HIV Pre-exposure Prophylaxis Champion Strategy Improved Uptake among Most-at-Risk Populations in Pwani Region, Tanzania

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BACKGROUND

- The Tanzania HIV Impact Survey 2022-2023 estimated adult HIV prevalence at 4.4%.
- Among most-at-risk populations (MARPs) of HIV, including women at high risk (WAHR), people who inject drugs (PWID), and men at high risk (MAHR), it's up to 36.1%.
- Social stigma and fear prevent MARPs from engaging in HIV prevention and treatment services, including HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).
- In routine practice, trained peer educators provided PrEP information and referrals but were not necessarily PrEP users themselves.
- In Pwani Region (Figure 1), we implemented the PrEP Champion Strategy to improve HIV PrEP initiation among MARPs.

METHODS

- **PrEP Champion Strategy**: We recruited, oriented, and engaged 276 MARPs who were existing PrEP users as PrEP Champions to identify networks of MARPs, provide health education, and facilitate linkage to PrEP services.
- **Timeline:** PrEP Champion Strategy implementation was for nine months (Oct 2024-Jun 2025) and baseline data for comparison was for nine months (Jan-Sep 2024).
- **Target population:** MARPs, including WAHR, PWID, and MAHR, in community-mapped hotspots (e.g., local bars, brothels, truck parking, construction, and fishing sites).
- **Implementation approach:**
  - Champions shared real-life experiences with PrEP to engage and help MARPs make informed decisions about initiating PrEP.
  - Champions provided PrEP education, including information about side effects and pill-taking routines, and escorted clients to the testing points or nearby facilities for initiation.
  - Champions were supported with airtime to help organize outreach events and transportation fare to hotspots.

The PrEP Champion Strategy more than doubled HIV PrEP initiation among most-at-risk populations in Tanzania.

RESULTS

- The PrEP Champion Strategy increased the number of MARPs reached and screened for PrEP by 83% from Jan-Sep 2-24 to Oct 2024-Jun 2025 in Pwani Region (Figure 2).
- The PrEP Champion Strategy led to more than a two-fold increase in PrEP initiation compared to baseline period (Figure 3).
- Among new PrEP initiations, WAHR comprised 98% (n=3,815), MAHR 2% (n=65), and PWID 1% (n=31).
- Most (94%; n=3,692) MARPs initiating PrEP were enrolled through community hotspots and 6% (n=219) through health facilities.

Figure 1. Map of Tanzania



Figure 2. Number of most-at-risk people screened for HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis in Pwani Region, Tanzania, from January 2024 to June 2025

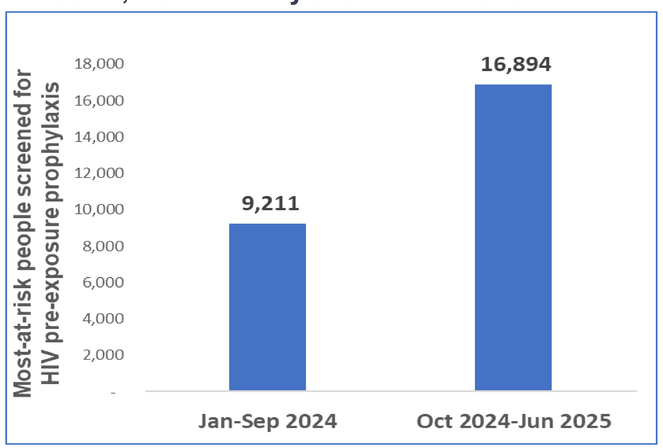
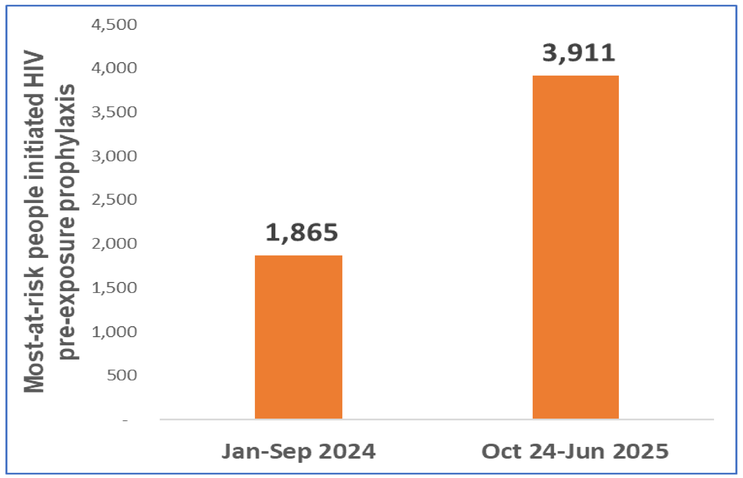


Figure 3. Number of most-at-risk people initiated on HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis in Pwani Region, Tanzania, from January 2024 to June 2025



CONCLUSIONS

- The PrEP Champion Strategy, which integrated peers with lived PrEP experience into outreach activities, resulted in improvements in PrEP initiation compared to routine practice.
- The PrEP Champion Strategy demonstrated a scalable, community-driven approach to increasing HIV PrEP screenings and initiations among MARPs that could be implemented in other regions in Tanzania.

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