

Self-Testing, Empowerment and Self-Care: perspectives from lessons learned in implementing HIV self-testing in West Africa

Joseph Larmarange on behalf of ATLAS Team AIDS 2022 · Self-testing symposium · 29 July 2022



The importance of peripheral populations in West Africa

- > Key Populations (FSW, MSM, PWUD) are overwhelmingly infected by HIV
- In Western & Central Africa (UNAIDS data 2021), new HIV infections in 2020:
 45% among KP and 27% among clients of FSW and sexual partners of KP
- Peripheral part of KP (e.g. occasional sex workers, hidden MSM...) are difficult to reach by peer educators and have less access to HIV testing

It is crucial to reach peripheral and vulnerable populations beyond key populations to achieve 95-95-95 targets





ATLAS project (2019-2022)

Funded by Unitaid (with additional funding of AFD) Coordinated by Solthis & IRD >1400 agents trained for distributing HIVST ~400 000 HIVST kits distributed 200 distribution sites







ATLAS self-testing distribution models

Primary distribution

for personal use



Secondary distribution

to be redistributed to partners and relatives





ATLAS Strategy for key populations



t VIH, Libre d'Accéder à la connaissance de son Statut

ÉNÉGAL - CÔTE D'IVOIRE - MAL

Secondary distribution is feasible for KP...

MSM, Mali (in-depth qualitative interview)

« J'ai tout le temps refusé de me faire piquer avec le dépistage classique, mais à cause de l'autotest, j'ai découvert que j'étais infecté… Ensuite j'ai fait le dépistage de ma fiancée avec, mais elle a eu un non réactif. »

"I have always refused to be pricked for conventional screening. Because of the self-test, I found out I was infected... Then I tested my fiancée [girlfriend] with it, but she got a non-reactive test."

FSW, Mali (in-depth qualitative interview)

« J'ai aussi un client chez qui je me rends (...) Je lui ai donné trois kits, parce qu'il m'a montré clairement qu'il a une autre partenaire, (...) donc il voulait que celle-là aussi fasse son dépistage avec l'autotest. »

"I also have a client who I go to in his flat [...] I gave him three [HIVST] kits, because he showed me clearly that he has another partner, so I told him that there is no problem, so he wanted that one to be tested with the self-test too."



More information: Odette Ky-Zerbo @ AFRAVIH 2022 https://youtu.be/kMpq2t-NfdA



... but it depends on the type of partner

MSM, Senegal (in-depth qualitative interview)

« Je proposerais bien l'autotest VIH à mon partenaire sexuel, parce que c'est quelqu'un avec qui j'entretiens une relation amoureuse. Mais le fait de le proposer à un partenaire occasionnel risquerait de poser problème. »

"I would offer the HIV self-test to my sexual partner, because he is someone I have a romantic relationship with. But offering it to a casual partner might be a problem."

- Secondary distribution is feasible with regular / life partners (MSM, FSW, PWUD) and regular clients (FSW)
- > Also feasible with **peers**
- However, it may be more difficult with
 casual partners and occasional clients
 - fear of negative reaction
 - > not enough time to discuss that topic
 - > risk of losing a client



More information: Ky-Zerbo et al., Apr. 2022, Women's health <u>https://doi.org/10.1177/17455057221092268</u>





More information @ AFRAVIH 2022 : https://joseph.larmarange.net/312 https://youtu.be/ACrzZhherkg

Arsène Kra Kouassi et al.,

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2615 participants

31% received HIVST from friend (17%), sexual partner (7%), relative (6%) or colleague (1%)

- 50% perceived themselves as not exposed at all to HIV risk >
- MSM-based channel: >
 - 9% of participants were female)
 - 45% of male participants did not report any male sexual partner > (suggesting that some "hidden MSM" may also be recruited)
- **FSW-based channel**: >
 - 48% of participants were male >



Profile of HIVST users

- Phone survey conducted between March & June 2021 >
- Survey flyers distributed with HIVST kits,) inviting people to call anonymously a toll-free phone number

> >



Complementary survey

- > Individuals with reactive test/2 lines called 3-6 months later
- > Linkage to confirmatory testing: 56%
 - > **BUT** large 95% confidence interval: 36% to 74% (small numbers)
- 65% of those who confirmed linked to a general health facility (all-public clinic vs dedicated community clinic)
- > All those confirmed HIV positive initiated ART
- Consistent with spontaneous feedbacks reported by partners



HIVST: an empowerment tool

WHEN

- users decide when, where to test and with whom to share the result
- > as emphasized in qualitative interviews

Systematic tracking

- logistically challenging through secondary distribution
- can hinder the secondary distribution, as primary contacts can be reluctant

Alternative approaches required to assess impacts







Mesure de l'impact populationnel de l'autodépistage du VIH par la triangulation de données programmatiques de routine : exemple du projet ATLAS en Côte d'Ivoire erts par ATLAS (**Figure c**), les kit VIH distribués via le PEPFAR son ette étude propose un moven de surmonter ce défi et utilise des de ATLAS SL ccès au dépistage du VIH. Le dépistage du VIH conve ionnel (c'est-à-dire autre qu AATÉRIELS ET MÉTH 12 94 91 92 92 93 l'effet net sur l'accès au dépistage est positif : pour 1 000 ADVIH distribués v DVIH (TU) de 80 % et 390 avec une hypothèse de 60 %. ostic du VIH était significatif et positif (+8). Pas d'effet obser 2 Entre T3 2019 et T1 2021, 99 353 kits d'ADVIH ont été distribués par ATLAS dans les 78 distr ionnel a diminué, passant a méthodologie utilisée ici pourrait être reproduite dans différen évaluation des programmes d'ADVIH, sans nécessité de systèmes de co 25 04 01 02 01 04 01 76 310 310 310 310 310 310 s réseaux ciblant les population clès et leurs proches et partenaires augme 'accès au dépistage du VIH et améliore le diagnost Solthis Unitaid RD fathat - Restante O AFD

@ AFRAVIH 2022
Arlette Simo Fotso et al.,
https://joseph.larmarange.net/312

Estimated impact at population level in Cl

- ATLAS dispensation data (Q3 2019 Q1 2021) triangulated with programmatic data from 79/118 health districts in CI
- > Mixed linear models adjusted by quarters and regions

For 1000 distributed HIVST:

- Light substitution effect
 (195 individuals performed a HIVST instead of a conventional test)
- > Significant increase on access to HIV testing (+589)
- > Significant increase of ne HIV diagnoses (+8)

Similar results in Senegal using national DHIS2 data, with significant positive impact on ART initiations



Preprint: Arlette Simo Fotso et al., MedRxiv, https://doi.org/10.1101/2022.02.08.22270670



To conclude...

HIV self-testing and secondary distribution are **feasible**, **appropriate**, and **adapted** among key populations in West Africa.

Our results show that HIV self-testing **is an opportunity to reach**, beyond key populations, **vulnerable groups who never tested before**.

HIV self-testing is an empowerment tool if we accept to **adapt the M&E paradigm** and to **trust users**





PARTNERS

Consortium いSolthis Solidarité Thérapeutique

t Initiatives pour la Santé

Funding



Technical partner

Vorld Health

Organization

Yale University





ENSEA

CRCF



Thanks to all study participants

