



# Is an Unassisted Pharmacy-based HIV Self-Testing Strategy in Mozambique Sufficient?

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## BACKGROUND

- HIV prevalence in Mozambique is 13%, with a coverage of HIV testing of 31% and 19% among reproductive aged (15-49 years) women and men, respectively<sup>1</sup>.
- Between May and December 2019, an HIV self-testing (HIVST) pilot was implemented in Zambézia Province involving 14 public and private pharmacies (8 urban, 6 rural).
- Clients were able to purchase up to two oral fluid-based HIV self-tests at a subsidized price of 50Mzn (0.80 USD).
- The study assessed the acceptability and use of this strategy in all participating pharmacies.

## METHODS

- To assess acceptability of HIVST among pharmacy clients, surveys were conducted as follows:
  - Pharmacy clients, independently of purchase of self-test (Months 1 and 3 of pilot)
  - Pharmacy clients who purchased a self-test and agreed to be contacted (Month 3-6 of pilot)
- To assess the use of HIVST among pharmacy clients, a survey was administered to pharmacy clients who purchased a self-test and agreed to be contacted.
- To assess uptake of HIVST kit purchase and linkage to health facility, the study team evaluated routine data collected from health facility-based and evaluation specific pharmacy-based registers.
- Descriptive analysis was performed, and Chi-square tests done for covariates comparing clients who purchased versus not.

**Table 1.** Perceptions on HIVST among pharmacy clients, comparing clients who bought versus did not buy a self-test (n=363)

	Pharmacy clients who did not buy a HIVST (n=260)	Pharmacy clients who bought a HIVST (n=103)	Total (n=363)	P-value
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	
<b>Ever tested for HIV</b>				0.487
No	43 (17%)	14 (14%)	57 (16%)	
Yes	217 (83%)	89 (86%)	306 (84%)	
<b>Ever heard about HIV self-testing</b>				<0.001
No	211 (81%)	51 (50%)	262 (72%)	
Yes	49 (19%)	52 (51%)	101 (28%)	
<b>Advantages of HIVST*</b>				
Maintains confidentiality	204 (78%)	87 (84%)	291 (80%)	0.196
Simple/ no need of health provider	118 (45%)	66 (64%)	184 (51%)	<b>0.001</b>
Result is fast	89 (34%)	44 (43%)	133 (37%)	0.13
To be able to test with my partner	35 (13%)	26 (12%)	47 (13%)	0.643
<b>Disadvantages of HIVST*</b>				
No counseling nearby	75 (29%)	36 (35%)	111 (31%)	0.255
Fear of test result	65 (25%)	22 (21%)	87 (24%)	0.464
Doubts on the quality of the test	28 (11%)	9 (9%)	37 (10%)	0.564
Fear of somebody discovering	28 (11%)	3 (3%)	31 (9%)	<b>0.016</b>
Don't know how to use it	17 (7%)	5 (5%)	22 (6%)	0.544
Too expensive	18 (7%)	2 (2%)	20 (6%)	0.061
Not able to read the instructions	4 (2%)	2 (2%)	6 (2%)	0.786
<b>Opinion on price of the test</b>				<b>0.034</b>
Very cheap	22 (8%)	7 (7%)	29 (8%)	
Cheap	22 (8%)	9 (9%)	31 (9%)	
Acceptable price	142 (55%)	73 (71%)	215 (59%)	
Expensive	73 (28%)	14 (14%)	87 (24%)	
<b>Preferred place to get a HIVST</b>				0.066
Public health facility	97 (37%)	24 (23%)	121 (33%)	
Private clinic	9 (3%)	6 (6%)	15 (4%)	
Private/public pharmacy	145 (59%)	70 (68%)	215 (59%)	
Other	8 (3%)	3 (3%)	11 (3%)	
<b>Preferred testing modality (oral versus finger-prick self-test)</b>				0.231
Oral	141 (54%)	67 (65%)	208 (57%)	
Finger-prick	103 (40%)	30 (29%)	133 (37%)	
Either	15 (6%)	5 (5%)	20 (6%)	

### References:

<sup>1</sup> Ministério da Saude (MISAU), Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE), and ICF International (ICFI), *Inquérito de Indicadores de Imunização, Malária e HIV/SIDA Em Moçambique 2015*. Maputo; Mozambique. Rockville, Maryland, EUA: INS, INE, and ICF.

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## RESULTS

### Acceptability (n=363)

- Median age = 29 years [IQR 23-37], 66% male, 60% married and 64% had a ≥ 12<sup>th</sup> grade education level.
- Persons who bought an HIVST had higher level of education, and higher self-reported Portuguese reading skills.
- 84% was previously tested for HIV (83% male; 88% female).
- The most frequently reported advantage of HIVST was confidentiality, while the main reported disadvantages were lack of counseling and fear of test result (Table 1).
- About a third preferred to get the self-test at a public health facility (Table 1).

### Use of test (among those who purchased)/ Feasibility (n=83)

- 78(94%) performed the HIV self-test.
- 9 (11%) reported it was their first time getting HIV tested.
- 53 (68%) performed the test alone; 17 (22%) performed the test with assistance of a family member.
- Self-reported easiness of test instructions and test performance was 31% and 41%, respectively.
- 29 (37%) felt they needed additional information or counseling.
- 45 (58%) revealed their HIVST result in survey response, and of these 10 (24%) reported being linked to a health facility (Figure 1).

### HIVST Uptake/ Distribution

- 1,153 adults purchased 1,356 tests
  - 70% male
  - 43% <30 years of age
- Two-thirds of the tests were sold in the 8 urban pharmacies

### Linkage to health facility

- 3 clients with a positive self-test result had registry of confirmatory testing at one of the health facilities in Zambézia

## CONCLUSIONS

- HIVST at public/private pharmacies was successfully implemented, reaching primarily males and younger persons.
- The cost, although low, may still be a barrier.
- Although many users found the test easy to perform, a perceived lack of counseling may also limit uptake, suggesting a need for additional counseling support (when requested) for clients purchasing an HIVST.
- Strategies to improve post-HIVST linkage to health facilities need to be explored.

