



PHOTO CREDIT: USAID MALI

EPIC: Maintaining Epidemic Control

CONTEXT

Mali's HIV prevalence rate of 1.1% is relatively high for West Africa and Mali is one of the few African countries where new infections are rising. HIV prevalence among key and priority populations is much higher than the national average. It is estimated that only around 62 percent of Malians living with HIV know their status. 56 percent of those who test positive are on antiretroviral therapy (ART) and just 48 percent of Malians on ART have achieved viral load suppression (Spectrum 2022). Viral load suppression helps people stay healthy and live longer, and greatly reduces the chances of an HIV-infected person passing the virus on to others. Many Malians have difficulty accessing HIV testing and treatment due to stigma and the discrimination key populations face. Difficult access to health facilities and scarcity of follow-up at community level are also challenges.

ABOUT THE ACTIVITY

With funding from the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), EpiC supports quality of care in Mali across the HIV program cascade in Mali in partnership with four local NGOs; two Key Population (KP)-led organizations; a KP focused organization; four community-based organizations, and community networks (PLHIV and KP Networks). EpiC also is partnering with the Ministry of Health through the national AIDS Commission and national referral laboratories to support 23 referral health facilities and 100 community facilities on HIV testing, care, and treatment.

PREVENTION, CARE AND TREATMENT

EpiC works through Malian partners to provide HIV testing, quickly enroll those testing positive on ART, and strengthening their retention to treatment until they achieve viral load suppression. For those who test negative, EpiC promotes peer messaging for evidence-based prevention measures such as condom use, prompt diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, regular HIV testing for individuals with high-risk behavior, access to pre-exposure prophylaxis as appropriate.

DEMAND CREATION FOR HIV SERVICES

EpiC supports Malian partners to increase demand for HIV services by helping target audiences reduce high risk behaviors, know their status, accept initiation of treatment if found to be HIV positive, and better understand the benefits of viral load suppression to maintain good health and prevent new transmissions.

BUILD CAPACITY

EpiC works with local NGOs and community partners, public and private sector providers, and governance bodies to improve HIV planning, management, service delivery, financial systems, and monitoring and evaluation. USAID supports the National AIDS Program’s Technical Working Groups and coordinates with other donors to ensure complementarity.

EpiC is continually working to improve HIV self-testing and index testing for family members and close contacts of people living with HIV. We are scaling up online outreach through social media and the highly successful Enhanced Peer Outreach Approach. Other priorities include closing the “linkage to treatment gap” by using peer navigation to get people who test positive onto ART, promoting PrEP implementation, and improving the availability and use of viral load testing to measure progress. EpiC is also investing to improve health information systems using an electronic individual tracker platform for data collection and evidence-based decision making.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE TWO FIRST YEARS

- 18,783 key population members and 21,792 priority population members reached with prevention.
- 4,313 adults and children newly enrolled on ART.
- 95% retention among 28,227 ART patients.
- 40% of those receiving ART (11,286 patients) received viral load tests.
- 88% of those receiving viral load tests (9,968 patients) with viral load suppressed.

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

FHI360

