Progress Toward 95-95-95 and Viral Suppression Among Female Sex Workers / Commercially and Sexually Exploited Girls in Unguja, Zanzibar 2023

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BACKGROUND

- A biobehavioral survey (BBS) in Unguja Island, Zanzibar, in 2019 showed female sex workers and commercially and sexually exploited girls (girls <18 years given money/goods for sex) (FSW/CSEG) had a higher HIV prevalence (12.1%) than the general population (0.4%).
- HIV diagnosis, linkage to antiretroviral treatment (ART), retention, and viral suppression (VS) among FSW/CSEG are critical to epidemic control in Zanzibar.
- In a follow-up IBBS completed in August 2023, we measured progress towards the UNAIDS 95-95-95 goals and VS among FSW/CSEG.

METHODS

- We used respondent-driven sampling to recruit 598 women aged ≥15 years who reported living in Unguja for ≥3 months and exchanging sexual intercourse for money in the prior month.
- We assessed HIV testing and treatment history through an interviewer-administered questionnaire and offered point-of-care HIV testing as per national guidelines.
- We produced weighted estimates, reported as percentages with 95% confidence intervals (CI).

CONCLUSIONS

- HIV prevalence among FSW/CSEG in Unguja remains high. While the UNAIDS target for ART coverage has been met among FSW/CSEG living with HIV, there are still gaps in HIV diagnosis and viral suppression. Finding a detectable VL among FSW/CSEG who reported being on ART for ≥6 months is alarming.
- Prioritizing interventions that address the 1st and 3rd 95 such as expanded HIV testing, including self-testing, and removing barriers to retention in ART will help to address these gaps.

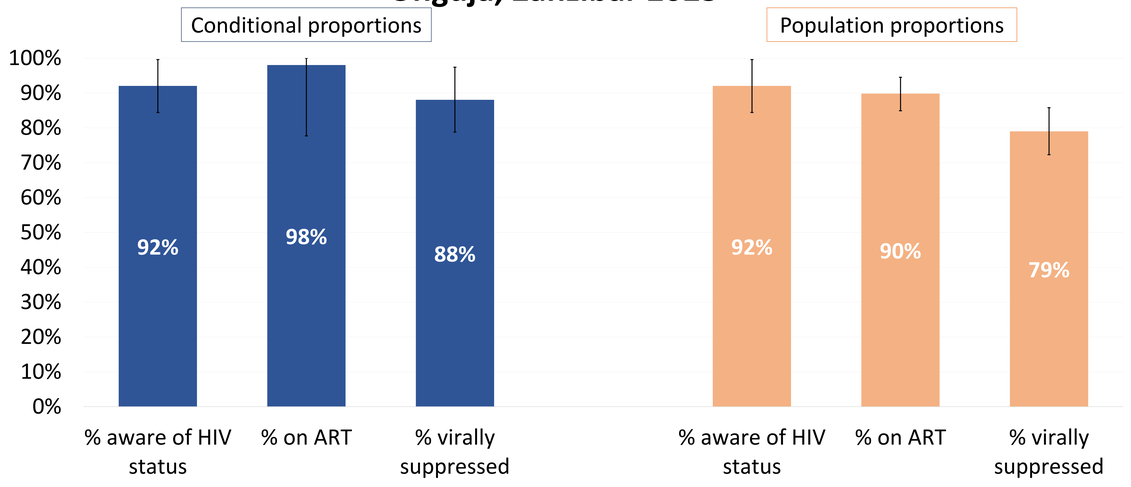
ADDITIONAL KEY INFORMATION

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Among 138 FSW/CSEG living with HIV in Unguja, Zanzibar: 92% knew their HIV status, 98% of those who knew their HIV status were on ART, and 88% of those on ART were virally suppressed. However, 13% of FSW/CSEG on ART for at least 6 months were not virally suppressed.

Progress towards 95-95-95 targets among FSW/CSEG Unguja, Zanzibar 2023



Women who disclosed a positive HIV status or were virally suppressed were categorized as knowing their HIV status. Women who self-reported ART use or were virally suppressed were classified as on ART. VS was defined as <1,000 HIV RNA copies/mL, comprising LLV (50–999 copies/mL) and undetectable VL (<50 copies/mL).

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RESULTS

- Median age was 31 years (range: 15–55 years)
- Weighted HIV prevalence was 21% (95%CI: 17–25%)
- HIV prevalence was highest among women aged ≥45 years (47%; 95%CI: 31–62%)

HIV prevalence by age group, Zanzibar 2023

	Crude n	Crude HIV prevalence (%)	Weighted percent (%)	Weighted 95% CI
15-19	0	0	0	0
20-24	8	10	9	3,15
25-29	20	14	13	6,20
30-34	23	17	16	10,23
35-39	40	42	40	29,51
40-44	27	35	37	24,49
45+	20	47	47	32,62

- Among 84 FSW/CSEG who self-reported being on ART for ≥6 months:
- 71% (95%CI: 60–82%) had an undetectable VL
- 17% (95%CI: 8–25%) had low-level viremia (LLV)
- 13% (95%CI: 5–21%) were unsuppressed

HIV viral suppression among FSW/CSEG who reported being on ART for ≥6 months, Zanzibar, 2023

