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## From Key Populations to beyond: using HIV self-testing to increasingly reach vulnerable groups in West-Africa

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### ► To cite this version:

Joseph Larmarange. From Key Populations to beyond: using HIV self-testing to increasingly reach vulnerable groups in West-Africa. 11th IAS Conference on HIV Science, International AIDS Society, Jul 2021, Berlin, France. ird-04058413

**HAL Id: ird-04058413**

**<https://ird.hal.science/ird-04058413v1>**

Submitted on 4 Apr 2023

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# From Key Populations to beyond: using HIVST to increasingly reach vulnerable groups in West-Africa

Joseph Larmarange on behalf of ATLAS Team  
*HIV Self-Testing, What's next?* Symposium @ IAS 2021



# The importance of peripheral populations in West Africa

- › Key Populations (FSW, MSM, PWUD) are overwhelmingly infected by HIV
- › In Western & Central Africa (Unaid data 2020), new HIV infections in 2019: 42% among KP and 27% among clients of FSW and sexual partners of KP
- › Peripheral part of KP (e.g. occasional sex workers, hidden MSM...) are difficult to reach by peer educators and have less access to HIV testing
- › Modelling work by Maheu-Giroux *et al.* (JAIDS 2017), in Côte d'Ivoire, between 2005 and 2015, 44% of new HIV infections occurred between a FSW client and a non FSW partner

**It is crucial to reach peripheral and vulnerable populations beyond key populations to achieve 95-95-95 targets.**

## ATLAS project (2019-2022)

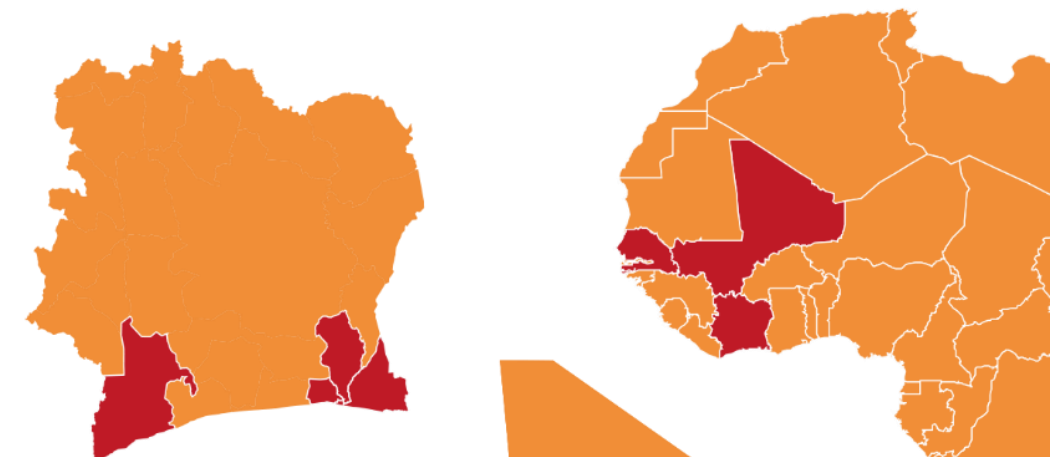
Funded by **Unitaid** (with additional funding of AFD)

