

## **RAMP Project Abstract: KALANGALA, UGANDA**

**Project Title:** Assess PEP and PrEP awareness among high-risk groups in Kalangala, Uganda

**Project Type:** Long-term Project 9 – 12 months On-site

**Proposed Project Dates:** On-site between May 2023 – April 2024

**Project Site:** Uganda Virus Research Institute-International AIDS Vaccine Initiative

### **Project Overview:**

Uganda Virus Research Institute-International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (UVRI-IAVI) program conducts HIV vaccine and prevention trials under the HIV Vaccine Trials Network and HIV Prevention Trials Network. The program also conducts basic sciences and epidemiological research in HIV, TB, Malaria and other related diseases. UVRI-IAVI is located in Nakiwogo, Entebbe, Uganda. We have 20 years' experience in working with the fisher folk and sex workers in the fishing communities. For this project, the scholar will work with social scientists and community engagement officers at the program. The scholar will also have an opportunity to work and interact with a team of highly qualified and experienced investigators. This will be a long-term project of 9 - 12 months with 8 months spent at the program. The scholar will learn Community-Based Participatory Research approaches and qualitative data collection methods and will obtain information on awareness and knowledge of (Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) and Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), and barriers and facilitators to its access and use among the fisher folk and, sex workers. Once data collection is completed, the scholar will analyze the data with guidance from their mentor and prepare an oral presentation and manuscript for publication. In case the COVID -19 pandemic doesn't allow the scholar to be on site, a number of activities will be done remotely including, but not limited to data collection, entry, and analysis.

### **Project Summary:**

This project aims to assess awareness and knowledge of PEP and PrEP among high-risk groups (fisher folk and sex workers). The prevalence of HIV will also be determined. The project will enroll up to 616 high risk groups (350 sex workers and 266 fisher folk ). A semi-structured questionnaire will be used to obtain participant demographics, awareness, knowledge, use, barriers, and facilitators of usage of PEP and PrEP. Qualitative interviews with the participants will be conducted to understand the barriers and facilitators of usage.

With our strong community engagement structures, we will work with community leaders, bar owners, fishing communities, peers to obtain participants. Since the high-risk groups especially sex workers are stigmatized culturally and legally constrained to carry their activities, we will use a toll-free line to have access to these participants and agree on the best location for the interview and HIV testing in order to maintain high levels of confidentiality. Snow ball sampling will be used especially with the sex workers. HIV testing will be done to determine HIV prevalence. HIV testing will be done using the National testing algorithm. Once data is obtained, it will be analyzed and a manuscript for publication written.

**Regulatory requirements for the project and plans for completing them:**

IRB (Institutional review Board) approval will be obtained from the Uganda Virus Research Institute Research Ethics Committee (UVRI REC) and the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST).

Before data collection from the participants, they will have to consent to the study by signing consent forms to allow us collect data from them. Information collected from the study participants will be kept confidential. Also written permission will be obtained from the district health offices in Kalangala to carry out the study in the area. These will be completed by the investigator.

**Expected Deliverables:**

- Questionnaires to be used by the study to collect data
- Data collected from the field
- Study recommendations
- Presentation of study findings at the HVTN Full Group Meeting (May 2024 in Washington, DC)
- Manuscript for publication

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