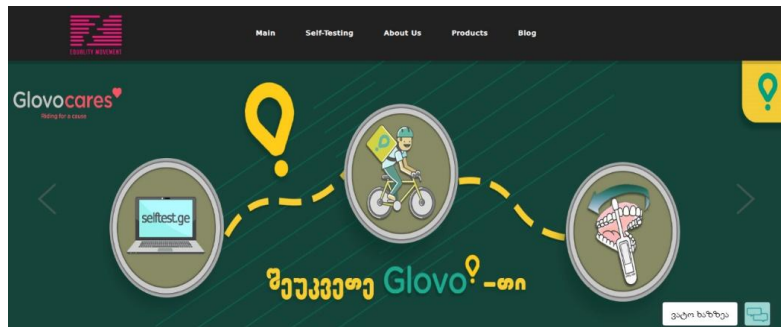


Innovative testing approaches – from self-testing to digital outreach



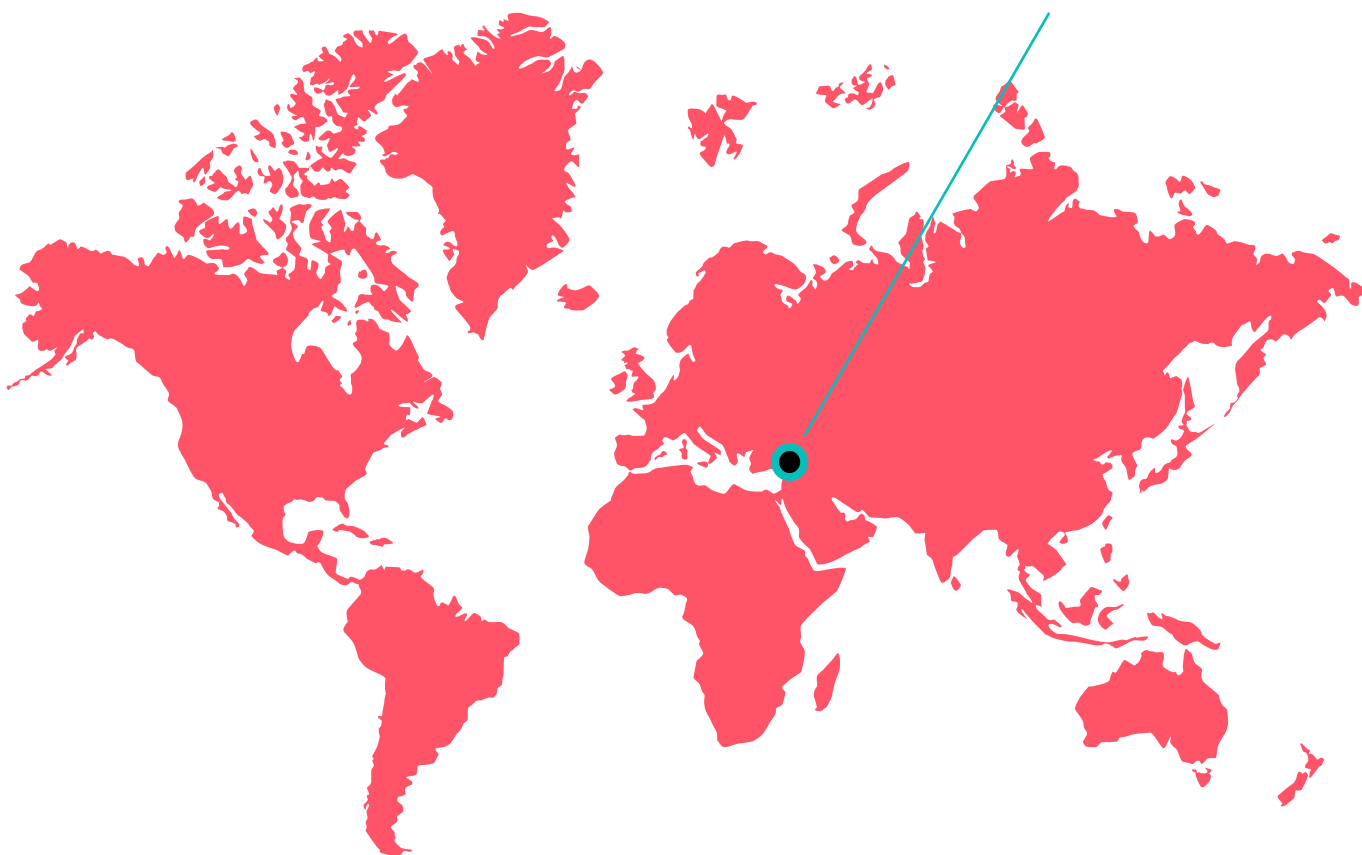
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November 20, 2025, Tirana, Albania

About Georgia



Georgia



Brief information:

- General population: 3,7 mln

Estimated sizes of the key populations:

- PLHIV – 9500 (*Spectrum 2023, UNAIDS*)
- MSM – 23268 (2023)
- Female sex workers – 6 715 (2024)
- PUD - 51 000 (2022)
- *Transgender people – 943 (2024)*



Epidemiological situation

HIV prevalence among general population - 0.4%.