Coordinated by **Solthis & IRD**

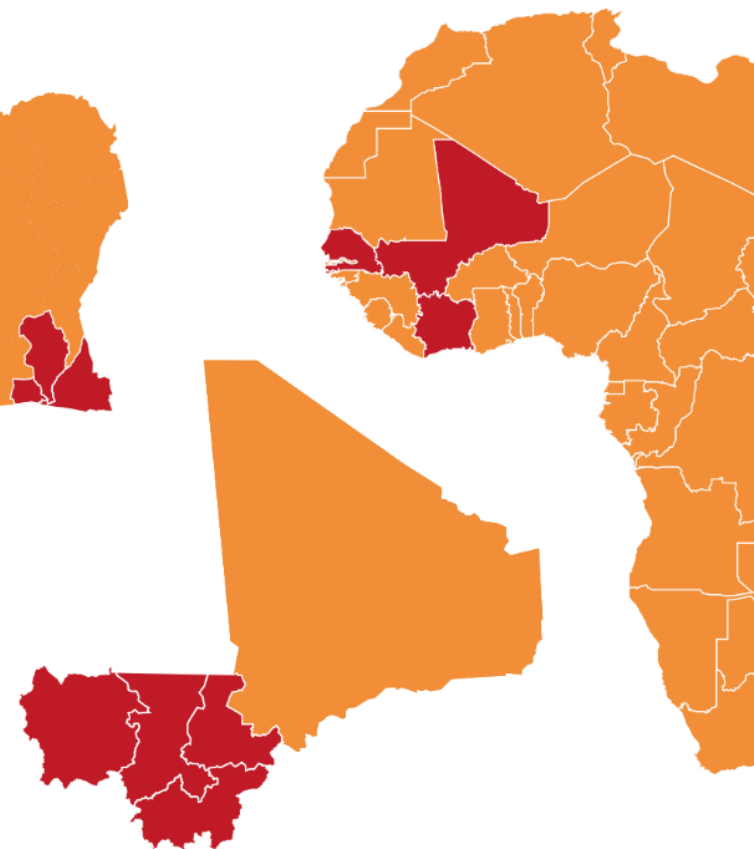
>**170** distribution sites

>**1400** agents trained for distributing HIVST

>**260 000** HIVST kits distributed since mid 2019



Côte d'Ivoire



Mali



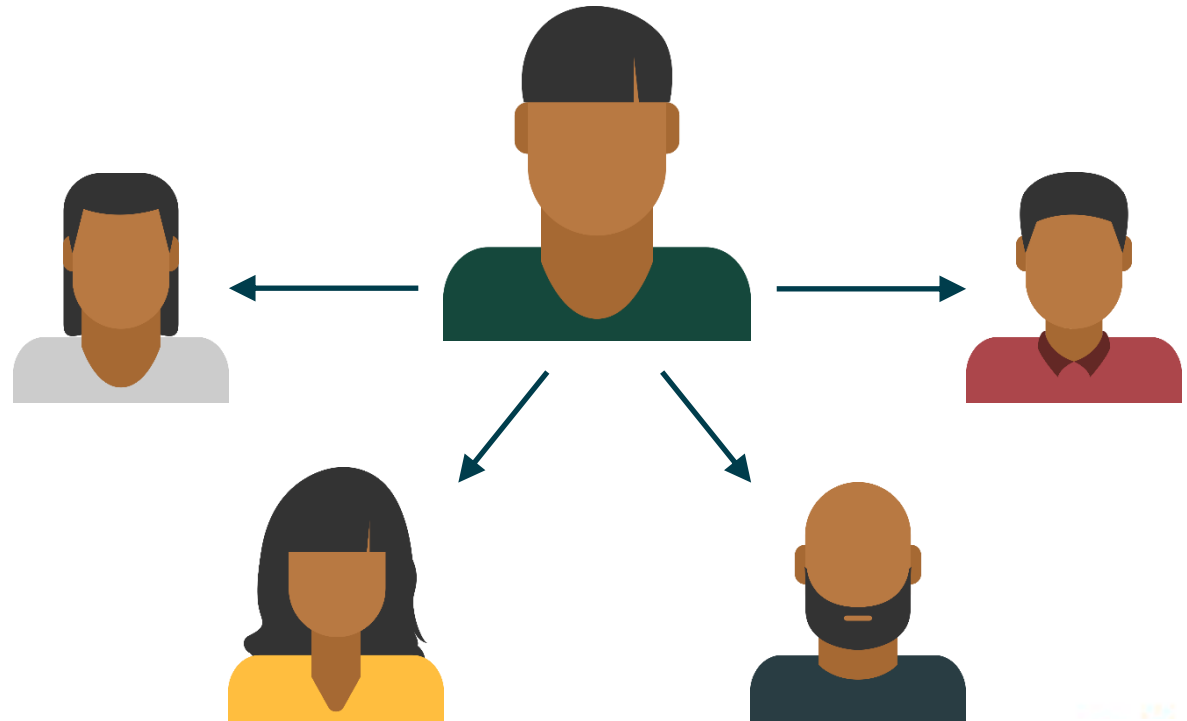
Senegal

# ATLAS self-testing distribution models

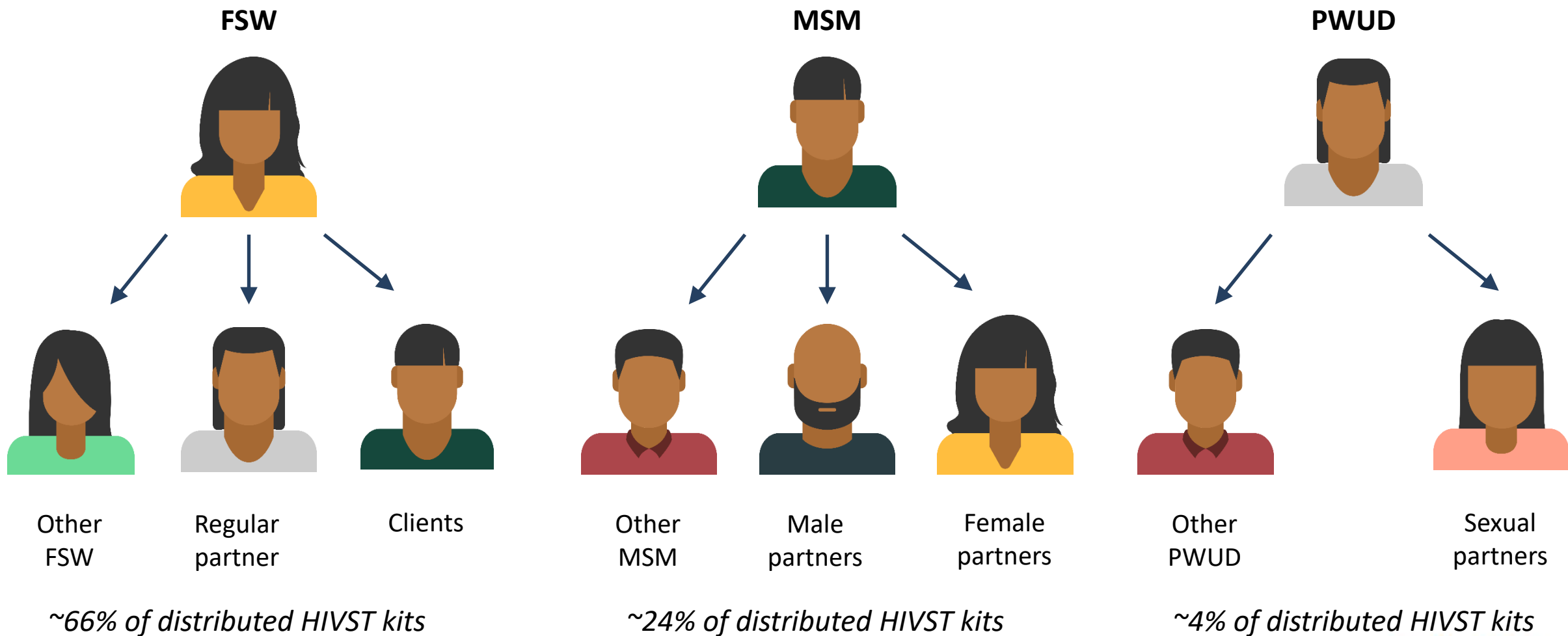
**Primary distribution**  
for personal use



**Secondary distribution**  
to be redistributed to  
partners and relatives



