

The AWAMU HIV Awareness Campaign: Training Peer Educator Champions to spread HIV prevention and awareness information among key populations in Uganda



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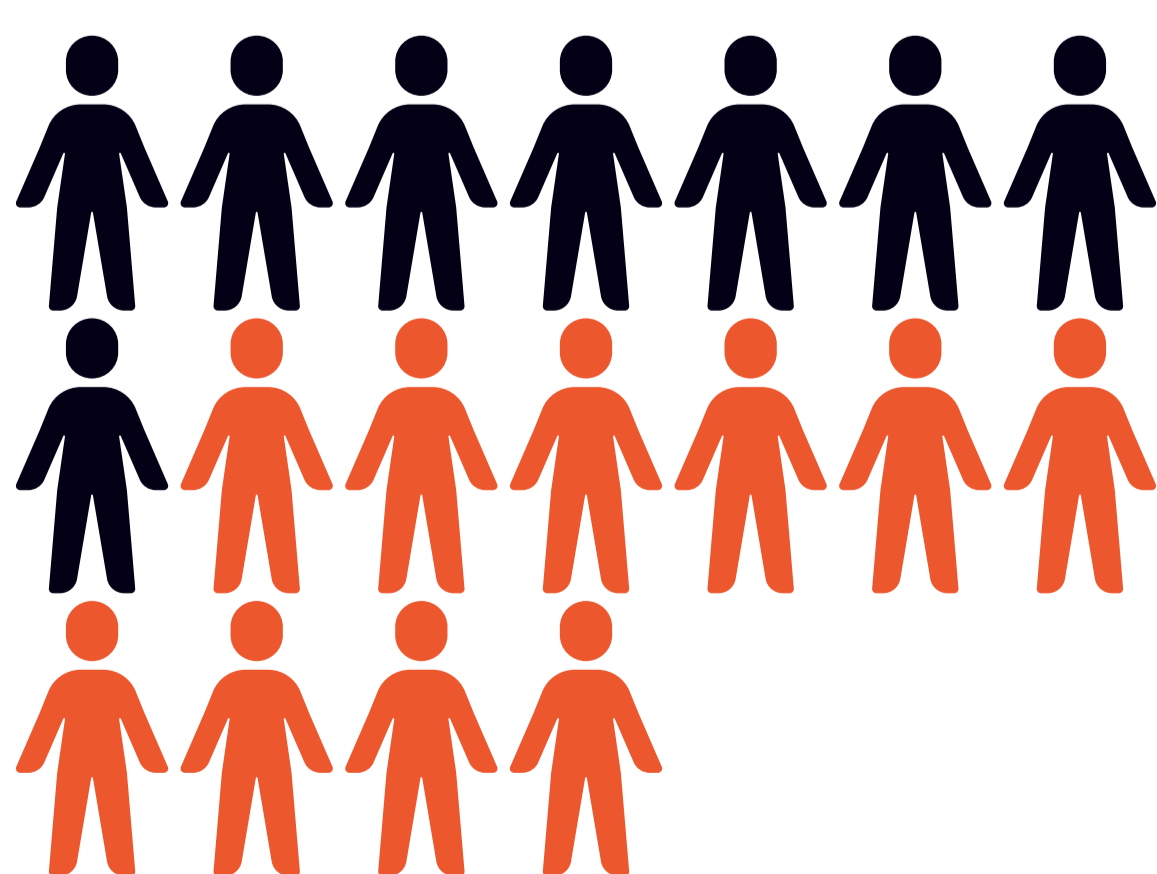
1 Background

In Uganda, as of 2021, the estimated HIV prevalence among adults aged 15-49 is 6.2%, with HIV prevalence among key populations estimated to be three times that. This is attributed to a number of factors, including: commercial sex, drug use, limited access to HIV prevention and testing services, and poor perceptions and attitudes towards HIV prevention programs.



