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**Maternal health in the context of HIV/AIDS â€“ the saliency of trust in improving access to and utilization of health services**

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In the WHO Africa region, Botswana’s maternal and child health service coverage is iconic of effective service delivery, yet some vital indicators thus far presents a paradoxical challenge. By 2013, WHO estimates of under-5 mortality and the maternal mortality ratio indicated that Botswana was on track to achieving its MDG 4 goal, but not its MDG 5 goal. This study explores some of the key impediments to improving maternal health in Botswana with a view to unravel this paradox. A two-step methodology was used for the study, 1) a review of 942 obstetric booklets and related hospital registers for births that occurred in the five year period between April 1st 2005 and March, 31st 2010, 2) in-depth interviews with 36 recently delivered women and 11 healthcare providers. The results of the study revealed a mismatch between women’s access to and utilization of health services. The results further revealed that variations in health service use among women could only be marginally explained by differences in women’s socio-demographic characteristics. Trust was found to be a very significant, yet downplayed (by healthcare workers) element influencing women’s access to and utilization of health services. This study demonstrates that even when women have adequate access to maternal health services, poor patient-provider relationships and therefore the breakdown of trust negatively affects their health service use.