# ATLAS Strategy for key populations



## Secondary distribution is feasible for KP

MSM, Mali (in-depth qualitative interview)

*“Because of the self-test, I found out I was infected... Then I tested my fiancée [girlfriend] with it, but she got a non-reactive test.”*

See E-Poster PEC320 by Odette Ky-Zerbo *et al.* @ IAS 2021  
<https://theprogramme.ias2021.org/Abstract/Abstract/972>

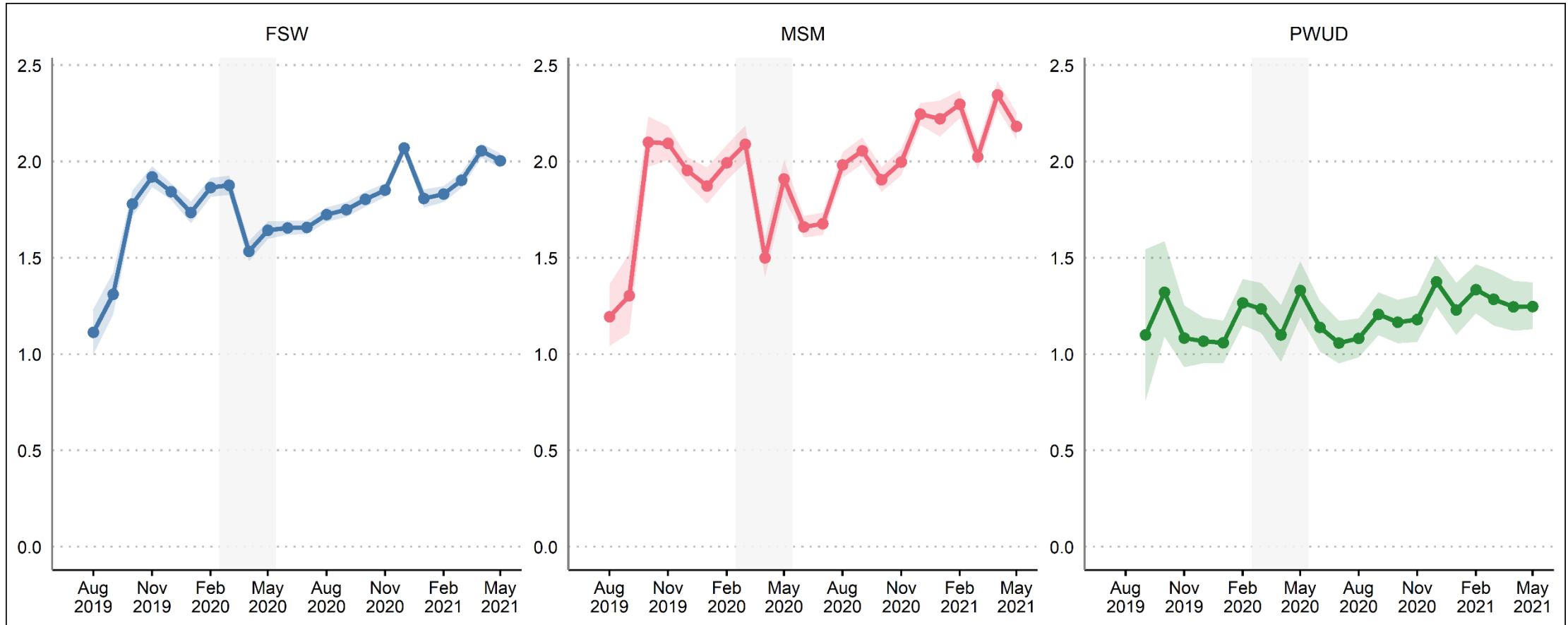
FSW, Mali (in-depth qualitative interview)

