

HIV Testing Services

Supporting children, adolescents and young people to know their HIV status



HIV testing is the entry point to HIV treatment, care and support services. Early diagnosis of HIV in children, adolescents and young people promotes earlier access to Antiretroviral treatment (ART) which in turn results in viral suppression, protects the immune system, and promotes normal growth and development. Viral suppression also prevents HIV transmission to the sexual partners and babies of adolescents and young people as they become sexually active. Early diagnosis also means that psychosocial support services can be provided as well as linkage to other services required. Despite the tremendous advances in HIV testing services (HTS) over the years, children and adolescents continue to lag behind in the uptake of testing as compared with adults, resulting in late diagnosis, increased morbidity and mortality.

Zvandiri supports the government in promoting the identification of undiagnosed children, adolescents and young people living with HIV, the provision of quality HTS services which are responsive to their specific needs and experiences, and the linkage of children and adolescents to post-test services.

Strengthening the Evidence

- Operations research in 2018 found CATS to be effective at promoting the uptake of HTS services among children, adolescents and young people¹
 - **15,223** household contacts and sexual partners with unknown HIV status (connected to **9,353** index PLHIV) were identified and referred for HIV testing, **12,114 (79.6%)** were tested and **1,193 (9.8%)** were confirmed to be living with HIV .
- Operations research in 2017 engaged 'Testing Motivators – pairs of young adults (one HIV positive, one HIV negative) to encourage household testing for untested children, using Oraquick. Stigma tools were included in the intervention²
 - The use of young adult "Testing Motivators" to target the testing of minor children at the household level using Oraquick led to high testing rates.
 - Of **305** households with untested 5-15 year olds, **221 (72.5% (95% CI 67.1%-77.4%))** consented to HIV testing.
 - Tools designed to reduce stigma may have added value, reducing testing hesitancy.

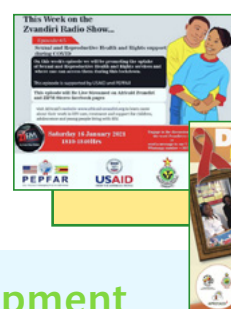


Studies confirm CATS are effective at improving case finding and the uptake of HTS among CAYPLHIV



Advocacy

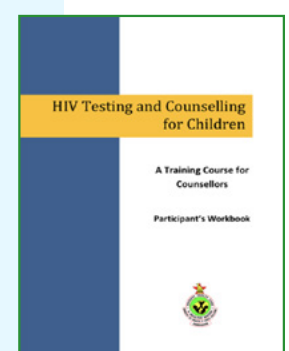
Development of mixed media advocacy campaigns to promote awareness of the rights and needs of children and young people to HIV testing services, and disseminated through radio, social media, TV, newspapers, the CATS Hub and international conferences



Mixed media, youth-led HTS advocacy to promote awareness among CAYPLHIV, their caregivers and communities, to promote the uptake of HIV testing services

Guidelines, Curricula and Tool Development

- Support to the MoHCC in the development of **HTS policy and guidelines for children and adolescents**
- Technical assistance to the MoHCC in the development of the **national HTS for children and adolescents training curriculum**
- Development of **HTS information and counselling tools for children and adolescents**, including:
 - Games: **Masas'** counselling game
 - Film: **Tanaka and Tonde** talk about the Immune System, HIV and ART
 - Film: **Rumbi and Sungi** talk about HIV testing and COVID-19
 - Books: **Our Story Book**; **Siyanakekela** book for Caregivers of CAYPLHIV
- Development of **Standard Operating Procedures for Zvandiri Mentors to guide Zvandiri HTS services**
- Development of the **CATS Service Delivery Manual to guide CATS in supporting their peers to know their HIV status**





A range of child and adolescent-sensitive implementation guidance, IEC materials and counselling tools have been developed by and for young people living with HIV to support CAYPLHIV to access quality, client centred HTS.



Africaid Zvandiri
Masas' - 1: Tanaka and Tonde talk about the immune system



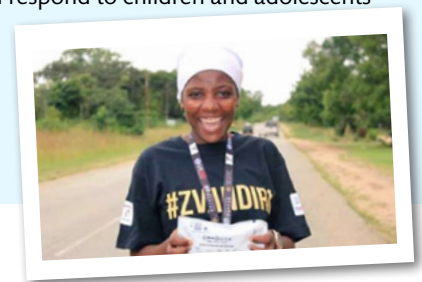
Africaid Zvandiri
Masas' - 2: Tanaka and Tonde talk about HIV



Africaid Zvandiri
Masas' 3: Tanaka and Tonde talk about antiretroviral medicine

Strengthening the workforce

- Training and mentorship of health care workers to provide child and adolescent sensitive HTS services, including age and developmentally appropriate counselling
- Training and mentorship of social welfare officers and community case care workers to identify and respond to children and adolescents facing challenges in accessing HTS services
- Training and mentorship of CATS to:
 - identify undiagnosed CAYPLHIV through index case finding
 - distribute HIV self-test kits and refer those with reactive results for confirmatory testing
 - Provide child and adolescent friendly counselling for CAYPLHIV accessing HTS



