



Image: Eric Gauss/Unitaid

IMPACT STORY: HIV SELF-TESTING

Closing the gap in knowledge of HIV status using self-testing

The problem

30 per cent of all people living with HIV do not know their status

Around 16 million of the 37 million people living with HIV have no access to treatment. Three in 10 are not aware that they are infected, putting them at risk of premature death and onward HIV transmission.

To find the undiagnosed—most often men, adolescents and other high-risk groups across Africa—we must circumvent common barriers to HIV testing, such as stigma, discrimination and a lack of access to diagnostic services.

The solution

Creating demand for HIV self-testing: the Self-Testing for Africa (STAR) initiative

Self-test kits offer a means to inform millions of people of their HIV status. The kits use an oral swab or blood collected from a finger prick to provide a fast diagnosis within 20 minutes. The tests can be done at home, enabling people to learn their HIV status in private. Overall, self-testing can help link more people living with HIV to treatment. Self-testing can also contribute to HIV prevention goals by linking those who test negative to voluntary medical male circumcision, preventive therapy (pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)), and other prevention health services and counselling.

Unitaid is investing US\$ 72 million through a consortium led by Population Services International¹. The HIV Self-Testing Africa (STAR) project is catalyzing the self-testing market in six Southern African countries and is being implemented in two phases². STAR phase 1 represents the world's largest evaluation of HIV self-testing to date.

Where are we now?

Phase 1 of STAR established that HIV self-tests can be used accurately by lay users, are widely accepted when offered at community level and in health facilities, and can reach high-risk populations that do not use conventional testing services. In December 2016, the WHO issued

normative guidance for HIV self-testing, largely based on data from the STAR project, as well as research from other partners and regions. More than 40 countries have adopted self-testing policies to date. The WHO pre-qualification programme, supported by Unitaid and other partners, approved the first HIV self-test in July 2017. Other HIV self-testing products are also seeking WHO pre-qualification—a certification of quality. Finally, the cost-effectiveness and affordability of HIV self-testing is improving; self-tests can now be procured for as little as US\$ 2 per kit across 50 low and middle income countries (compared to approximately US \$40 in the United States and up to US \$ 15 in South Africa, in the private sector), as a result of an agreement secured by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation³.

STAR Phase 2 and beyond - finding the missing 11 million

The second phase of STAR will involve bringing the project to scale with the distribution of 4.2 million test kits, and will test and optimize distribution models, evaluate the public health benefits at the national level, alongside the potential efficiency and cost savings from using self-testing at scale. Other funders are already investing in self-testing kits to lay the foundation for full scale-up, which could help to find one-third of all new cases identified each year from 2020.

¹ The consortium also includes the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Society for Family Health (for South Africa only) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

² Phase One - 2015-2017 and Phase Two - 2017-2020. STAR project countries - Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe (both phases), and Lesotho, South Africa and Swaziland (phase two only).

³ For one HIV Self-Test product.

IMPACT STORY

HIV SELF-TESTING

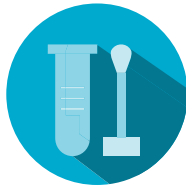
HIV Self-testing has the potential to reach those disconnected from conventional health services

Increasing Acceptability



98% acceptance among men and adolescents¹

Increasing Testing Coverage



HIV Self-Testing is reaching more men, young people and first time testers²

Empowering people



Gives individuals control of when and where to test³

Finding people living with HIV



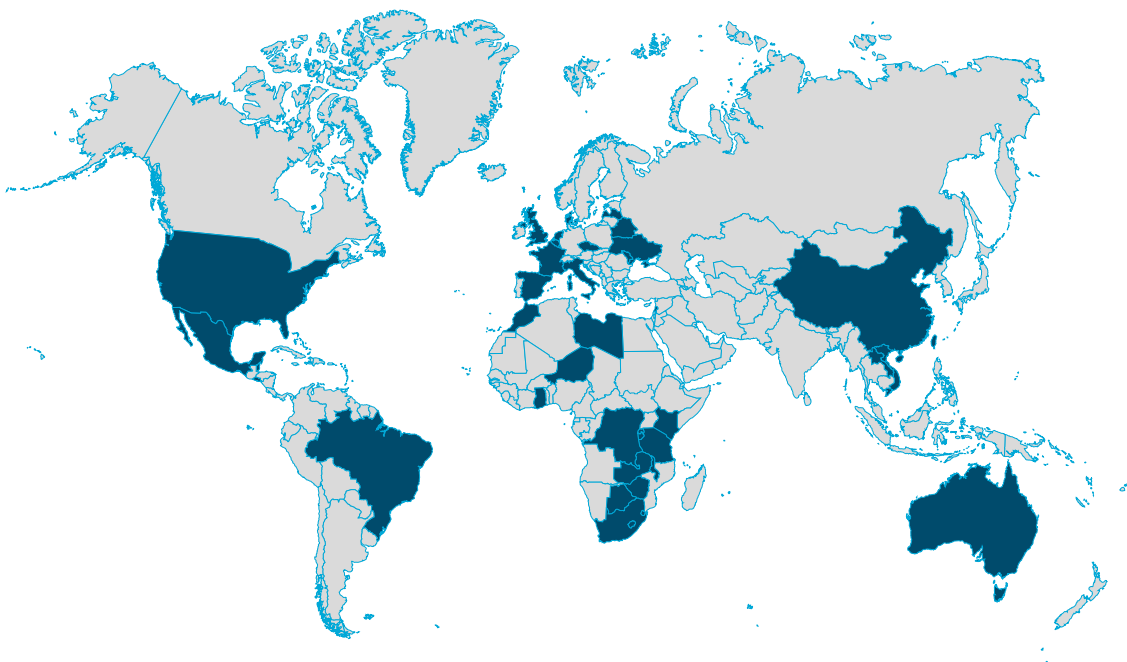
Up to twice as effective at finding people who are HIV positive than conventional testing²

Linking people to care and prevention



More people linked to HIV treatment and prevention services²

More than 40 countries have implemented an HIV Self-Testing policy in just over one year



¹ Acceptability, feasibility, and preference for HIV self-testing in Zimbabwe. Mavedzenge, S; IAS 2016

² STAR Initiation project data: Preliminary data on endline survey

³ Preferences for Models of HIV Self-Test Kit Distribution: Results from a Qualitative Study and Choice Experiment in a Rural Zimbabwean Community Sibanda E.L; IAS 2017