

## **Extended working hours increase linkage to ART services among key populations in Kilimanjaro region**

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### **Background**

Tanzania's linkage to antiretroviral therapy (ART) services remains slow among men who have sex with men (MSM) and female sex workers (FSWs). MSM and FSWs feel insecure about accessing highly visible ART clinics and find standard facility hours inconvenient. Health care workers (HCWs) are perceived as unaccepting, and criminalization of MSM and FSWs in the community leads to low use of traditional facilities. Traditional approaches to enhance service quality, including HCW counseling, peer navigation, and escorted referrals, have not been successful. The Meeting Targets and Maintaining Epidemic Control (EpiC) project introduced HCW engagement and extended working hours to complement linkage to ART services among key populations.

### **Description**

Through routine client feedback, extended clinic hours were identified as a way to better meet the needs of FSWs and MSM. An assessment was conducted in 14 care and treatment center (CTC) sites in Kilimanjaro to determine feasibility of extending opening hours to improve linkage to ART services. EpiC began an incentive system offering CTC nurses transport reimbursement for working during extended hours (before 7 a.m. or after 3 p.m. on weekdays, or on a weekend). EpiC trained 19 HCWs from 19 health facilities on key-population-friendly services during extended working hours.

### **Lessons learned**

Linkage rates increased from 82% to 99% among FSWs and MSM after the introduction of extended working hours and HCW training on provision of key-population-friendly services. Extended working hours may better meet the needs of key populations and enhance linkage rates among populations that are traditionally difficult to reach.

### **Next Steps**

There should be scale up of key-population-friendly services during extended clinic hours to all EpiC regions to increase linkage among FSWs and MSM. These interventions are simple to implement and could be tested among other populations to accelerate progress toward the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) 95-95-95 goals.

Rates of ART linkage before and after introduction of extended working hours