2 Description

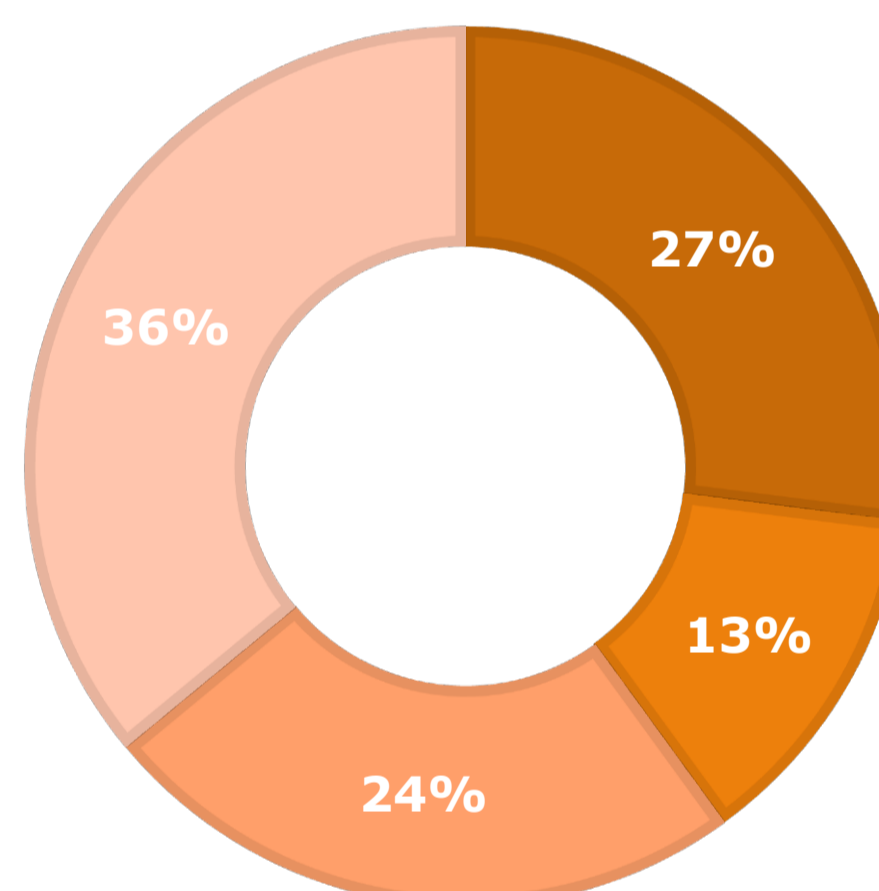
Working in partnership with district health offices and local health partners, communities in need of HIV prevention and testing outreach were identified for awareness outreach. A two-day Peer Educator Champions training in HIV prevention messaging aimed at overcoming barriers between HIV knowledge and social stigma was conducted in each of the five districts. Peer Champions approached key populations in various locations for free HIV services, including: HIV testing and counselling, PrEP information and condom distribution. A structured survey was conducted to collect program data which was uploaded in real time onto a secure encrypted database using cellphone data or wi-fi.