HIV prevalence among KPs:

KPs	HIV prevalence (%)
PUDs	0.9% (2022)
MSM	15.3% (2023)
SW	0.3% (2024)
Trans*	8% (2024)



Testing approaches that proved effective

- Self-testing/assisted self-testing among sex worker women
- Vending machines and index-testing for improved access to testing among PUDs
- Digital outreach and delivery of self-test kits to MSM



Innovative testing models used among sex workers

Training self-testing “instructors” from the community:

Sex workers refrain to self-test – being afraid of the results, or thinking they will not be able to do the test correctly. We select one sex workers from each small group, train them to do the self-test and how to assist/teach self-testing for others.

Results:

Year	% in relation to target
2022 (before introducing the approach)	26%
2023	117%
2024	98%
2025 (10 months)	106%

Innovative testing models used among sex workers - continued

Incentivized testing:

During the first ever testing sex worker receives incentive and is offered both versions of testing (blood or self-testing).

Once the testing is done, beneficiary is told that she can always get tested with our program, and next time she can get other services for free (STI testing and treatment, case management to receive other social or legal support services).

Result: Coverage has topped over 90% despite increase in annual targets.

Digital outreach models as a tool to increase coverage and testing uptake among sex workers

In Georgia:

- sex workers community is not organized in large networks;
- there are no specific websites for sex work;
- sex work is administrative offense and women are refraining of being presented online as sex workers, escort, etc.

Hence, open marketing would not work. We are currently in preparatory phase – mapping out all online resources/channels where sex workers can be found. Based on this, digital outreach in order to increase referrals to testing will be rolled out next year.

Innovative testing models used among PUDs

Vending machines:

- Have been launched in Tbilisi, the capital, in 2023, only for PUDs, and expanded for MSM and sex workers. Geographical expansion was also planned.
- Provides free access (with special cards for KPs) to sterile instruments, condoms, HIV self-tests.
- Acceptability of self-tests for the machine users have been studied and was high.



Challenges for expansion (due to lack of finances):

- No possibility to replicate
- No possibility to switch to newer models of the machines
- Resistance from the cities to place the machines on their territory



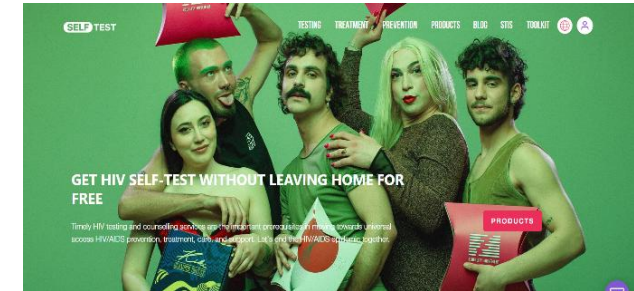
Innovative testing models used among PUDs - continued

- **Index-testing** – recruiting (incentivized) sexual partners or drug partners of registered HIV positive PUDs
- **Self-testing** – through an online platforms selftest.ge
- **Online outreach** – using social platforms and chatbots



Innovative testing models used among MSM

- **Online platform** selftest.ge
- **Closed social media pages** of Tanadgoma to offer HIV self-tests, get the orders and deliver with two modalities – taxi or social worker (for the first-time users)
- Pilot of **modified model** to reach and test MSM which are usually not covered by prevention programs, especially in remote mountainous areas
- **Digital outreach** is currently the increasing way to reach MSM – official apps such as Grindr, etc.



Recommendations for innovative testing and digital outreach targeting KPs

- Sharing best practices from other countries and across KPs
- Take into account the specifics of the scenes where the KPs exist in particular country (legislative environment, networking patterns, level of self-mobilization or community sense)
- Expand use of innovative approaches geographically, into the regions of the country
- Develop/update HIV prevention/testing protocols and standards to include innovative testing approaches that proved effective and acceptable by the communities
- Elaborate/update self-testing (saliva) protocol

THANK YOU!