

# Promoting Male Involvement in ASPIRE: The Zimbabwean Experience

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# Rationale

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- Zimbabwe is a patriarchal society
  - >90% of participants in HIV prevention research are married and depend on partners for financial support
- Enlisting male partner involvement perceived to be an important component of women's successful uptake of female initiated HIV-prevention methods.
- Previous clinical trials (MIRA, VOICE) showed:
  - Disclosure of study product use and partner approval have been significantly associated with women's acceptability and consistent use of the products
  - An essential component for determining the efficacy of INDs in HIV prevention trials.



# Rationale

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- It is against this background that we scaled-up male involvement activities in ASPIRE.
- Male involvement is useful:
  1. As a recruitment strategy
  2. As a retention method
  3. As an adherence strategy



# Male engagement in recruitment

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- Started by consulting CAB on best strategy
- The outreach team has had several activities in the community aimed at male partners of potential participants.
- The key factors are:
  - Making the men feel honoured/respected
  - Making them understand they are an integral and indispensable component of the study,
  - Without male partners' support, it would be difficult to achieve our objectives.

# Male engagement in recruitment

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- At Seke South the team had an FGD with a group of men from a densely populated resettlement area through the local leadership and CAB. Attended by 15 males
- The men opened up, and made it clear they also perceived themselves to be at risk, and they understood the need for more HIV prevention methods.
- Reiterated the need for healthy women via: “*Musha mukadzi*” a popular saying implying that a woman is the homemaker, so if a woman is healthy, then the whole household can be healthy
- Outcome - a total of 11 participants came through for screening from this area, with 8 having been enrolled to date.



# Male engagement in recruitment

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- At Zengeza the outreach team has given 2 study overviews to men in the surrounding farms, which are densely populated with high degrees of idleness and sexual immorality.
- These were given during lunch hour while the men were taking a break.
- Outcome: 24 women were sensitised from referrals by these men.
- 8 women were pre-screened at the farm, 4 were screened at the clinic and 1 has been enrolled so far.



# Male engagement in recruitment

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- The Spilhaus outreach team has also targeted male dominated workplaces like construction companies and tobacco auction floors, since the clinic is located in an industrial area.
- They have also targeted places where males gather like shebeens and at the cobblers.
- They give overviews and then provide their contact details to those interested to know more.
- 10 Meetings have been held, on average 2 meetings from each recruitment community.
- Outcomes:
- One male actually invited the outreach team to his home and the partner has successfully enrolled in ASPIRE.
- The clinic has received 8 drop in clients who have been referred to the clinic by their male partners.



# Male engagement in recruitment

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- We have also made use of our protocol trained drivers to sensitise males during times when females are being addressed.
- Those with questions afterwards are referred to the outreach workers for clarifications.
- Depending on clinic burden, male clinicians will also accompany the outreach teams to help address males.
- Zim men like men's forum like "*Padare*"

# Plans for male engagement in retention and adherence

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- Plans in our Community Involvement Workplan to engage the CAB to sensitise men about partner support in ASPIRE.
- Planned retention meetings with enrolled participants, and we will encourage them to bring their partners.
- Possibly have a soccer match: partners vs. staff
- During these meetings the male partners will get a chance to raise their concerns in separate meetings.

# Plans for male engagement in retention and adherence

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- Male partners will interact with male members of the team
- Forum to ask sensitive questions which they feel they can't ask female staff
- Women are encouraged to discuss the ASPIRE study with their partners during screening, and discuss their participation at enrolment.

# Conclusion

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- All these male engagement activities will result in timely **recruitment** of high risk women, **retention** rates >95%, good **adherence** and, combined with **data** of excellent quality and remarkable participant **safety**, we will achieve our goals for ASPIRE.
- At the success of ASPIRE, the Zimbabwe team will proudly say:



Thank you

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