

## Mini-Oral Abstract Presentations 3

# #9 Creating a Safe Space for Key Populations Within Health Facilities: Experience from Montserrado County, Liberia

Gift Kamanga, Liberia

# Creating a safe space for key populations within health facilities: Experience from Montserrado County, Liberia

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# Introduction to LINKAGES Liberia

- LINKAGES Project funded by PEPFAR/USAID and implemented by FHI360 supported 9 CSOs, including 4 KP led, and collaborated with 13 health facilities in Montserrado County, Liberia
- Provided comprehensive HIV services to key populations, including female sex workers, men who have sex with men and transgender people
- HIV prevalence in Liberia is highest for FSW (9.8%) and MSM and transgender people combined (19.8%) compared to 2.1% for the general population
- High levels of stigma against KP and PLHIV deter them from accessing life saving HIV services.
- An enabling environment that provides friendly and quality services to these individuals is paramount for a successful HIV response.



PHOTO CREDIT : FHI 360

Collaborative session between health facility and CSO personnel

# Intervention description

- Health facilities are a critical partner for HIV services in Liberia, complimenting CSOs
- LINKAGES provided capacity building to health care workers in 13 health facilities in respective catchment areas to provide friendly and KP competent HIV and other health services to in Montserrado County.
  - 4 day Health for All curriculum
  - ½ day whole of site workshop for all facility staff (including non clinical)
- LINKAGES trained and deployed 13 clinical staff (Linkage Retention Coordinators) to facilitate navigation of KP services throughout the facilities and to provide positive influence on other health care workers, creating a safe, stigma free space for KP

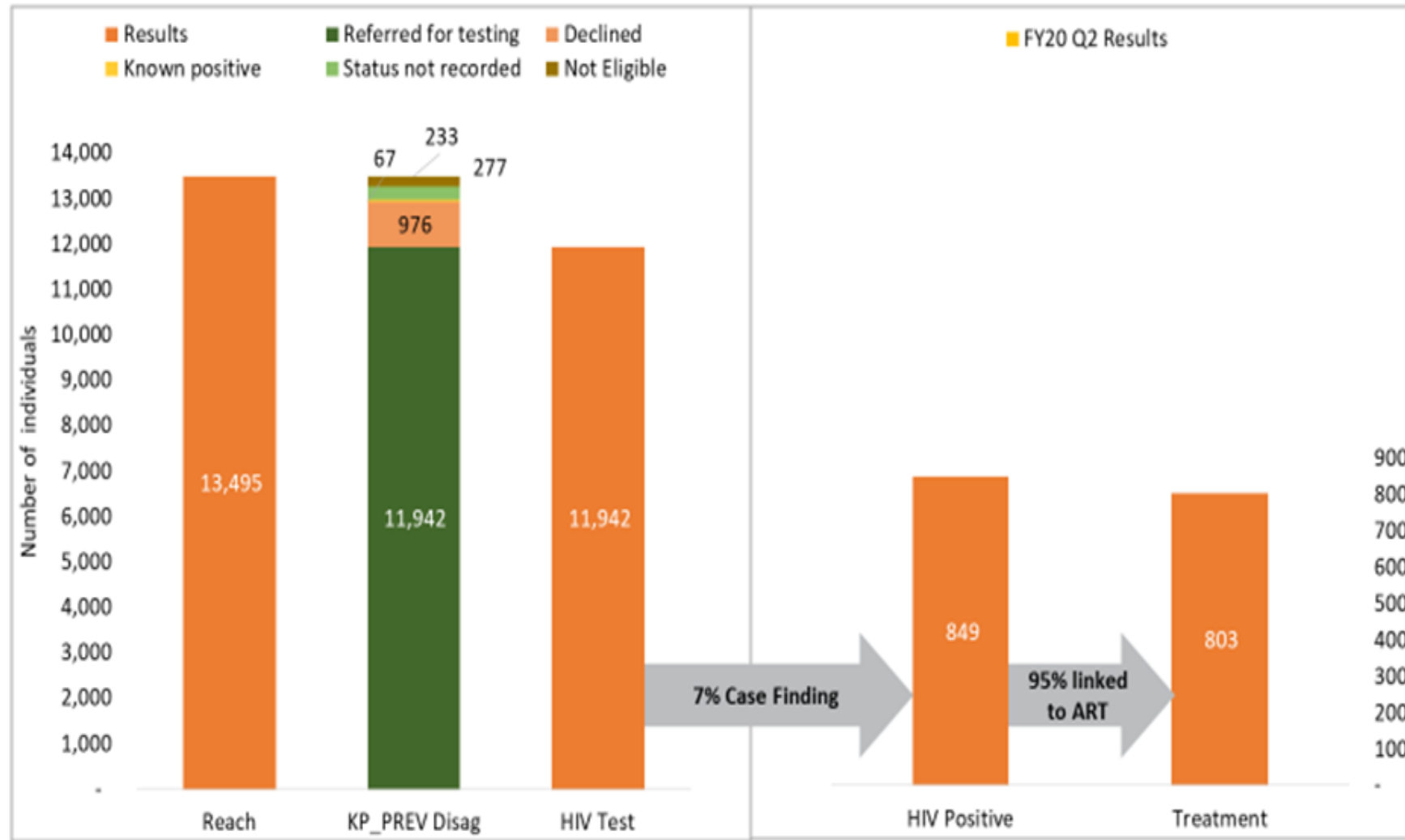
## Lessons Learned

- Over a period of 16 months, May 2019 to September 2020, facilities and CSOs reached 13,495 KPs with comprehensive package of HIV services
- Among those eligible, 92% (11,942/12,918) received HIV testing, identified 849 HIV cases (7%) and 95% ART initiation.

## Accolade

*“We are so grateful to USAID and FHI 360 because of the LINKAGES project. Your support and facilitation have necessitated the health care workers to be very friendly, and we just walk in comfortably to access health services any time and we receive very good care unlike in the past”—KP member, Montserrado County*

## Cumulative Cascade for KPs in Liberia (May 2019 – Sep 2020)



# Conclusion

- Partnerships between CSOs and health facility staff can lead to quick gains in getting all KPs on treatment and contribute to epidemic control
- Adequate sensitization and mentorship of health facility staff to be receptive to KPs and creation of safe spaces for KPs has increased quality services and demand.
- Although traditionally service provision at public health facilities has been the best option for KP friendly services, the experience from LINKAGES in Liberia has demonstrated the feasibility and usefulness of this approach and should be supported



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