The estimated number of HIV positive pregnant women across the region needing PMTCT has decreased from 9000 in 2010 to 8400 in 2016. The Elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis in the Americas. Update 2016 report produced by PAHO showed that HIV testing among pregnant women increased from 58% (2010) to 78% (2015). Treatment coverage has increased by 64% between 2010-2016, rising from 45% to 74% respectively. This increase is impressive, demonstrating the political commitment and determination of the Caribbean to achieve the PMTCT elimination goal. Currently, PMTCT treatment coverage ranges from 35% to >95% (with 9 out of 10 at least 63%).

The first country in the world to eliminate mother to child transmission of HIV and Syphilis was Cuba in the Caribbean, on June 30th, 2015. On the 1st december 6 countries were validated for having eliminated MTCT of both HIV and Syphilis. Efforts across the region have greatly reduced the number of infants born to HIV positive women being infected. Several countries are on their way to being validated as eliminating MTCT of HIV. Considering the elimination of MTCT of HIV only, Jamaica has achieved a <2% transmission rate and Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago are close to achieving elimination with transmission rates between >2% and 5%.

The increase in effective early diagnosis and effective treatment has contributed to a significant increase in the estimated number of infant infections averted, from 2400 to 3400 between 2010 and 2016.
Pregnant women who received ARV for PMTCT

New HIV infections averted due to PMTCT

Progress towards elimination

Elimination of the mother-to-child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis in Antigua and Barbuda

The launch of the “Regional Initiative for the Elimination of the Vertical Transmission of HIV and Syphilis” by PAHO and UNICEF, in 2009 resulted in the development of a roadmap for the integration and decentralization of HIV/STI and TB in primary care, and the endorsed and approved the Plan of Action for the achievement of these eMTCT targets by Antigua and Barbuda:

1. Reduction of rate of mother-to-child transmission of HIV to 2% or less.
2. Reduction of incidence of mother-to-child transmission of HIV to 0.3 cases or less per 1,000 live births.
3. Reduction of incidence of congenital syphilis (including stillbirths) to 0.5 cases or less per 1,000 live births.

Antigua and Barbuda has achieved those targets via the utilization of sustainable primary services.

Antigua and Barbuda has also adopted early infant diagnosis as a national policy, the country reported that all the infants exposed to HIV received a virological test within two months of birth in 2014-2015, and has joined Canada, Cuba, Puerto Rico, USA and other 13 countries in the list of countries and territories that have achieved the elimination of MTCT of both HIV, and syphilis.

As we began the process I quickly realized that validation was never our main objective. Our main objective was simply to protect our pregnant women and their children. Commitment, diligence and dedication to our patients were the values and principles that guided us in achieving that objective. Validation is what I have termed the icing on the cake and a wonderful reward for all our efforts.

As Chief Medical Officer I am honored to have led such a devoted and hardworking team on this journey. I look forward to building and improving the relationships that the process has fostered. I envisage even greater achievements as we continue to improve the lives of citizens and residents of Antigua and Barbuda”.

Dr. Rhonda Sealey-Thomas, Chief Medical Officer, Ministry of Health