



October 2020

Reaching Impact, Saturation and Epidemic Control (RISE)

Engaging Men in HIV Testing, Linkage, and Retention in Care

The Global Challenge

In 2019, there were an estimated 3.8 million people living with HIV (PLHIV) worldwide. Men account for 48% of PLHIV globally, but are less likely than women to know their HIV status or to use HIV prevention and treatment services, and are more likely than women to die from AIDS-related causes—resulting in as much as a 10-year life expectancy gap between men and women living with HIV. Often, men, a critical link in the onward transmission of HIV to others, avoid seeking care because of harmful gender norms or stigma, or the common perception that health care services prioritize women and children. In addition, men who have sex with men (MSM) represent a particularly underserved group, whose vulnerability to HIV and poor health outcomes is compounded by stigma, discrimination, and, in many places, criminalization. Efforts to end the HIV epidemic must therefore include interventions that address the social, personal, and behavioral barriers to seeking and remaining in care; create demand and increase awareness; and engage men fully in HIV testing, prevention, and treatment services.

The Jhpiego-led RISE, 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), supports 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. Key to these efforts are interventions that address the barriers that reduce men's ability to access HIV testing services, receive treatment, and remain in care.

The RISE consortium (Jhpiego, ICAP, Management Sciences for Health, Anova Health Institute, BAO Systems, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and Mann Global Health) brings unrivaled expertise in taking evidence-based programming to scale and transitioning to local implementing partners for sustainable, self-reliant, and resilient health systems. We have a history of meeting ambitious targets through provision of high-quality, cost-efficient services matched with innovative and human-centered demand-creation approaches.



PEPFAR
U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief



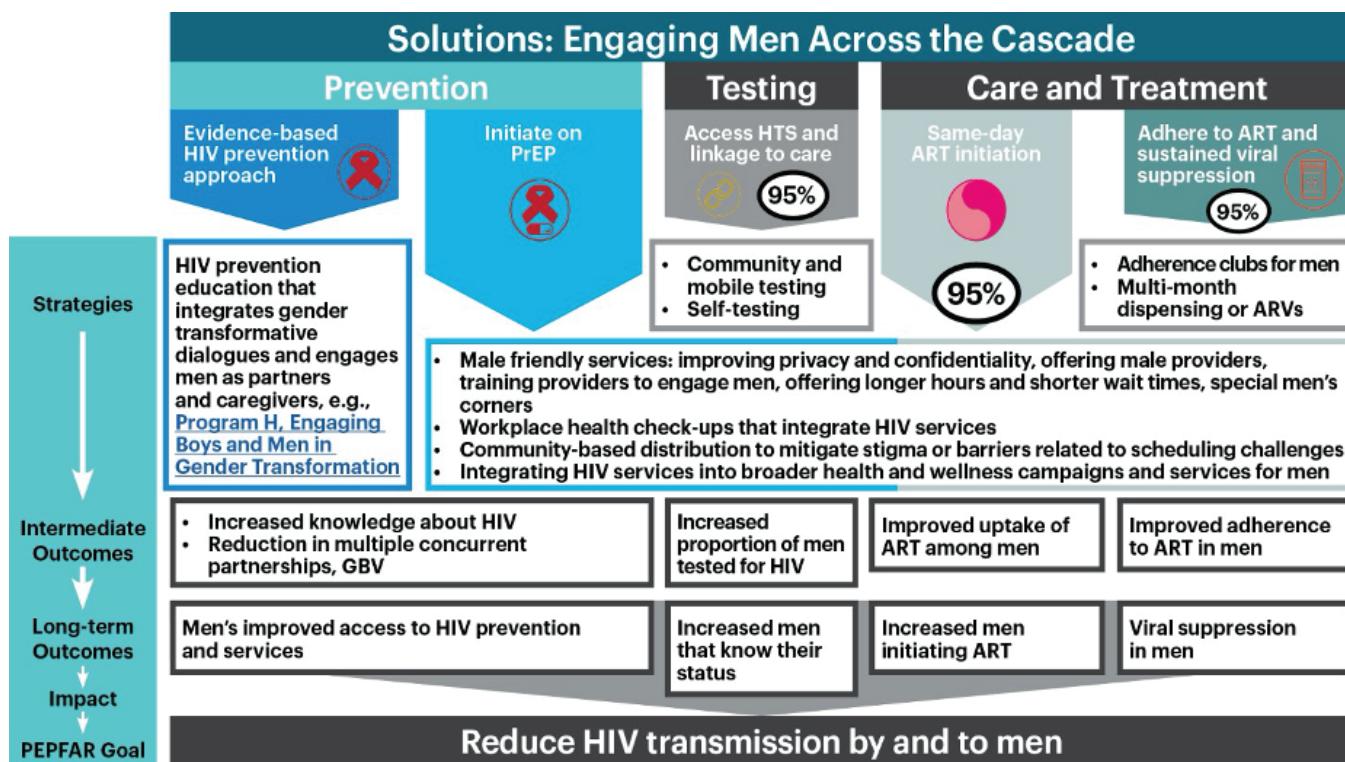
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RISE
Reaching Impact, Saturation
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How RISE Can Help Countries to Reach, Engage, and Retain Men in Care

