

Camp model for Viral Load testing in North East India (September 2020 – March 2021)

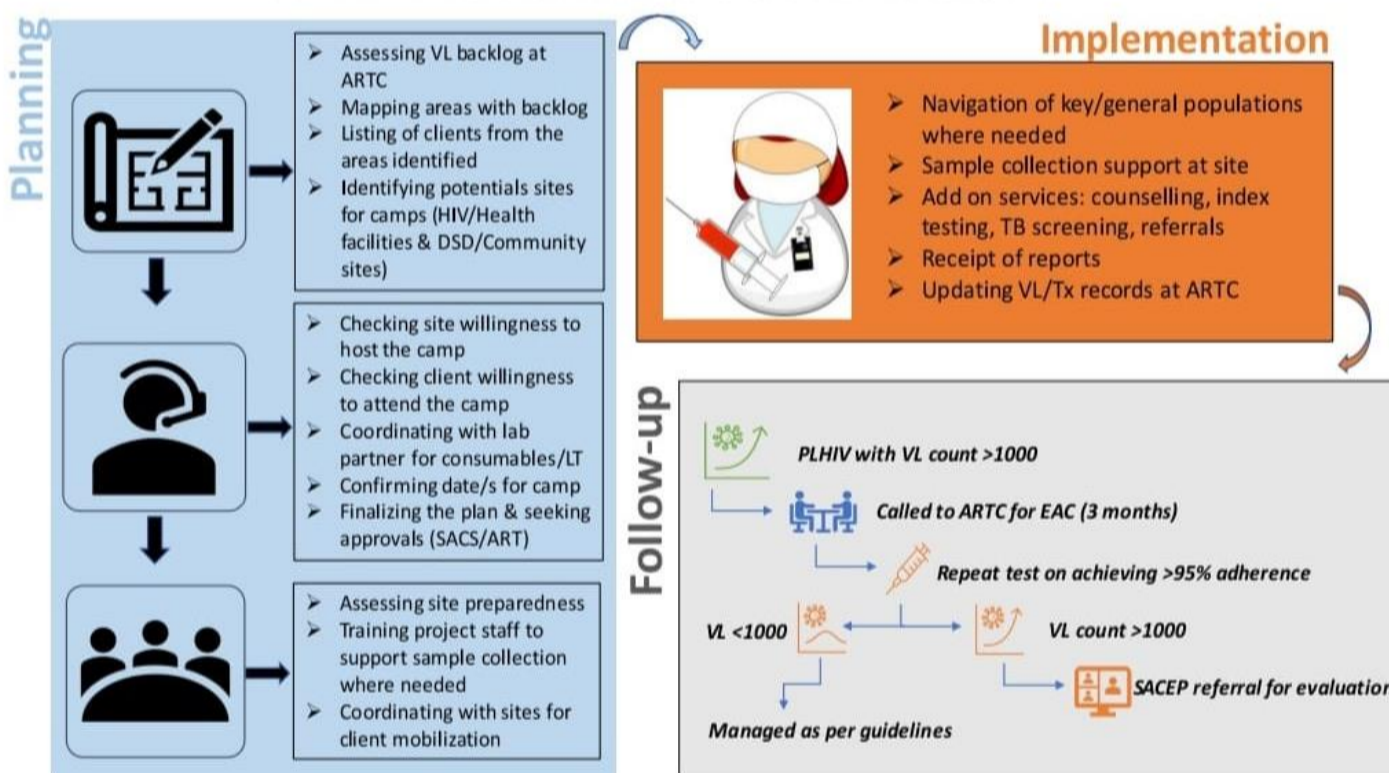


Background

I-TECH India in partnership with CDC and PEPFAR provides Technical Assistance (TA) to the State AIDS Control Societies (SACS) in the states of Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland of the Northeast region in India for the effective implementation of HIV Care and Treatment programme for the People Living with HIV (PLHIV).

