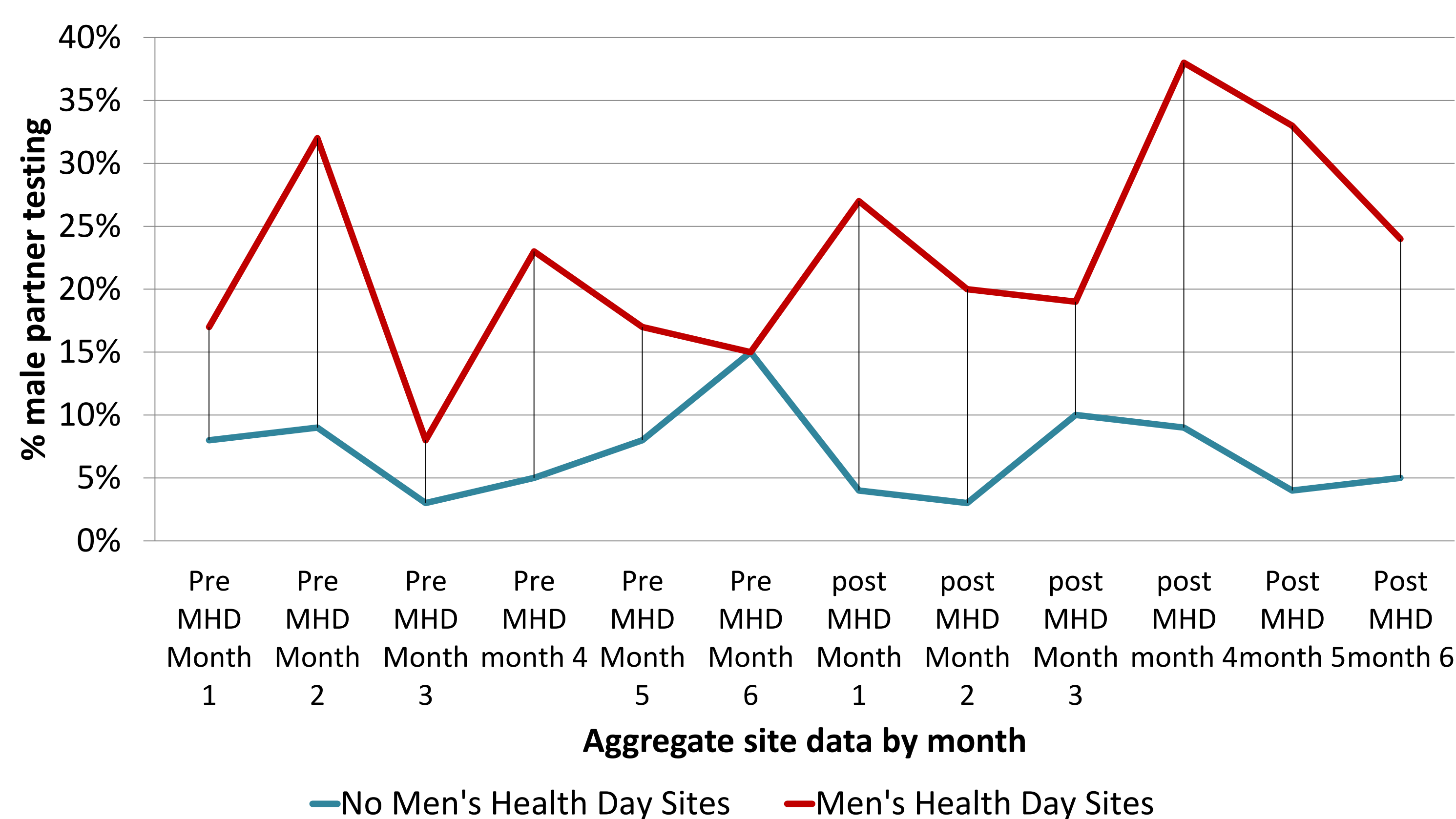
## RESULTS

- In October 2013, MHDs reached 1,539 men at 8 clinics.

### HIV Testing and Counselling

- The total number of men (N=402) received HTC at MHDs, approximated the number of male partners accessing HTC services District-wide in the previous quarter (n= 311).
- 17 men (4%) tested positive and were provided confidential post-test counselling by clinic nurses to ensure immediate linkage to care and treatment.
- Clinics where MHDs were conducted experienced a sustained increase in the proportion of male partner testing in ANC after the intervention compared to control sites that recorded a decline, relative change of +37% and -26%, respectively (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Proportion of male partners HIV testing in ANC



## RESULTS continued

### Community dialogue sessions

- Community dialogues provided an opportunity to educate and correct myths and misconceptions among men about contraception, pregnancy, child birth in the context of HIV (Figure 2; Box 1.0).
- The MHDs provided a platform for peer to peer discussions where men shared their experiences to motivate men to support their partner's uptake of maternal and child health services in the context of HIV.

Figure 2. Health Care Worker leading community dialogue on PMTCT, maternal and child health



### Box 1.0 Voices of Men at MHDs

*"We didn't realize how important it was for us to be there when women are HIV tested".*

*"... for the first time in my life I have learned how medical family planning methods are used. I was very suspicious because I thought they were meant to stop my wife from having children. I refused my wife jadelle insertion because I didn't understand that one can take it out whenever they are ready to have another child".*

### Recommendations by men for increasing male involvement

- Men suggested more family-centered approaches to health service provision, such as weekend HTC for couples when men are not working.
- One participating clinic has subsequently institutionalized weekend HIV testing for men.

## CONCLUSIONS

- High attendance at Men's Health Days demonstrated men's interest in better understanding, participating, and accessing health services in their communities.
- Clinic-based Men's Health Days are an effective strategy for reaching men for HIV prevention, treatment and care services.
- Increases in male partner HIV testing with pregnant wives in ANC following MHDs reflects the potential of this strategy to increase male engagement in PMTCT.
- Capacity building of community-based initiatives to support male involvement should be pursued in conjunction with MHDs for sustained, community-led male engagement in MNCH and PMTCT.
- Future research should explore long-term impact on service utilisation and health outcomes among women, men and infants in communities where Men's Health Days are held.

## REFERENCES

1. MOHCC. Zimbabwe National HIV AND AIDS Estimates 2013. Harare. Ministry of Health and Child Care [Zimbabwe]. 2014
2. UNAIDS. Global Plan Towards the Elimination of New HIV infections among Children by 2015 and Keeping their Mothers Alive 2011-2015. 2011
3. Zimbabwe Ministry of Health and Child Care. eMTCT Stock Taking Report 2013. Harare. MOHCC. 2014.