



October 2020

Reaching Impact, Saturation and Epidemic Control (RISE)

HIV Testing Services and Linkage

The Global Challenge

Of the estimated 38 million people living with HIV (PLHIV) worldwide, more than 7.1 million (19%) do not know their HIV status. HIV testing—the only way people can know if they have HIV—is key to epidemic control. Early testing allows PLHIV to get on treatment and to take precautions to avoid transmitting HIV to others. For those who test negative, HIV testing services (HTS) are an important link to prevention services, such as pre-exposure prophylaxis, voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC), condoms, and risk-reduction counseling. RISE offers technical assistance and service delivery support to help countries achieve HTS targets while adhering to quality and safety standards in alignment with PEPFAR guidance.

RISE is a 5-year global project (2019–2024) generously funded by the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to support countries to achieve and maintain epidemic control by providing strategic technical assistance and direct service delivery to improve HIV prevention, case finding, treatment, and viral load suppression. RISE partners with governments and other stakeholders and implementing partners to establish, expand, and improve the quality of HTS and linkage, with a goal of ensuring implementation of and fidelity to best practices and evidence-informed HTS and linkage interventions; ensuring country-level engagement and ownership; strengthening existing health systems; and supporting continuous quality improvement of HTS programs.

How RISE supports optimized HIV Testing Services

With leadership from Jhpiego, the RISE consortium brings extensive experience in helping to introduce, scale up, and optimize multiple HIV testing modalities. RISE supports country efforts to improve performance on PEPFAR’s first 95 targets, with interventions ranging from national-level policymaking to community-level implementation, including:

- Assisted partner notification services and index case testing ensure that when an individual tests positive for HIV, all members of that person’s household and all sexual partners are offered voluntary HTS. Strategies include family tree tracking, integration of partner notification and self-testing, and couples HIV testing and counseling (HTC). Recognizing that violence and harmful gender norms may prevent individuals from accessing HTS and disclosing their status, RISE addresses gender-based violence (GBV) in the context of HTS by ensuring that survivors identified during self- testing, index testing, and partner notification services, and provided and/or referred to HIV treatment initiation and comprehensive GBV response services.



- Social and sexual network testing provides HTS clients with information about HIV risk reduction and testing services that they can pass on to their social and sexual networks. The approach is particularly valuable among key and priority populations, who are often discouraged from seeking comprehensive HTC services by stigma or unavailability of services at locations and hours that are appropriate for them.
- Provider-initiated testing and counseling supports health care providers to offer voluntary HTC to all clients as part of routine care, as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, especially in areas where HIV is prevalent. RISE helps to build the capacity of health care workers to deliver compassionate and comprehensive HTC services and works with governments to develop policies and guidelines to ensure this work continues.
- HIV self-testing expands the reach of HTS programs by providing an option to populations that might otherwise not seek out or receive these services. In addition to advocating with ministries of health for policy and implementation planning, RISE introduces and supports innovations such as couples testing, in which pregnant women receive oral HIV self-test kits for themselves and their partners during antenatal care visits and are encouraged to test together at home.
- Recency testing distinguishes new HIV infections from long-term infection using a test that measures the level of antibodies in an HIV client's blood. RISE uses recency testing to identify hotspots of new HIV infection and target interventions to halt the spread of HIV. Recency testing also supports RISE's efforts to collect, analyze, evaluate, and share data on HIV infection at the population level.

Examples of RISE Consortium Expertise in HIV Testing

RISE is providing service delivery support and technical assistance in HTS to multiple countries in COP19 and COP20, supporting countries to optimize efficiency and yield of case finding efforts. In **Nigeria**, RISE is meeting ambitious targets for HIV case finding in four states and supporting the introduction and scale up of HIV Self Testing services at the national and state levels. In **Ukraine**, RISE is providing virtual, targeted technical assistance to a local implementing partner to help refine and optimize HIV testing and linkage services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Jhpiego brings extensive experience supporting HTS services from across all levels of the health system—from policy and health systems strengthening support at the national level to community-level testing services. Jhpiego is supporting multiple countries to optimize HIV testing services, including quality improvement and technical assistance to ensure the quality and safety of index testing services, in alignment with PEPFAR guidance. Between 2009 and October 2020, approximately 17.5 million individuals in 34 countries received HTS through Jhpiego-led programs:

