

Promoting HIV self-testing amongst male partners in Kenya

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Highlights

Evidence impact

- Kenya's National AIDS and STIs Control Programme (NASCO) and Ministry of Health opted to include HIV self-testing (HIVST) services to male partners through antenatal care (ANC) centres in their Operational Manual for the Delivery of HIV Self-Testing Services in Kenya, released in 2017, citing 3ie evaluation findings.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) added a recommendation for the distribution of HIVST kits at ANC centres in its December 2016 Supplement to Consolidated Guidelines on HIV Testing Services, also citing 3ie evaluation findings.

Factors that contributed to impact

- The researchers engaged regularly with the HIVST technical working group to convey the implications of the evaluation findings. Researchers at Jhpiego and the Medical University of South Carolina held in-depth discussions with Kenyan Ministry of Health officials throughout the research period.
- The evaluation findings and recommendations were available in time for the Ministry of Health and NASCO to consider as they reworked the HIVST guidelines and operational manual.
- Engagement with researchers of multilateral organisations through different platforms – including conferences and workshops organised by 3ie on HIV – amplified the findings and facilitated uptake.

Impact evaluation details

Title: [Increasing male partner HIV testing using self-test kits in Kenya](#)

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Status : Completed September 2017



Context

Sub-Saharan Africa witnesses 88 per cent of the world's HIV-related deaths amongst children under the age of 15 years. In Kenya, 6.5 per cent of pregnant women live with HIV/AIDS. Each year, between 38,000 and 42,000 children are infected with HIV via mother-to-child transmission. Since government ANC centres provide HIV prevention, testing and counselling (HTC) services to pregnant women, it is likely that more Kenyan women than men have been tested for HIV.

ANC centres in Kenya experience heavy traffic from pregnant women every year and see near universal uptake of HTC amongst their clients. However, there is hardly any uptake of these services among the male partners of these clients.

In 2014, researchers from Jhpiego and the Medical University of South Carolina conducted a study to determine whether providing pregnant women with oral HIVST kits to give to their partners could improve rates of male partner HIV testing. The kits included information cards

produced by the Kenyan Ministry of Health.

The randomised controlled evaluation was carried out at the 14 health facilities that received the highest volume of ANC clients in eastern and central Kenya. These facilities were divided into three arms, consisting of one intervention group (arm 3) where HIVST kits were distributed and two control groups (arms 1 and 2) where standard care was provided.

Evidence

Overall, the evaluation findings revealed a high uptake (88 per cent) of HIVST kits in the intervention group, suggesting a willingness by male partners to use the kits. The method was shown to be effective, with an overwhelming number of women (98 per cent) in arm 3 discussing HIV testing with their male partners, resulting in increased use of self-testing kits.

Additionally, the usability and acceptability of self-test kits were verified. A large number of women and men said they understood the instructions easily, the tests were easy to conduct, and it was easy to read and comprehend the test results.

Evidence impacts

“We know from the study that male partner testing can increase by using the HIV self-test kit. Now, what government did was to look at it more holistically and say all right, now we know that self-testing is a good idea. So, they incorporated that in the guidelines. Since ANC offering self-test kits has been included in the HIV self-testing guidelines ..., ANC clients and their partners know that that's one of the options.

Anthony Gichangi
lead principal investigator

Government's operational manual includes ANC centres as an HIVST delivery channel
To address the male testing gap, NASCOP opted to include ANC centres as a delivery channel for HIVST, based on advocacy around the evaluation findings. The researchers had presented their findings to the NASCOP Technical Working Group on HIV, who were in the process of designing the HIVST Operational Manual. The Ministry of Health also acknowledged the role ANC centres play in improving HIVST coverage.

WHO Guidelines draw from the evaluation

WHO cites 3ie evaluation findings in [strongly recommending that HIVST be offered](#) and in supporting implementation and scale-up of ethical, acceptable and evidence-based approaches to HIVST. WHO also refers to ANC centres as an effective delivery mechanism for reaching men who would not otherwise be tested. The recommendation appears in the organisation's [Consolidated guidelines on HIV testing services](#) released in December 2019, citing evidence from various sources, including the research conducted by 3ie. These update the previous [guidelines on HIV Self-testing and Partner Notification](#) released in 2016, that also cited the evaluation

findings. The updated guidelines note that HIVST has emerged as an effective tool to expand testing among people at risk of HIV who may not otherwise test and those at ongoing risk who need to test frequently.

Suggested citation

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[Blog: Preparation meets opportunity: how 3ie's stakeholder engagement paid off on HIV self-testing](#)

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