Viral load testing is crucial for monitoring the patient response to Antiretroviral Treatment (ART). The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the ART services essential for viral suppression, risk reduction and maintaining quality of life of the PLHIV, including children. Most of the ART centers (treatment sites) were converted into COVID Care Centers and ART centers were temporarily closed or shifted out of the hospital premises. Restricted mobility and suspension of transportation services resulted in delay of timely ART refill / delivery and testing services affecting treatment adherence and monitoring. Furthermore, latest viral load (VL) result is mandatory for transition to Dolutegravir (DTG) based regimens (recently introduced in the national programme for rapid viral suppression).

Process for client mobilization and result utilization







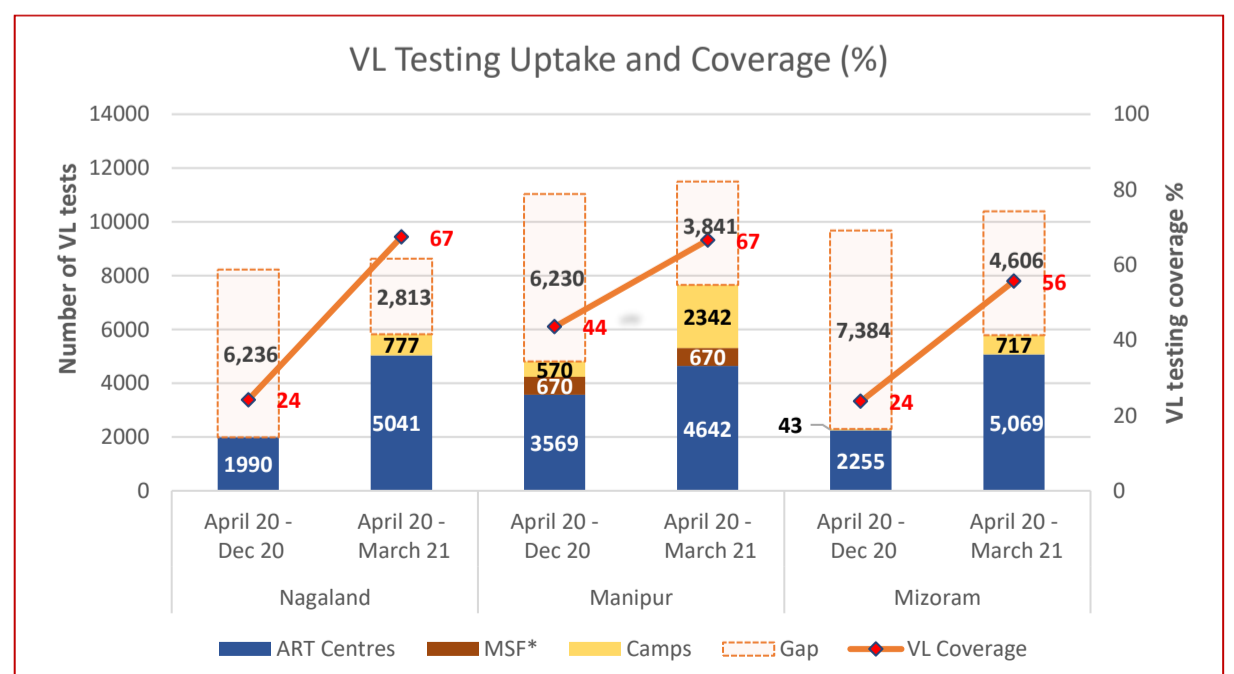
Interventions

To improve viral load (VL) coverage in the region, I-TECH India initiated a model on 'camp-based VL sample collection' in Manipur in September 2020. Under this model, PLHIV eligible and due for VL were mobilized for sample collection through community outreach at specified sites, outside the ART centers.

570 PLHIV were tested in Manipur through camps during September – December 2020. Based on the learnings from the camps conducted in Manipur, I-TECH India expanded the model to states of Mizoram (December 2020) and Nagaland (January 2021). I-TECH India provided support in the planning and implementation of this model including follow up.

Key highlights

-  **112 camps**
-  **76 Sites**
-  **3,836 PLHIV tested in 3 states**
91% virally suppressed
38% tested for the first time
-  **Key Population tested:**
PWID - 20%
MSM - 1%
FSW - 0.8%
TG - 0.3%



*I-TECH conducted VL testing in Manipur with the support of Medicines Sans Frontiers (MSF) when sample collections were halted due to the pandemic.

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