

Promoting and creating awareness of HIV/AIDS in the black African communities in Luton, United Kingdom.

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Background

Across Luton, HIV rates among men who have sex with other men as well as heterosexual black African men and women continue to go up. In 2015, 622 Luton residents were HIV positive accessing care, of which 470 people were seen and treated in Luton, 409 people were of Black African origin (PHE, 2016). Black African men and women are advised to have an HIV test regularly. However, the uptake in HIV testing remains relatively low in Luton partly due to stigma around the virus. In 2017, 'Take Action Now and U Test 4 Life' project was launched in Luton. It was aimed at reducing new infection rate of HIV, promoting early diagnosis, setting up testing clinic and challenging stigma associated with HIV /AIDS in the black African communities in Luton.

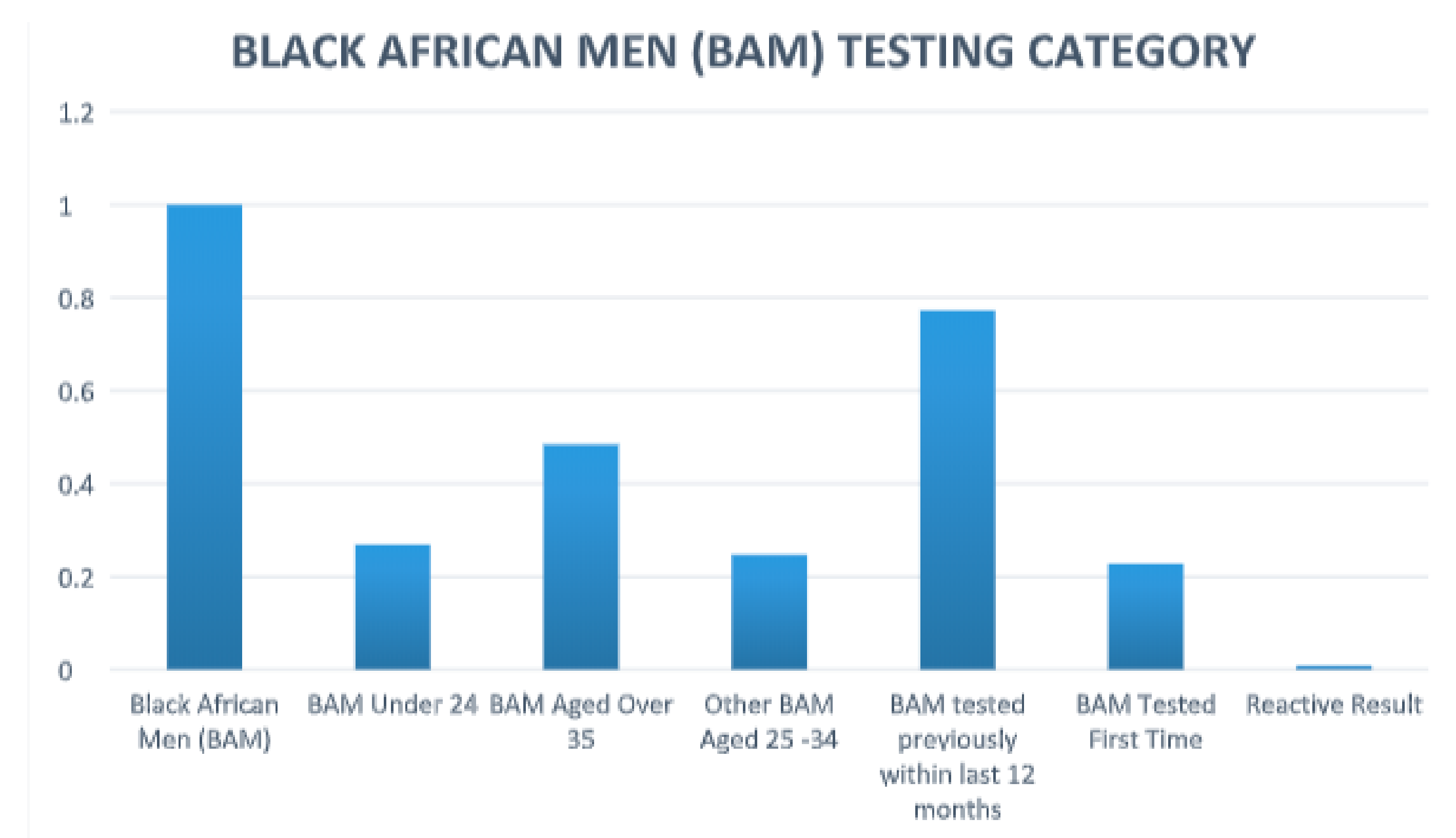
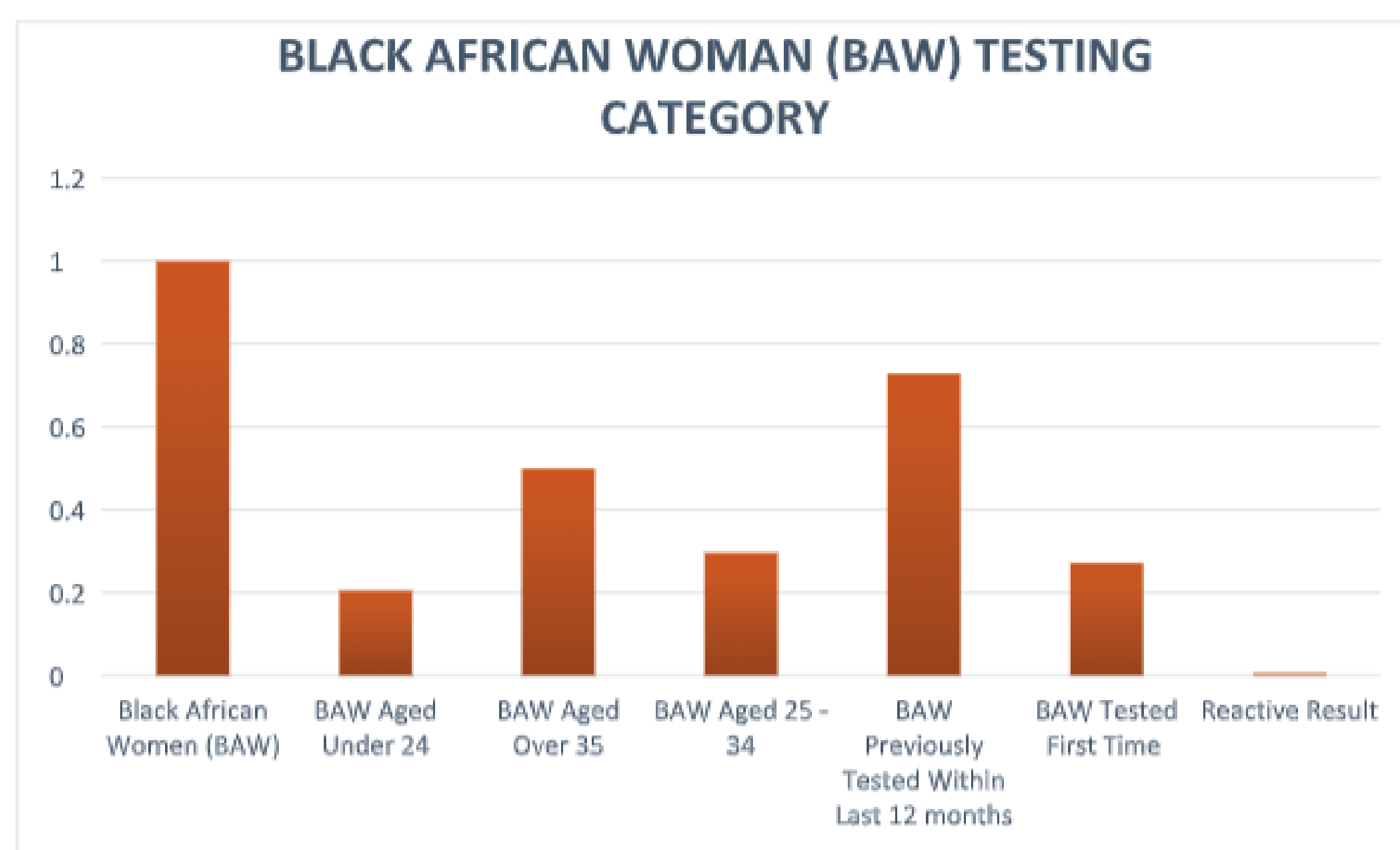
Methods

- Organised HIV Health & Multi - Faith Conferences.
- Engaged participants on face-to-face and group discussions.
- Set up free and confidential HIV testing clinics in black African Churches.
- Advertised the project in the target communities, in churches and on social media.
- Had interviews and presentation on radios in Luton.
- Data collected and analysed on the number of people engaged and tested for HIV.

Take Action Now And U Test 4 Life

OUR VISION!

A world where people affected by HIV
do not experience poverty,
ill health and prejudice.



Results: 2961 black African people engaged and tested for HIV. 77% and 73% black African men and women aged over 19 years had tested previously within the last 12 months and know their status. 23% and 27% of black African men and women tested for the first time. 1% of black African men and women testing categories had reactive results.



Conclusion: HIV is often a topic that people avoid talking about it, which leads to a culture of shame and misinformation. HIV is a virus. It doesn't define anyone. It doesn't contribute or take away anything from an individual's worth. It is a health problem that we all need to discuss it and tackle together. It is important to adopt effective anti-stigma approaches to include improved information on HIV treatment and prognosis, engagement with faith communities in anti-stigma and anti - discrimination work.