Scaling up COVID-19 vaccine uptake among people living with HIV: Insights and lessons from Kigoma, Shinyanga, and Pwani regions, Tanzania

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BACKGROUND

- People with underlying and chronic medical conditions continue to be at greater risk of severe Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and its sequelae.
- Despite people living with HIV (PLHIV) being considered a priority group for vaccination against COVID-19 , by end of October 2021, less than 1% of the eligible PLHIV in the Pwani, Shinyanga, and Kigoma regions of Tanzania were fully vaccinated.
- Through the AFYA HATUA (AH) Project funded by US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Tanzania Health Promotion Support (THPS), collaborated with Tanzania's Ministry of Health immunization and vaccination department (IVD) and the regional and council health management teams (R/CHMTs) in assigned regions to establish strategies to scale up COVID-19 vaccination to eligible PLHIV for vaccination.

METHODS

- A total of 110,733 PLHIV aged 20 years and older, from high volume PEPFAR-supported health facilities were eligible for COVID-19 vaccination (Shinyanga 60,986; Pwani 36,033; and Kigoma 13,714).
- Initially in last week of February 2022, We conducted sensitization meetings with grassroots influential leaders using the available information, education, and communication (IEC) materials.
- Vaccination points were added to outpatient departments, reproductive and child health clinics, and HIV care and treatment clinics.
- PLHIV peer educators and vaccine champions conducted community vaccination outreach services.

RESULTS

Within 6 months of intervention, 110,544 (99.8%) age-eligible PLHIV enrolled in care and treatment at AH sites were fully vaccinated against COVID-19 across the three regions: Pwani 35,848 (99.5%), Kigoma 13,710 (99.9%), and Shinyanga 60,986 (100.0%).

Figure 1: COVID-19 vaccination trend among eligible people living with HIV from 2nd March to 1st September 2022

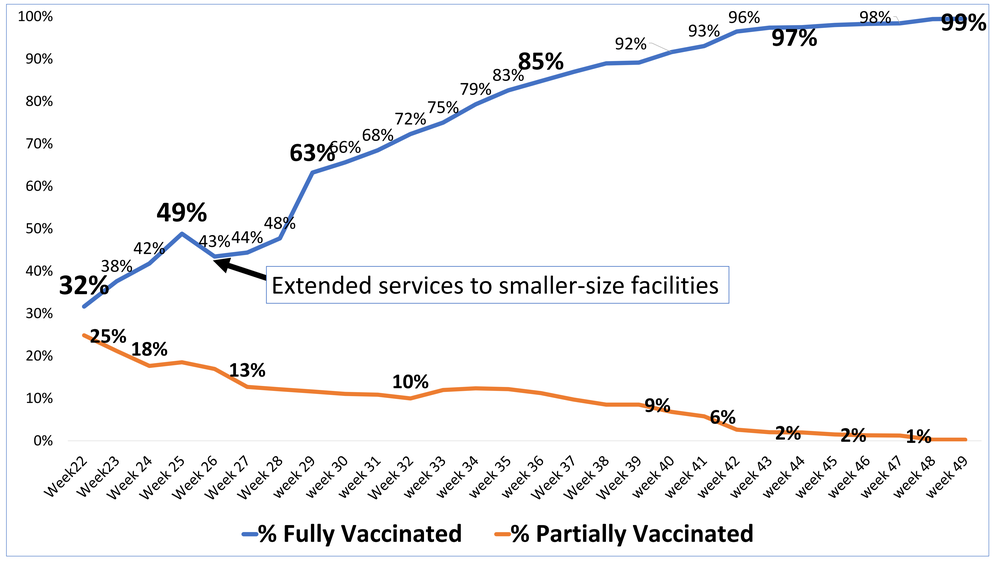
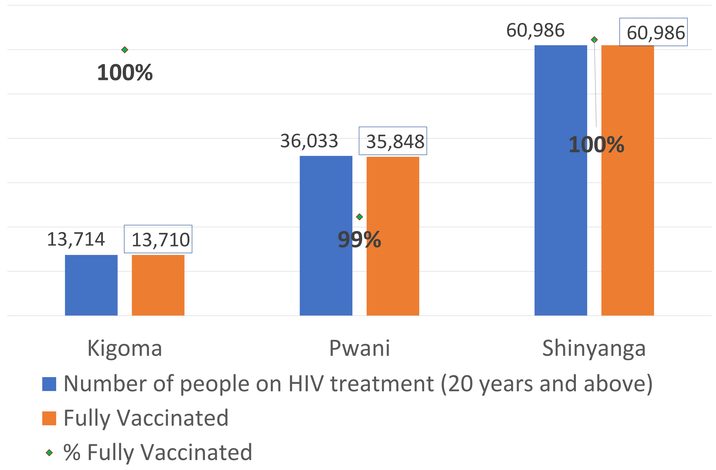


Figure 2: COVID-19 vaccination uptake among people living with HIV in Kigoma, Shinyanga and Pwani, Tanzania



CONCLUSIONS

- Data insights from the routine program monitoring indicate that nearly all age-eligible PLHIV have been fully vaccinated in these three regions.
- Collaboration with local health authorities, and influential community leaders, coupled with stable supply of vaccination commodities enabled the scaling up of COVID-19 vaccination to PLHIV.
- Use of peer educators and vaccines champions and community outreach services have a great role in enhancing uptake vaccines.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Tanzania Ministry of Health, Immunization and Vaccination Department (IVD) and People Living with HIV

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The findings and conclusions in this poster are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the funding agencies. This project has been supported by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Tanzania Health Promotion Support (THPS) under the terms of CoAG number: GH002354