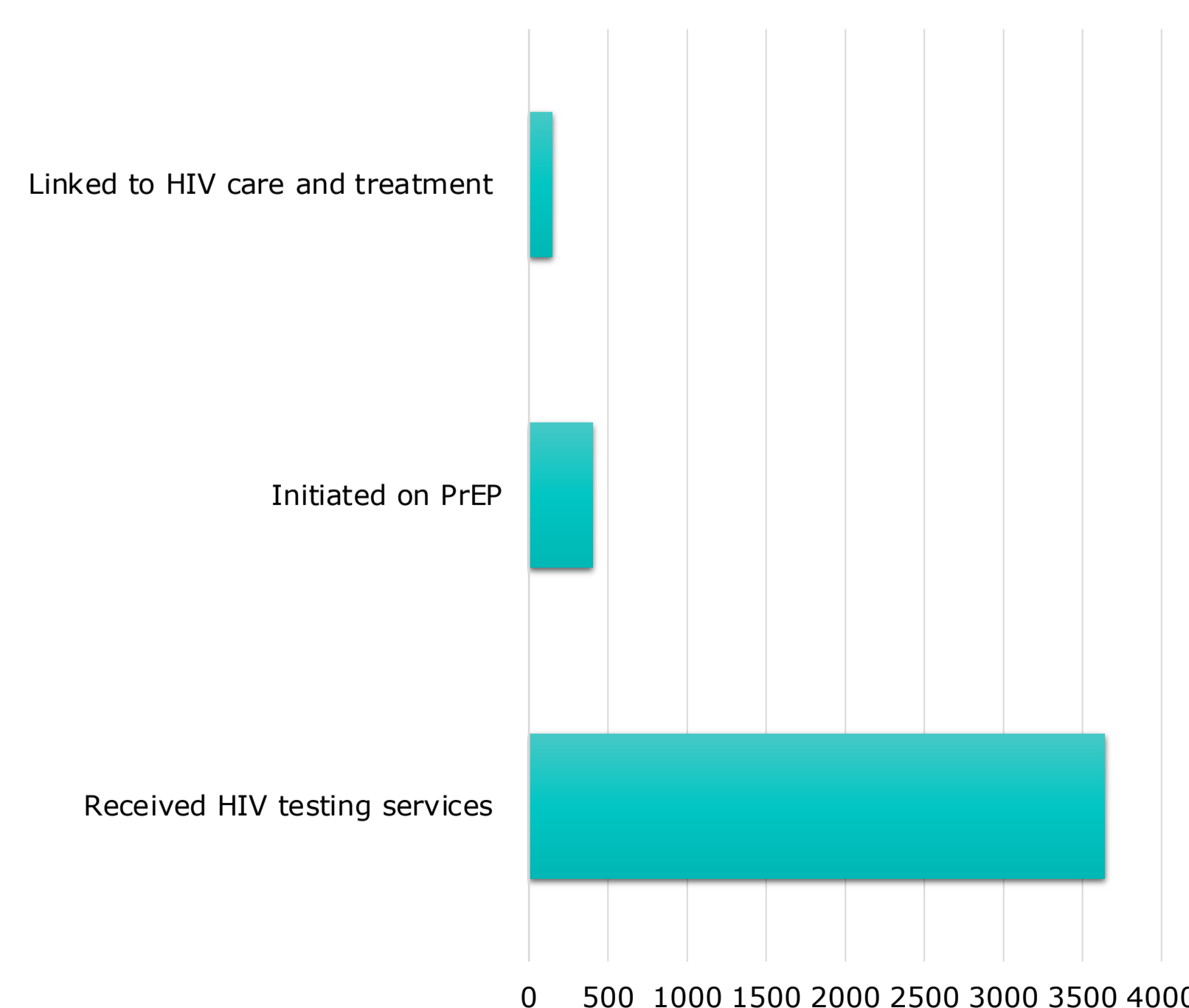
3 Lessons Learned

A total of 67 Peer Educator Champions were trained in Kabale, Sheema, Mbarara, Kasese and Lira. They consisted of young people, HIV +ve individuals, and key community leaders. 4,996 people from key populations were reached with HIV information and awareness.

- Sex Workers
- Truck Drivers
- Motorcycle Riders
- Adolescents and Young People



Of these, 27% were sex workers, 13% truck drivers, 24% 'Boda Boda' drivers and 36% youth and adolescents. 3,641 were referred for HIV testing with 403 people referred for PrEP. The program opened a mobile HIV clinic in Katuna (Uganda/Rwanda border) for targeted testing among special groups. A total of 147 HIV +ve individuals have been linked to care through our HIV Adherence, Retention and Treatment (HART) program which uses quality improvement methodology to monitor adherence and retention. Peer Educator Champions were successful at creating networks within their key populations which increased attendance.



4 Conclusion/next steps

The results show that a peer-to-peer approach to HIV awareness is effective. Despite the challenges of low resources and hard to reach communities, we were able to exceed our targets by over 50 percent.



Given that the AWAMU campaign has run for only 12 months, we are confident that we can see positive results as we continue.

