



LINKAGES

Mali's HIV prevalence rate of 1.4% is relatively high for West Africa and Mali is one of the few African countries where new infections are rising. HIV prevalence among key populations is much higher than the national average. It is estimated that only one-third of Malians living with HIV know their status. Slightly less than one-third of those who test positive are on antiretroviral therapy (ART) and just under 10% of Malians on ART have achieved viral load suppression. Viral load suppression helps people stay healthy and live longer, and greatly reduces the chances of an HIV-infected person passing the virus on to others. Many Malians have difficulty accessing HIV testing and treatment due to stigma and the discrimination key populations face.

PROJECT APPROACH

With funding from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), LINKAGES supports four local NGOs working across the HIV/AIDS cascade. LINKAGES also builds local capacity to end HIV as a public health threat in Mali.

Target Prevention, Care and Treatment: LINKAGES works through Malian partners to provide HIV testing, quickly get those who test positive onto ART, and help them stay on it until they achieve viral load suppression. For members of key populations who are HIV negative, LINKAGES promotes peer messaging for evidence-based prevention measures such as condom use, prompt diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted disease, regular HIV testing, and improved access to pre-exposure prophylaxis as needed.

Increase Demand: LINKAGES supports Malian partners to increase demand for HIV services by communicating and helping change behaviors so key populations know their status, demand immediate treatment, and understand the benefits of viral load suppression for their own health and to prevent transmission.

Build Capacity: LINKAGES works with local NGOs and community partners, public and private sector providers, and governance bodies to improve HIV planning, management, service delivery, financial systems, and monitoring and evaluation. USAID supports the National AIDS Program's Key Populations Working Group and coordinates with other donors to ensure complementarity.

LINKAGES is continually working to improve HIV self-testing and index testing for family members and close contacts of people living with HIV. We are scaling up online outreach through social media and the highly successful Enhanced Peer Outreach Approach. Other priorities include closing the "linkage to treatment gap" by using peer navigation to get people who test positive onto ART, and to improve the availability and use of viral load testing to measure progress.

BUDGET TO DATE: \$8.7 million

PROJECT CYCLE: 2014-2021

TARGET AREAS: 13 districts in Bamako, Segou and Sikasso

KEY POPULATIONS: Men who have sex with men, female sex workers, and clients and partners of sex workers

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER: FHI360

KEY 2019 ACHIEVEMENTS:

- 21,118 key population members reached with prevention
- 1,016 adults and children newly enrolled on ART
- 97% retention among 3,910 ART patients
- 63% of 673 patients who received viral load tests achieved viral load suppression