

HIV SCREENING BY ORAL FLUID TESTS (OFT) AMONG FEMALE SEX WORKERS USING DRUGS IN YALA PROVINCE, THAILAND

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BACKGROUND

The APASS team, working with drug users in the three southern border provinces, has identified significant gaps in HIV testing among sex workers who use drugs. Drug use and sex work pose a dual risk, coupled with a lack of awareness of government service constraints and widespread stigma. These challenges hinder service utilization and contribute to social discrimination, particularly among Thai Muslims in the southern border provinces.

OBJECTIVE

This study aims to elicit data on the implementation of HIV testing and harm reduction strategies among sex workers who use drugs in the three southern border provinces of Thailand.

DESCRIPTION

During 2023-2024 Betong District, Yala Province, Thailand, APASS will be providing mobile clinics through a partnership between the government and NGOs. The delivery model includes health screening and HIV screening using the Ash IV Oral Flu Test (OFT) kit at workplaces or by appointment, allowing service staff flexibility to address service-time-related issues. and provide initial screening and psychological counseling to interested individuals.



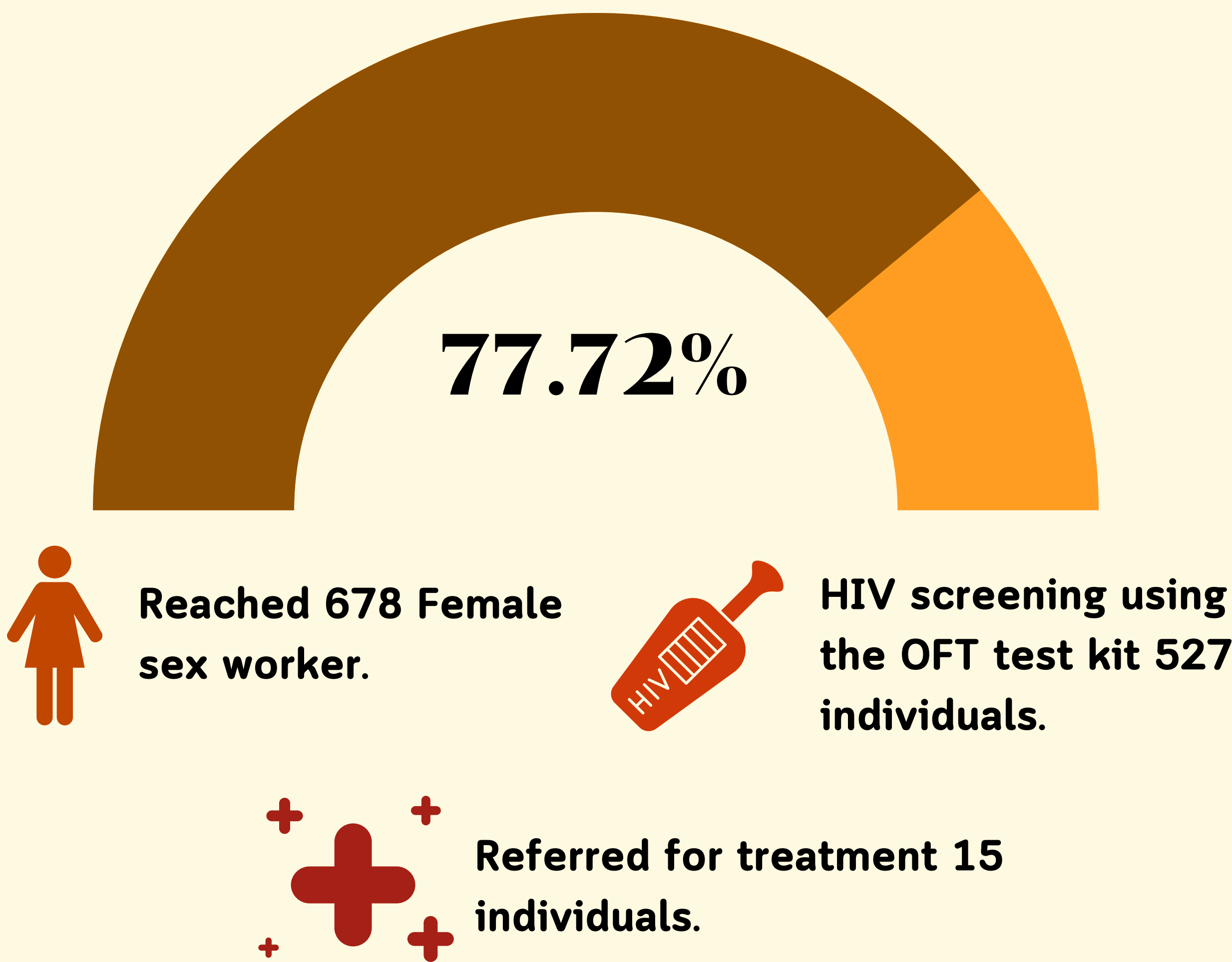
CONCLUSION

The mobile HIV screening clinic, using the OFT test kit, has proven to be an important tool in overcoming the barriers faced by sex workers who use drugs. This approach creates a safe and welcoming environment, free from stigma and discrimination, ensuring consistent, timely, and lifestyle-appropriate services. Comprehensive support, including peer-to-peer services, distribution of protective equipment, and ongoing follow-up, is an important and effective strategy tailored to the specific needs of women who use drugs.



RESULTS

APASS reached 678 sex workers, of whom 77.72% (527) underwent HIV screening using the OFT test kit. Of these, 2.84% (15) were reactive and immediately referred for treatment. Both cases were confirmed as HIV positive, resulting in referrals for antiretroviral therapy and ongoing follow-up. All 678 received ongoing support, including information on harm reduction, HIV prevention, and mental health counseling.



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