HIV testing services (HTS) are the gateway to comprehensive HIV prevention, care, and treatment for people who test positive, and to evidence-based prevention for those who test negative. However, unlike adult women, who may receive HIV testing and counseling services during pregnancy, men do not routinely access health care services and thus have fewer opportunities to access these services. Key to RISE's strategy to reduce the spread of HIV is reaching men where they are and ensuring they receive care. Our approach includes:

- Increasing accessibility to HTS through community and mobile health clinics; male-friendly services that include improved privacy and confidentiality, longer hours and shorter wait times, and male providers; male-only clinics or special male corners; workplace health check-ups; and community based testing.
- Using Human Centered Design approaches to develop tailored demand generation strategies and messages that speaks to men's motivations, interests, desires, and emotional needs.
- Promoting index testing and assisted partner notification, couples testing, and self-testing to help reach underserved populations and improve partner testing.
- Employing peer counselors and expert clients to help ensure that men who test positive for HIV are linked to care, and ensuring that HIV negative men eligible for PrEP are initiated on PrEP for HIV prevention.
- Engaging men in HIV prevention education and family planning and maternal health services, to not only provide HTS but also to engage them as partners and caregivers through gender-transformative dialogue.
- Supporting an integrated model of service for voluntary medical male circumcision that includes HIV testing and linkage to care.
- Fostering retention in care through adherence clubs for men, male-friendly services and clinic hours, and multi-month dispensing of antiretrovirals.
- The RISE Global Gender Strategy defines a range of solutions to engaging men across the prevention, testing, and treatment cascade that can countries identify context-specific interventions according to epidemiology and programmatic priorities.



This graphic of points of intervention along the HIV cascade was adapted from USAID's Gender and Sexual Diversity Branch Global GBV and Gender Strategy

RISE Consortium Experience with Engaging Men in HIV Services

The RISE consortium brings extensive experience working across multiple countries and implementing contexts to extend the reach of comprehensive HIV services to reach men across the continuum of care. For example:

- In **Nigeria**, 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. 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).
- Through a 3ie-funded project in **Kenya**, Jhpiego offered pregnant women at antenatal care clinics oral HIV tests to take home to their partners. More than 82% of male partners in the study arm that offered couples the opportunity to test together took the HIV test.
- In **Mozambique**, Jhpiego worked with local leaders and lay counselors to provide mobile testing and linkage to care and treatment. Of the 1,388 men who tested positive for HIV, 63% were linked to care and treatment. Also in Mozambique, ICAP supported male health clinic that integrated HIV testing and counseling with services such as blood pressuring monitoring and eye exams at community health fairs.
- In **Kenya**, Jhpiego supplemented facility-based services with free-standing, one-stop-shops providing a comprehensive package of biomedical, behavioral, and structural interventions.
- In **eSwatini**, ICAP supported male-friendly services and clinic hours for men working in industrial area and developed data systems (including a mobile app) to track linkage to care.
- Jhpiego has offered biomedical prevention services with linkages to care and treatment to incarcerated men in eight countries, including **Namibia**, and in **Lesotho**, Jhpiego trained 50 inmates as peer educators and established support groups to promote adherence.
- In **Myanmar**, ICAP supported peer-led demand-creation, male-friendly services, and pre- and post HTS counseling for MSM. In **South Africa**, ICAP supported peer-led prevention, testing, linkage, and retention services for MSM.
- Jhpiego supported provider-initiated testing and counseling to reach 85,506 individuals with HTS (89% of whom were men) in **Mozambique**, with 81% linked to care and treatment.
- In **Kazakhstan**, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, ICAP supported integration of HIV, TB, and medication assisted therapy for people who inject drugs (most of whom were men) and provision of nurse supported counseling to increase retention and adherence.

Tools & Resources

- Blind Spot: Reaching Out to Men and Boys, UNAIDS: https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2017/blind_spot
- Male Engagement Task Force, Interagency Gender Working Group: <https://www.igwg.org/priority-areas/maleengagement/male-engagement-task-force/>
- HIV self-testing (links to updates, guidelines, and articles), World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/hiv/topics/self-testing/en/>
- MenStar Coalition: <http://www.menstarcoalition.org>

RISE Technical Areas

To learn more about our work, visit our website at <https://www.jhpiego.org/rise>, 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

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