Using Programmatic Data to Assess Pediatric Service Coverage and HIV Treatment Cascades in Western Region, Ghana

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Background

In 2019, 2,972 (15%) of new 20,068 HIV infections in Ghana were in children under the age of 15. Of the estimated 13,616 annual deaths, 2,441 (18%) were children. Identifying and implementing patient-centered care and treatment approaches for infants and young children living with HIV is critical to epidemic control.

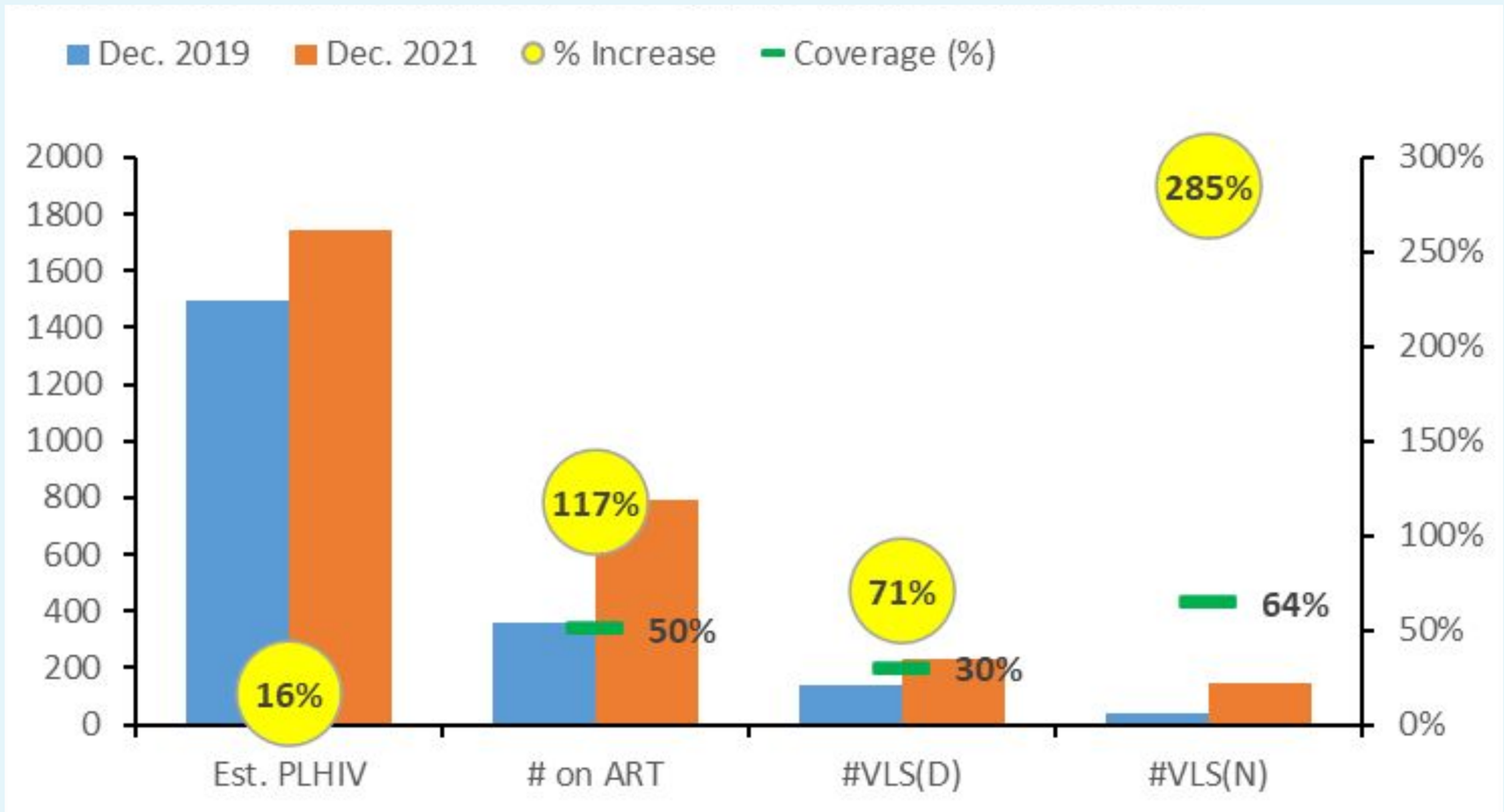
Response

The USAID Strengthening the Care Continuum project, implemented by JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc., reviewed program data of pediatric patients on ART from January 2019 to December 2021. This included those tested for HIV, positivity rates, and linkage to treatment; ART facilities and those offering pediatric services; patients who received viral load results; and those suppressed and unsuppressed.

Results

Service use in 58 of 76 ART sites (76%) were assessed along with pediatric HIV tests of 8,539 females and 7,601 males. Service data were triangulated with the sub-national estimate results for December 2019 and December 2021. The results show an overall improvement in HIV service uptake for pediatric clients, even though the estimated children with HIV rate increased by 16%. Pediatric ART uptake, at 117%, more than doubled, while uptake for viral load testing increased by 71%.

Increased Pediatric HIV Service Uptake in Western Region



Conclusion

The results showed coverage of essential interventions remains low, despite the improvement in uptake of pediatric HIV services. Pediatric ART coverage was 50% and viral load testing was 30%. This can delay treatment for pediatric HIV clients. One way antenatal care units can remedy this is by forwarding client folders when mothers transition to reproductive and child health services.