- Jhpiego's technical assistance has resulted in the development of up-to-date national HTS guidelines to incorporate recency testing and other novel case-finding approaches, including HIV self-testing, partner notification services, and dual HIV/syphilis rapid diagnostic testing. Our programs incorporate "Undetectable = Untransmittable" messaging on viral suppression to counter stigma and empower providers and clients for improved service uptake, adherence, and retention. Jhpiego also provides TA on prevention, mitigation, and monitoring of adverse events in index testing.
- In Nigeria, RISE is meeting ambitious targets for HTS and linkage to care across four states (Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, and Niger) using multiple adaptive strategies to maximize HIV case finding despite challenges associated with COVID-19. Across the four supported states in COP19 (preliminary data), RISE provided HTS for 537,344 individuals, identifying 26,258 confirmed positives (for a yield of 5%). Cumulatively, More than 98% of those testing positive were successfully linked to ART.
- RISE is implementing the VALOR initiative (Virtually Accelerating Linkage Of Men to Reframed HIV Services) to optimize uptake of first time HIV testing and enrollment on care among undiagnosed and unlinked men aged 20-35 in Nigeria. VALOR targets men through social media advertising with client-centered messaging that is COVID-contextualized and speaks to the emotional needs and desires of Nigerian men. Via WhatsApp, men are connected to "VIP Guides" who screen for HIV risk, link men to appropriate community-based HIV services and/or self-testing where available, and support men through the challenge of revealing sexual contacts, partner disclosure, drug (re) initiation, and habit forming. Preliminary data from the first month of implementation (September 2020) show high rates of virtual engagement (45% of men who clicked on the WhatsApp add engaged with a VIP Guide, and 22% of those men were linked to testing and treatment referrals).
- In support of HTS targets in Ukraine, RISE provides virtual TA and capacity building support to a local IP and USAID bilateral, the 100% Life project to optimize facility and community index testing services and HIV self-testing services, along with expansion of risk network referral services and multi-testing for HIV and HCV/HBV/STI. RISE TA is focused on optimizing
- In Malawi, for example, Jhpiego worked with the Ministry of Health (MOH) to support scale-up of comprehensive HIV testing, treatment, and prevention services for high-risk and hard-to-reach populations in priority districts. Our strategies include:
 - Mobile and outreach HTS in workplaces, markets, and sports events to reach men, who are often the least likely to know their HIV status and be on treatment; in teen clubs to reach adolescents; and in prisons, job sites, and at "open day" events that include music, drama, theater, speeches, and testimonies focused on HIV/TB health education.

- Index testing using MOH Family Referral Slips—an official invitation for a family member of an HIV client to visit a health facility for HTS. In Thyolo district, for example, of the 5,468 people tested for HIV between April and September 2018, 1,030 people were tested through index testing; of these, 419 tested positive. In Malawi, as in other Jhpiego HTS programming, index testing is a critical strategy for improving yield of HTS services.
- Integration of HIV testing with VMMC initiatives, which has resulted in more than 130,000 VMMC clients tested through Jhpiego-supported projects. A referral tracking form supports follow-up with HIV-positive clients to ensure linkage to ART.
- Health worker capacity-building to improve quality of care and integration of services. The Jhpiego-led Support for Service Delivery Integration-Services project, for example, trained 164 health workers on viral load, 114 on the revised HTS curriculum, and 201 on the revised ART/prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV guidelines. The project also trained 429 volunteer expert clients, who supported 21,832 clients to receive HTS in their communities.

RISE Project Principles

- Break the cycle of HIV transmission and reach those at highest risk for HIV.
- Scale up proven and innovative approaches, using human-centered design thinking to inform the development and implementation of locally driven, adaptive solutions.
- Implement interventions that address structural drivers.
- Strengthen local partners and build networks for resilient systems.
- Impart a culture of quality, data use, and accountability.
- Rapidly mobilize to respond to immediate country needs and establish strong working platforms to achieve the bold vision of epidemic control by 2020.
- Work with local partners to tailor impactful, innovative, evidence-based services to targeted populations, particularly at risk adult men and women, including key populations.

Tools & Resources

- Consolidated guidelines on HIV testing services for a changing epidemic (WHO): <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/consolidated-guidelines-on-hiv-testing-services-for-a-changing-epidemic>
- Guidelines on HIV self-testing and partner notification (WHO): <https://www.who.int/hiv/pub/self-testing/hiv-self-testing-guidelines/en/>
- HIV Testing Services Guidance Database (USAID): <https://aidsfree.usaid.gov/resources/guidance-data/hts>
- HIV Testing Strategies to Reach People Living with HIV Who Are Unaware of Their Status (ICAP): https://icap.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/HIV-Testing_Technical_Brief_2019_WEB-1.pdf
- USAID List of Approved HIV Rapid Test Kits (February 1, 2017): https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1864/Rapid-Test-Kit-List-February-1-2017-508_0.pdf
- WHO HTS Info app (available through the Apple Store for iPhone and iPad): <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/who-hts-info/id1359010276>

RISE Technical Areas

To learn more about our work, visit our website at <https://www.jhpiego.org/riase>, and see our briefs on:

- RISE Introductory Brief & Project Overview
- Health Systems Strengthening
- HIV Prevention: Oral Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis
- HIV Prevention: Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision
- Engaging Men in HIV Testing, Linkage, and Retention in Care
- Antiretroviral Therapy Optimization
- Strategic Information
- Key Populations
- TB/HIV Integration
- Laboratory Services

For more information about RISE, contact:

At RISE: Kelly Curran, RISE Project Director (kelly.curran@Jhpiego.org)

At USAID: Elizabeth Berard, USAID Agreement Officer's Representative (EBerard@usaid.gov)