

CHALLENGES IN DISAGGREGATION AMONG KEY POPULATIONS IN MYANMAR: HIGH HIV POSITIVITY AMONG OTHER VULNERABLE POPULATIONS REACHED THROUGH DECENTRALIZED HIV TESTING AND COUNSELLING

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Background: Enhancing HIV testing and counseling (HTC) services for key populations is critical to reach 90-90-90 targets in the cascade of HIV services in Myanmar. In mid-2014, the Myanmar National AIDS Program decentralized HTC services, allowing trained NGO health care personnel to provide HTC at fixed sites (drop-in centers and clinics) and mobile/outreach settings.

Methods: With support from the Global Fund, NGOs funded by Save the Children Principal Recipient (SC-PR) tested people from key populations, including female sex workers (FSW), men who have sex with men (MSM), people who inject drugs (PWID), and people from other vulnerable populations (OVP). We aggregated the data reported by these NGOs and analyzed trends in the number of tests performed and the proportion of positive results by population subgroup.

Results: Between July 2014 and December 2015, NGOs tested 71,404 people from key populations (FSW, MSM, and PWID) and 68,642 OVP. There was a 112% increase in HTC uptake among targeted groups between the first half of 2014, before decentralization (25,814 tests), and the second half of 2015, the most recent reporting period (54,813 tests). After PWID (27.9% positive), OVP had the next highest positivity (8.0%) as compared with FSW (5.6%) and MSM (5.2%). Further disaggregation by location revealed high positivity at border and mining areas where migrants, miners, truck drivers and entertainment workers are found.

Conclusion: HTC decentralization demonstrably increased uptake of HTC among key populations and further decentralization will be important for Myanmar to meet its prevention and treatment targets. Moving forward, NGOs should experiment with innovative strategies to facilitate self-disclosure, including modification of counseling protocols and revision of traditional key population categories. In addition, it is critical to identify other specific populations--migrants, fishermen, miners, truck drivers, and entertainment workers--for tailoring better service delivery and program management.

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