



Safe in the Safe Space

Harnessing the Reach of Female Sex Workers through Social Networks for Integrated Prevention and Treatment Services: The Case of Mwanjuni Health Post

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Background

HIV prevalence among sex workers in Zambia is around 48% (UNAIDS 2021). Health service delivery where care recipients need to travel to health facilities may exclude some HIV vulnerable population groups with high-risk behaviors.

To **reduce stigma, discrimination, and long waiting times**, the Mwanjuni Health Post, a health facility in Zambia, developed an approach called **“Safe in the Safe Space”** (SSS). This approach:

- Facilitates person-centered care to key populations.
- Harnesses the reach of female sex workers (FSWs) through social networks to provide integrated primary health care services including HIV prevention and treatment.
- Seeks to create a safe and supportive environment for FSWs, build trust and relationships with the FSW community, and provide them with the necessary resources to improve their health and well being.

Intervention

The **SSS approach**, which adopts individualized preferences and supports expectations of HIV vulnerable populations, involves the use of social networks to reach FSWs and provide them with information, counseling, and medical services by:

- Mobilizing them through **social networks** to participate in HIV testing; those who test positive are immediately linked to care and support services.
- Provide FSWs with **access to combination HIV prevention** including pre-exposure prophylaxis.
- Engaging FSWs **queen mothers** through Mwanjuni Health facility in Chibombo District to facilitate access to FSWs social network to provide integrated prevention and treatment services in their safe spaces using a person-centered approach.
- Utilizing the **unstructured supplementary service data (USSD)** platform to access health services within safe spaces without worrying about stigma and discrimination, or limited privacy and confidentiality.

Results

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FSWs from the social networks were trained as key population mentors to mobilize peers to access integrated primary healthcare services including HIV prevention and treatment through the use of the USSD (*573# platform on their phones in their safe spaces).

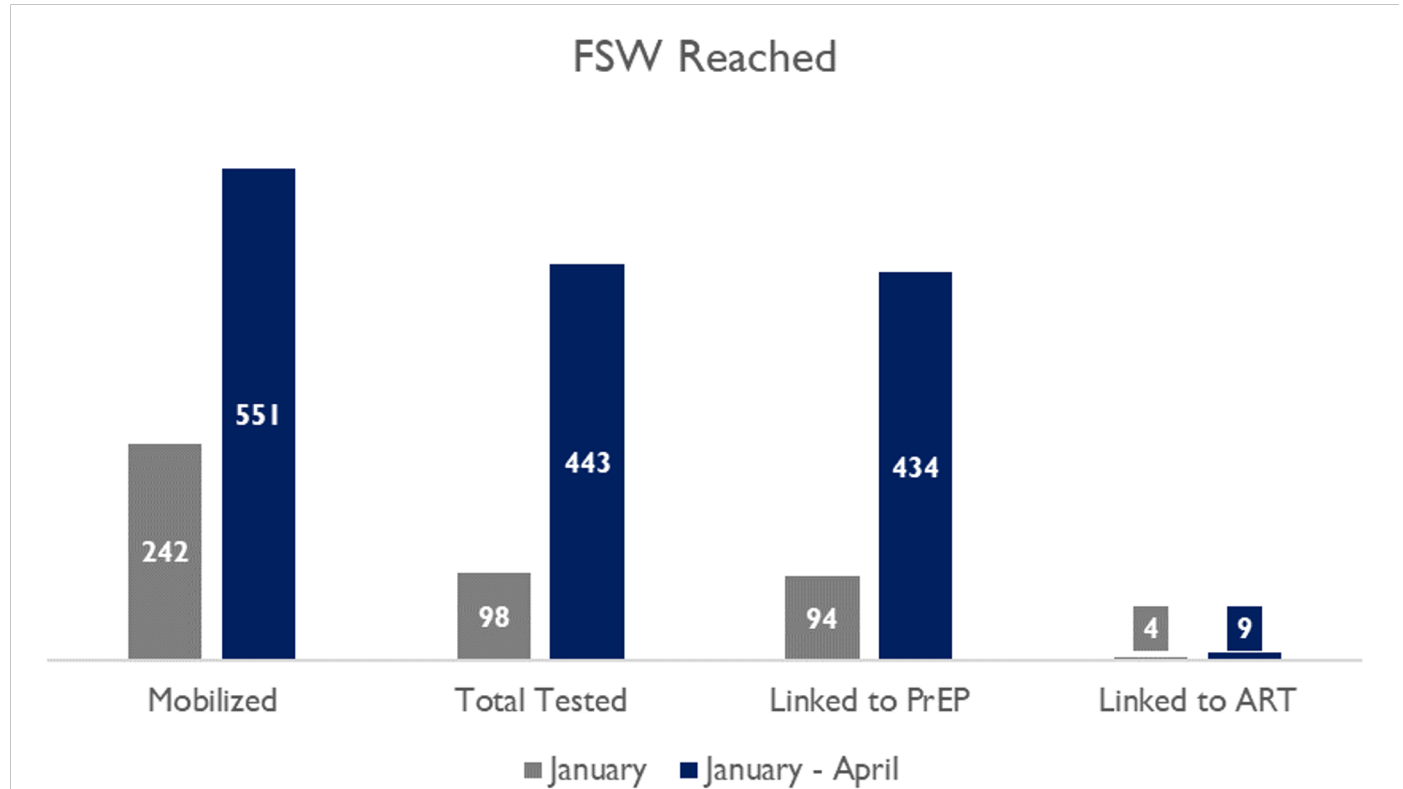
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Experienced health care service providers were given additional training in key population sensitivity and safety for the **SSS** provision.

From program inception in January 2023, through the USSD platform of the SSS model, **551 FSW were reached, 443 were tested, 434 were initiated on PrEP, and 9 on ART.**

Results

FSW reached between January and April 2023.



About USAID DISCOVER-Health

The USAID DISCOVER-Health project in Zambia, implemented by JSI, aims to improve the lives of Zambians by providing them with better access to quality health care. Launched in 2015, by December 2025 USAID DISCOVER-Health aims to:

- Initiate 141,400+ people living with HIV on ART
- Circumcise 354,700+ eligible males
- Provide Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) to 115,300+ clients
- Provide FP services to 412,400+ new clients
- 72,300+ women living with HIV for cervical cancer
- Provide antenatal care services to 191,900+ women
- Fully vaccinate 70% of the eligible population against COVID-19 in supported districts

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Thank you!

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