*“I also have a client who I go to in his flat [...] I gave him three [HIVST] kits, because he showed me clearly that he has another partner, so I told him that there is no problem, so he wanted that one to be tested with the self-test too.”*

**Qualitative survey among HIVST users**  
Detailed results to be presented  
by Odette Ky-Zerbo @ ICASA 2021

# Increase of secondary distribution over time

Mean number of HIVST kits distributed per primary contact (outreach activities targeting KP)



**More information:** Kra Kouassi et al. "Introducing and implementing HIV self-testing in Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Senegal: what can we learn from ATLAS project activity reports in the context of the COVID-19 crisis?" *Frontiers in Public Health* (<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2021.653565>)



# Field adaptation

## Direct distribution to secondary targets

- > Following suggestions from peer educators, they have been invited to distribute HIVST kits directly to secondary targets when relevant (for example a sexual partner of KP seen on site)
- > Other strategies have been developed, e.g. HIVST kits left at the reception of a brother/“love hotel” to be redistributed to the clients

## In the context of sanitary measures (Covid-19)

- > Relocation of activities
- > Use of social networks (Facebook, WhatsApp...)
- > Integration of hygiene measures...



Maintien de la dispensation de l'autodépistage du VIH en contexte Covid-19 : retours d'expériences et bonnes pratiques du projet ATLAS

Janvier 2021

Projet de promotion et déploiement de kits d'autodépistage du VIH Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Sénégal



available at  
<https://atlas.solthis.org/>

## Profile of HIVST users

- › Phone survey conducted between March & June 2021
- › Survey flyers distributed with HIVST kits, inviting people to call anonymously a toll free phone number
- › 2615 participants
- › Despite some recruitment biases, 1/3 received their HIVST kit through secondary distribution (friend, sexual partner, relative...)
- › 41% were first-time testers (first HIV test in their lifetime)
- › 50% perceived themselves as not exposed at all to HIV risk
- › MSM-based channel:
  - › 1/10 of participants were female
  - › 45% of males did not report any male sexual partner (“hidden MSM”)
- › FSW-based channel:
  - › 1/2 of participants were male

**Phone survey among HIVST users**  
Detailed results to be presented  
by Arsène K Kouassi @ ICASA 2021



## To conclude...

HIV self-testing and secondary distribution is feasible and sustainable among key populations in West Africa.

Our results show that HIV self-testing is an opportunity to reach, beyond key populations, vulnerable groups who never tested before.

# PARTNERS

## Consortium



## Funding



## Technical partner



## Implementation partners

### Côte d'Ivoire

Ministère de la Santé et de l'Hygiène Publique  
PNLS



Alliance CI  
Aprosam  
Arc en Ciel  
Ariel Glaser  
Blety  
Eloé  
Espace Confiance  
Heartland Alliance  
Orasur  
Ruban Rouge

### Mali

Ministère de la Santé et des Affaires sociales  
HCNLS



AKS  
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PSI  
Soutoura

### Sénégal

Ministère de la Santé et de l'Action Sociale  
CNLS



CTA  
CEPIAD  
Enda Santé

## Partner projects



## Research partners

