

A light blue world map is centered in the background. Overlaid on the map is a large, semi-transparent red ribbon, a symbol for HIV/AIDS awareness. At the bottom of the map, several hands of different skin tones are shown reaching upwards, symbolizing support and community.

# Improving Access to HIV Services

## GSFP Cohort 4 Workgroup

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# Content Outline

1. Research Questions
2. Strategies or interventions to improve access and uptake
  - Background
  - Methods
  - Results
3. COVID-19 and sexual behavior
  - Direct Impact
  - Indirect Impact
  - Discussion
  - Recommendations



# Research Questions

1. What are effective and acceptable strategies or interventions to improve access and uptake of community-based HIV testing services?
2. How has COVID-19 changed sexual behavior?

# Background:

**Size and scope;** According to UNAIDS, in 2018, an estimated 1.4 million people were living with HIV, an estimated 23,000 Ugandans died of AIDS-related illnesses.

**Affected populations;** sex workers, young girls and adolescent women, men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs and people from Uganda's transient fishing communities

**Efforts, improvements, and shortfalls;** renewed engagement of the political leadership at all levels and strengthening the multi-sectoral efforts to curb the impact of the epidemic. As part of its international commitment, Uganda is implementing several resolutions including by 2020, 90% of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status; 90% of all people with diagnosed HIV infection will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy and 90% of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy will have viral suppression

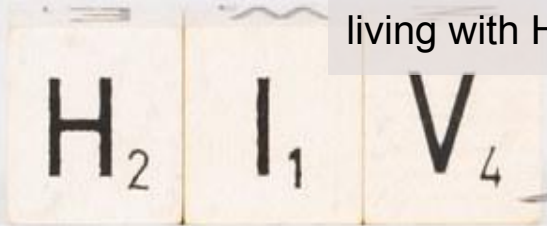
**Prevalence among adults (aged 15 to 49)**

8.8%

4.3%

Adult men living with HIV

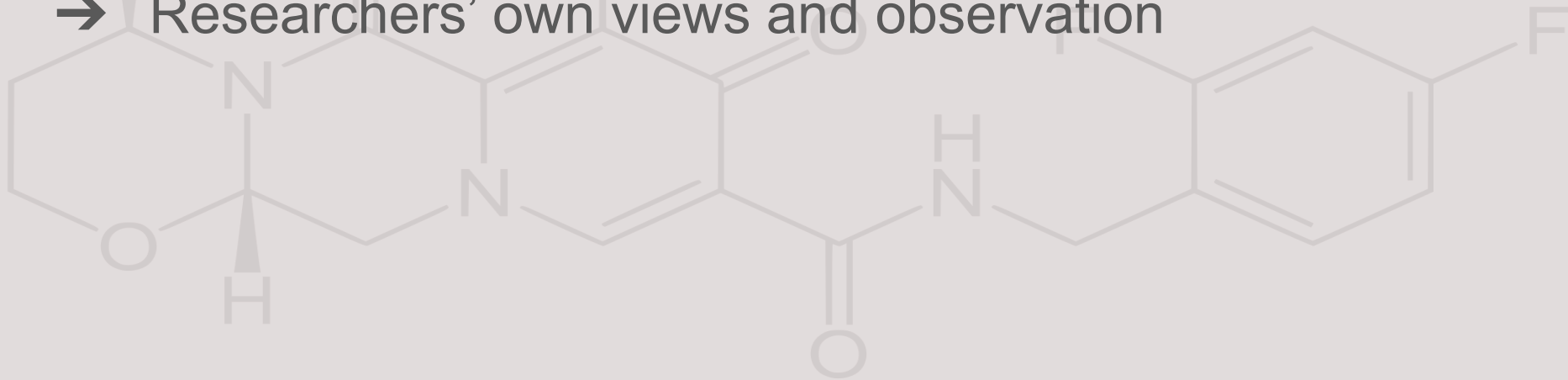
Adult women living with HIV



# Methods

Qualitative methods were mainly used for the research

- Literature review;
- Existing research publications on the topic were used
- Researchers' own views and observation



