

A Technical Guide to Implementing a Continuous Quality Improvement Approach to Strengthen Infection Prevention and Control Programs at Health Facilities in MTaPS Program Countries

Background

Health care-associated infections (HAI) are a global patient safety problem resulting in prolonged hospital stays, the development and spread of antimicrobial resistance, and an increased financial burden on health systems and patients. A patient is at risk of acquiring an infection in a health facility in any country, but the risk is particularly high in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). These countries typically have underfunded health systems and weak infection control measures, including a lack of infection prevention and control (IPC) products and poor hand hygiene practices. HAI surveillance requires resources and expertise that are not always available in LMIC health facilities, making it difficult to know and address the true burden of HAIs. A meta-analysis published in *The Lancet*¹ suggests that the prevalence of HAIs in LMICs (pooled) was approximately 15.5 per 100 patients, which is at least three times higher than the prevalence in high-income countries.

World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines and publications² establish a strong correlation between a country's IPC practices and its HAI rate. A comprehensive IPC study conducted in Uganda with MTaPS' assistance also established a correlation between facilities' IPC performance, as evaluated through the Infection Prevention and Control Assessment Framework (IPCAF), Hand Hygiene Self-Assessment Framework (HHSAF), and the HAI point prevalence survey; for example, three regional referral hospitals scoring "basic" in HHSAF and "inadequate" in hand hygiene compliance studies showed HAI prevalence of 26.2%, 16.4%, and 15.4%.

Reliable data from comprehensive studies, like those done with MTaPS' assistance in Uganda, Cameroon, and Senegal, that use standardized assessment tools such as IPCAF³, HHSAF⁴, the hand hygiene observation form, and a modified Centers for Disease Control and Prevention HAI surveillance tool, will inform the development of IPC improvement plans by hospital infection control committees (ICCs).

¹ Burden of endemic health-care-associated infection in developing countries: systematic review and meta-analysis. *Lancet* 2011; 377: 228–41. [https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736\(12\)00396-1458-4](https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736(12)00396-1458-4)

² https://www.who.int/gpsc/tools/fags/evidence_hand_hygiene/en/

³ <https://www.who.int/infection-prevention/tools/core-components/IPCAF-facility.PDF>
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