



Differentiated Service Delivery for Sex Workers: Optimizing Testing and Linkage Strategies

Grace Kamau

Regional Coordinator, African Sex Workers Alliance

CQUIN Differentiated Service Delivery Across the HIV Cascade Workshop

August 15 – 19, 2022 | Kigali, Rwanda



Introduction – 1

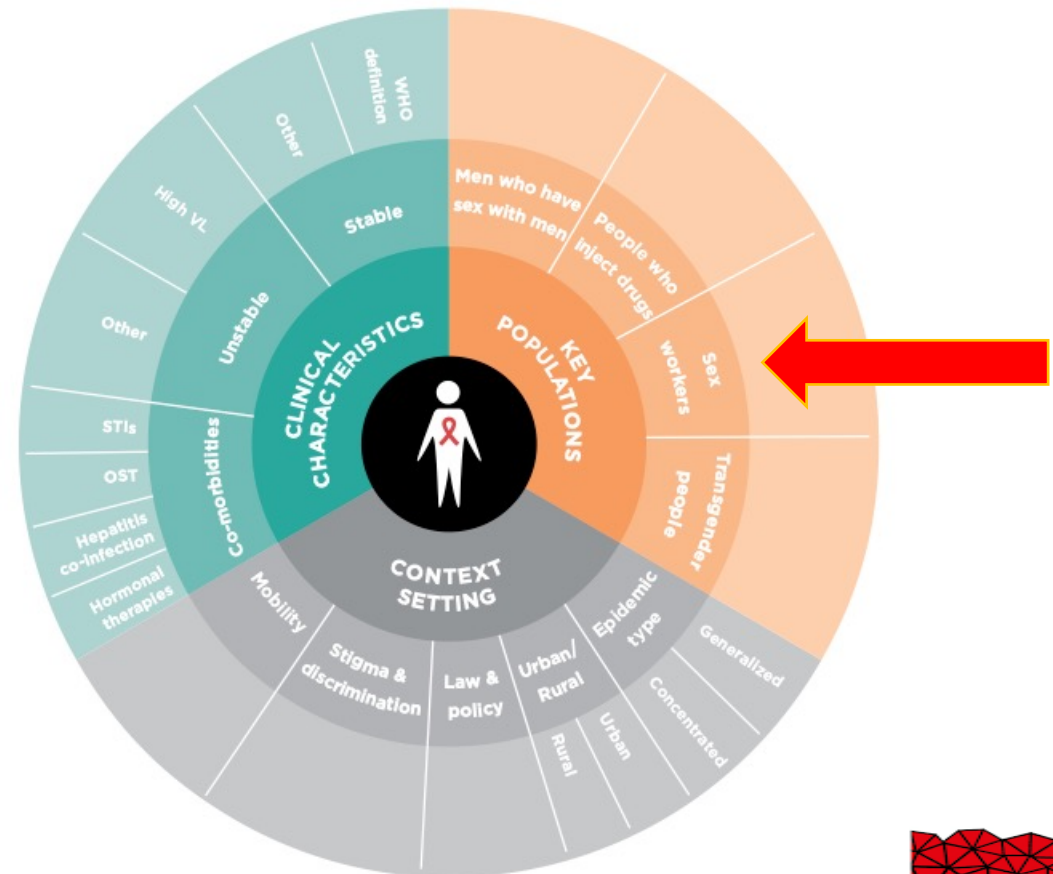
- **Sex workers are at very high risk of HIV infection:**
 - In 2021, 15% of new HIV infections in Africa were in SW¹
 - UNAIDS estimates that the risk of acquiring HIV is 30 times higher for FSW than for other adult women¹
- **Sex workers with HIV face unique barriers to linkage and retention²**
 - Timing of public ART services not convenient
 - Fear of ‘outing’ in community or to family, including fear of losing work
 - Migration, movement
 - Stigma, discrimination, criminalization

¹ UNAIDS Global Update 2022 (link [here](#))

² IAS Decision Framework for differentiated ART for Key Populations (link [here](#))

Introduction – 2

Adapting differentiated service delivery (DSD) strategies to meet the expectations and needs of SW is a critical element of the HIV response in every country



Learning from experience – Testing

Community-targeted services: **We need to meet SW where they are**

- Drop-in centers with “moonlight hours”
- Mobile clinics
- Venue-based services (e.g., at brothels, bars, truck stops, markets)
- Use of HIV self-testing strategies

Peer-led services: **Nothing about us without us**

- Specialized DSD models designed for and supported by SW

Learning from experience – Linkage

Rapid ART initiation increases uptake and reduces loss to follow-up

- Test and start: same-day ART initiation
- Community-based ART initiation: starter packs

Program design can enhance both linkage and retention:


- Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U) messaging incentivizes adherence
- Multi-month dispensing reduces visit frequency, travel and costs to clients
- Community drug distribution (including home delivery) increases convenience
- Strong focus on privacy can reduce concerns about stigma and discrimination

Barriers/Challenges related to DSD



- Insufficient number of trained public health care workers with cultural competency to provide differentiated SRHR and HIV services to sex workers.
- Lack of political will in some countries
- Limited resilience in key areas of health system, and interrupted supply of medical supplies and commodities
- Inadequate funding of DSD, leading to slow uptake and integration of the approach by sex workers programs in Africa.
- Stigma, discrimination, and provision of unfriendly services has also been a major hindrance to the full rollout of differentiated service provision





Best practices for sex workers DSD programs

- Multi-month scripting – FSW receive ART for a period of three to six months and are therefore not required to come for ART on a monthly basis.
- Community and facility-based ART groups – Where FSW on ART designate members of their communities to pick drugs for them. One person picks ART for five to ten sex worker peers and deliver the drugs to their homes.
- Fast track model - FSW on ART can present to the drop-in center and proceed directly to the pharmacy for medication refills. They are not required to see a clinician, which saves considerable time.



Conclusion and Recommendations

- African sex workers programs should adopt effective, effective and high impact service delivery mechanisms that are responsive to the needs of sex workers.
- There should be a deliberate effort to improve access to HIV treatment and prevention services, TB drugs and other sexual and reproductive health services and provide different options for support of treatment continuity.
- HIV-positive sex workers should be in the driver's seat to influence and be part of designing of national HIV care and prevention strategies that adequately reflect and respond to our lived realities and needs



Stay Connected with ASWA



Follow ASWA on Twitter:
@AfricaSexWork



Like the organization on Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/AfricaSexWork>

- Website: <https://aswaalliance.org>



african **SEX**
WORKER
alliance