# Results: Improving access and uptake of HIV testing

1. Messaging
  - a. Stories
  - b. Concerts, music, celebrities
  - c. Radio
  - d. Digital communications
2. Community Health Workers
  - a) Healthcare Professionals



# Results: Improving access and uptake of HIV testing

- Testing Strategies
  - WHO Recommendations
  - Clinic Based Testing
  - Mobile, community, workplace testing
  - Home-based HIV counseling and self-testing
- Testing sensitive populations



# Results: Improving access and uptake of HIV testing

- Treatment
  - ★ Social support networks
- Prevention
  - ★ Be Self Sure Campaign



# Background: How has COVID-19 changed sexual behavior?

A hand wearing a blue nitrile glove holds a red COVID-19 test tube with a purple cap. The background is a light purple gradient with a faint, repeating pattern of discarded syringes, suggesting a medical or pandemic context.

- **Direct impacts of COVID:**
  - Disrupted access to medicines including ARV, PrEP, and opioid treatment, testing including STI and HIV testing and viral load monitoring, and prevention items such as condoms and clean needles.
  - Difficulty accessing healthcare, testing and treatment centers
- **Indirect impacts of COVID:**
  - prevention efforts which limit and criminalize movement, expanded police powers to target vulnerable and criminalized populations.
  - Increased abstinence from sexual activity
  - Increased sexual abuse
- **Mitigation measures disrupted distribution of condoms**
  - Factory closures, decreases in freight, quarantines for shipments, and decreased distribution

# Results: How has COVID-19 changed sexual behavior?

- Going forward, diminished funding for HIV/AIDS testing, treatment, prevention may persist as efforts are refocused around COVID-19
  - Have to be creative with funding to address behavioral interventions
- Female sex workers at higher risk of HIV infections due to decreased condom use, changes in sex work availability
- Observation that many sex workers adapted quickly to disclosing their COVID-19 status in a similar way to disclosing HIV status (date of most recent test, publishing outcome)

# Discussion

- School going children got pregnant last year since schools were closed
- Increased Sexual abuse due to the physical distancing and movement restrictions
- Difficulties accessing the test and/or treatment centers during lockdown either increased unsafe sex
- Limited condom distribution has put Female sex workers and other women at risk of catching HIV, coupled with Inadequate money to buy condoms leads to unsafe sex

DAILY MONITOR THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 2022

**National News**



**200 fathers defile daughters**

**Statistics: Defilement numbers in Uganda**

<b>1,682</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>175</b>
Number of defilement cases reported in the last 12 months	Number of defilement cases reported in the last 12 months by fathers	Number of defilement cases reported in the last 12 months by fathers who were also defiled	Number of defilement cases reported in the last 12 months by fathers who were also defiled and their daughters

**At least 1,682 total defilement cases reported last year through the child helpline services.**

**At least 451 fathers defiled their daughters last year through the child helpline services.**

**200 fathers defiled their daughters last year through the child helpline services, and were also defiled themselves.**

**175 fathers defiled their daughters last year through the child helpline services, and their daughters were also defiled.**

**48 fathers defiled their daughters last year through the child helpline services, and their daughters were also defiled and their daughters were also defiled.**

**90 fathers defiled their daughters last year through the child helpline services, and their daughters were also defiled and their daughters were also defiled.**

**The latest data from the Uganda Child Helpline shows that 1,682 defilement cases were reported last year through the child helpline services. Of these, 451 were reported by fathers, 200 by fathers who were also defiled, 175 by fathers who were also defiled and their daughters, and 48 by fathers who were also defiled and their daughters were also defiled. The data also shows that 90 fathers defiled their daughters last year through the child helpline services, and their daughters were also defiled and their daughters were also defiled.**

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# Recommendations

- Interventions and strategies to improve access to and uptake of community based HIV testing and treatment services
- Address limitations in condom distribution
- Respond to essential financial needs of key populations
  - Importance of good interventions to reach high risk groups early, restore mobility and ability to earn income
- Consider empowering sex workers as public health advocates to avoid disruptions when NGOs and funding are disrupted



## Contributors

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