



# Taiwan Medical Mission in the Republic of Somaliland

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# Saving My Mother, One Screening at a Time —A WHO Cervical Cancer Elimination Day of Action in Somaliland (2023/11/17)

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## 1 Introduction

The Cervical Cancer Elimination Day of Action is an annual event that takes place on November 17th. It marks the anniversary of the launch of the "Global Strategy to Accelerate the Elimination of Cervical Cancer" as a public health problem by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Cervical cancer is a preventable and curable disease, yet it remains the 4th most common form of cancer among women worldwide. In May 2018, the WHO Director-General announced a global call for action to eliminate cervical cancer[6], underscoring renewed political will to make elimination a reality and calling for all stakeholders to unite behind this common goal. In August 2020, the World Health Assembly adopted the Global Strategy for cervical cancer elimination. Now is the time to act to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem. The Taiwan Medical Mission proposes a medical campaign called "WHO Cervical Cancer Elimination Day of Action"[7] to be held at Hargeisa Group Hospital on November 17th, 2023. Our hashtags are #GlowTeal and #CervicalCancer.

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common transmitted infection that can cause cervical cancer in women. HPV infection often has no symptoms, so many people may not know they have it. There are many different types of HPV, some of which can cause cancer.

Cervical cancer screening can help detect abnormal cells in the cervix before they develop into cancer. The two main types of cervical cancer screening tests are the Pap test and the HPV DNA test. During a Pap test, a sample of cells is collected from the cervix and examined by cytologist for abnormalities. During a Pap test, a sample of cells from the cervix is obtained and analyzed for abnormalities by a cytologist. An HPV DNA test can identify high-risk HPV varieties that are most likely to cause cervical cancer. These tests are advised for women aged 30 to 49.[2, 8].

If abnormal cells are detected during cervical cancer screening, further testing and treatment may be necessary. Treatment options for pre-cancerous lesions include cryosurgery, laser surgery, surgical removal, loop electrosurgical excision procedure (LEEP), and cold knife conization[1]. These treatments aim to remove abnormal cells before they develop into cancer.

We will propose using the "screen-triage-treat" approach via HPV DNA testing, which has been recognized by the WHO as the primary screening method for eliminating cervical cancer globally[8]. This project will enable the HPV self-sampling initiative, a widely used HPV testing method, to discover best practices in low-resource service delivery.

## 2 Objectives

The main objective of this project is to improve cervical cancer prevention and screening in Somaliland by implementing the 2021 WHO recommendation guideline, which includes HPV DNA testing. The project aims to achieve the following targets by 2030[6]:

- Vaccination: 90% of girls fully vaccinated with the HPV vaccine by the age of 15.
- Screening: 70% of women screened using a high-performance test, including HPV DNA test, by the age of 35, and again by the age of 45.
- Treatment: 90% of women with pre-cancer treated and 90% of women with invasive cancer managed.

## 3 Methods

The campaign will implement several strategies to improve cervical cancer prevention and screening in Somaliland:

- In-person communication and information material at Hargeisa Group Hospital (HGH): This can include brochures, posters, A5-sized notes from hospital information system (HIS) at OPD, and other informational materials that explain the importance of cervical cancer screening, how to get screened with both HPV DNA test and Pap smear, and the benefits of vaccination against HPV.
- Better recall through SMS (Telesom or Somtel) written in Somali languages: A system can be set up to send reminders to women through SMS. These reminders can include information about how to attend a screening, recall for further therapy in case with abnormal findings of HPV DNA test or Pap smear, and when their next screening is due.

- Incentives: People can be encouraged to attend screenings through free health checks, small gifts (like multivitamin tablets), recognition, or small rewards.
- Verbal communication through seminars and workshops: Seminars and workshops can be organized to educate women about their risk of cancer and the importance of screening.
- Screening approach
  - screen-treat method: Taking Pap smear, then follow or treat according to cytology result
  - screen-triage-treat (mobileODT)[5] at once: It offers a full turnkey diagnostic and treatment program utilizing the HPV DNA rapid test, the EVAPro digital colposcope and the ThermoGlide, for thermocoagulation treatment of precancerous lesions.

## 4 Sustainability

To ensure the sustainability of the project, several measures will be implemented:

- Collaboration with local organizations: Partnering with local organizations can help to ensure that the campaign is culturally sensitive and tailored to the needs of the local population.
- Training of healthcare professionals: Training healthcare professionals on the importance of cervical cancer screening and how to perform HPV DNA tests and Pap smears can help to ensure that women receive high-quality care.
- Regular follow-up: Regular follow-up with women who have attended screenings can help to ensure that they receive appropriate care if any abnormalities are detected.
- Data collection and analysis: Collecting data on the number of women who attend screenings, the results of their tests, and any follow-up care they receive can help to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign and identify areas for improvement.
- Funding: Securing long-term funding for the campaign from organizations such as WHO[6], Prevent Cancer Foundation[4], or European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO)[3] can help to ensure its sustainability.

## 5 Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes of this project include:

- Increased awareness about cervical cancer prevention among women in Somaliland.
- Improved participation in cervical cancer screening among women in Somaliland.
- Improved access to high-quality cervical cancer prevention services for women in Somaliland.

## 6 Conclusion

This project aims to improve cervical cancer prevention and screening in Somaliland by implementing evidence-based strategies that are tailored to the needs of the local population. By achieving its objectives, this campaign can contribute to eliminating cervical cancer as a public health problem in Somaliland.

## References

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