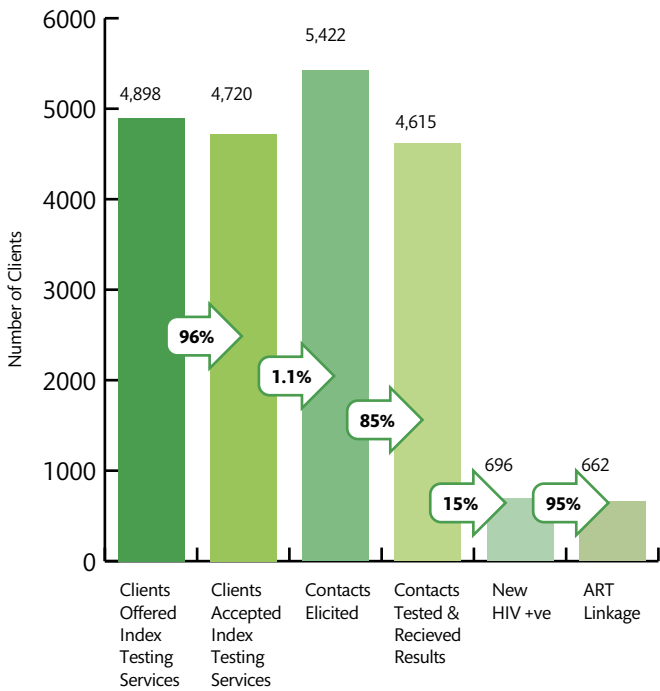
Service Delivery

- CATS-led index case finding to identify and refer to HTS the undiagnosed children of caregivers on ART and the siblings and sexual partners of CAYPLHIV
- Information, counselling and support for caregivers of children in need of HTS
- CATS-led distribution of HIV self-test kits for 'at risk' adolescents and young people (16-24 years) and referral of those screening positive for confirmatory testing
- Case conferencing with families, health care workers and social welfare officers for children and adolescents facing barriers to HTS
- Referral of young people testing HIV negative to prevention services including DREAMS programme
- Engagement of children and young people testing HIV positive in Zvandiri

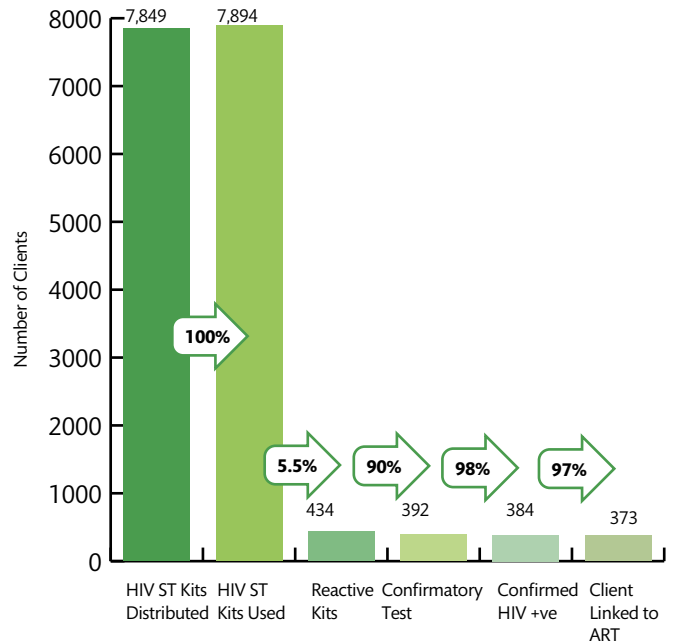


Results

- In 2020, CATS worked with health care workers and Zvandiri Mentors to identify **5,422** elicited contacts requiring HIV testing services. **4,615** contacts were tested and **696** received a positive result. Most of the contacts which were reached are sexual partners of young people living with HIV.
- In addition, **7,849** HIV self-test kits were distributed with **7,849** (100%) kits being used successfully and test results reported. The reactive rate was **6%**, a total of **384** HIV positive clients were identified and **97%** (373/384) were linked into HIV treatment and care.



CATS-led index case finding



CATS-led HIV testing kit distribution

Lesson learned and Recommendations

- CATS have been found to be effective at promoting the identification and linkage to HTS for CAYPLHIV through an index case finding approach
- A multi sectoral response is essential for complex cases where the best interests of the child is not being upheld and requires a planned, integrated, enhanced response
- CATS require sustained training, mentorship and support to equip them with the skills to understand, implement and document index case finding
- Linkage with other testing partners strengthens the referral process and uptake of HTS
- Games and videos are important in supporting HTS with young people.
- Child and adolescent sensitive HIV testing counselling tools need to be available in formats for CAYPLHIV with disability
- The use of standardized HTS counselling tools by health care workers and CATS promotes understanding and consistency for CAYPLHIV and their caregivers

References

1. Tapera T., et al (2019) *Effects of a Peer-led Intervention on HIV Continuum Outcomes among contacts of children, adolescents and young adults living with HIV in Zimbabwe.* Global Health: Science and Practice December 2019, GHSP-19-00210; <https://doi.org/10.9745/GHSP-D-19-00210>
2. Lowenthal ED., et al *Youth Mobilizing Parents to HIV Test Minor Children at Home (In Press)*



Siphho's Story

Siphho is a 15 year old boy who describes a childhood of recurrent illness, hospitalization and medication. In his story, he recounts how he overheard health workers recommending 'a test' but that his relatives refused this; he did not know or understand why. He recalls how isolated he felt from friends who continued to go to school while he had to stay at home. He narrates his fears and worries that he was not getting an education as he was always sick and that he was so much smaller than his friends. Siphho then describes the turning point in his life when a Case Care Worker who was concerned about him referred him to Zvandiri CATS in his community. The CATS provided counselling and support for Siphho and his caregivers and referred him to the clinic nurse for HIV testing after which he was commenced on ART. Siphho tells us he is now healthy but wishes he had been tested and started on treatment much earlier.

Siphho

