



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SIAPS Helping to Save Newborn Lives in the DRC

Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), November 15, 2013 --- US Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Systems for Improved Access to Pharmaceuticals and Services (SIAPS) is helping the Government of the DRC save newborn lives. By using a common antiseptic, 7.1 percent Chlorhexidine (CHX) for cleaning a baby's newly cut umbilical cord, infant mortality rates can be significantly reduced in countries with poor hygiene practices.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), neonatal deaths account for 40 percent of the under-five mortality rate. In resource-poor countries, infections account for over half of all neonatal deaths. A baby's newly cut umbilical cord provides an easy entryway for bacteria, which can lead to cord infection and potentially life-threatening sepsis. By applying CHX to the baby's cord, the risk of infection is significantly decreased.

The DRC has an infant mortality rate of 112 per 1000 live births. SIAPS is providing critically needed assistance to the Government of the DRC in developing an action plan to support UN recommendations for access to lifesaving medical products, such as CHX.

In August 2013, SIAPS partnered with the DRC's Ministry of Health to bring together policy makers, health services providers and donors to develop a national strategy for the introduction, training and use of CHX for umbilical cord care. After two days of consultation, a consensus was reached on putting into place a gradual scaling up of using CHX for facility and home births.

USAID-funded SIAPS helps countries improve access to health products and services by adopting sound pharmaceutical policies and implementing effective regulatory, financing and pharmaceutical quality and safety initiatives.

For more information about the stakeholder workshop, please visit our website at www.siapsprogram.org.



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