

Point of care data-driven reviews to improve retention in care

A Case of USAID RHITES N -Lango Project, Northern Uganda.

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Problem

The Lango sub-region in northern Uganda has 2.4 million people: 80% live in rural communities and 50% are below 15 years. HIV prevalence is 7.2%, above the national average of 6.2%.

USAID's Regional Health Integration to Enhance Services North, Lango (RHITES-N, Lango) project, implemented by John Snow, Inc (JSI), is committed to improving client access to and retention on lifelong ART.

The expected annual number of clients on antiretroviral therapy (ART) in Lango sub-region by the end of September 2019 was 87,278. But, the project noted low retention rates in March 2019, with only 62% and 69% of clients previously started on ART who were still in care at 6 and 12 months respectively.

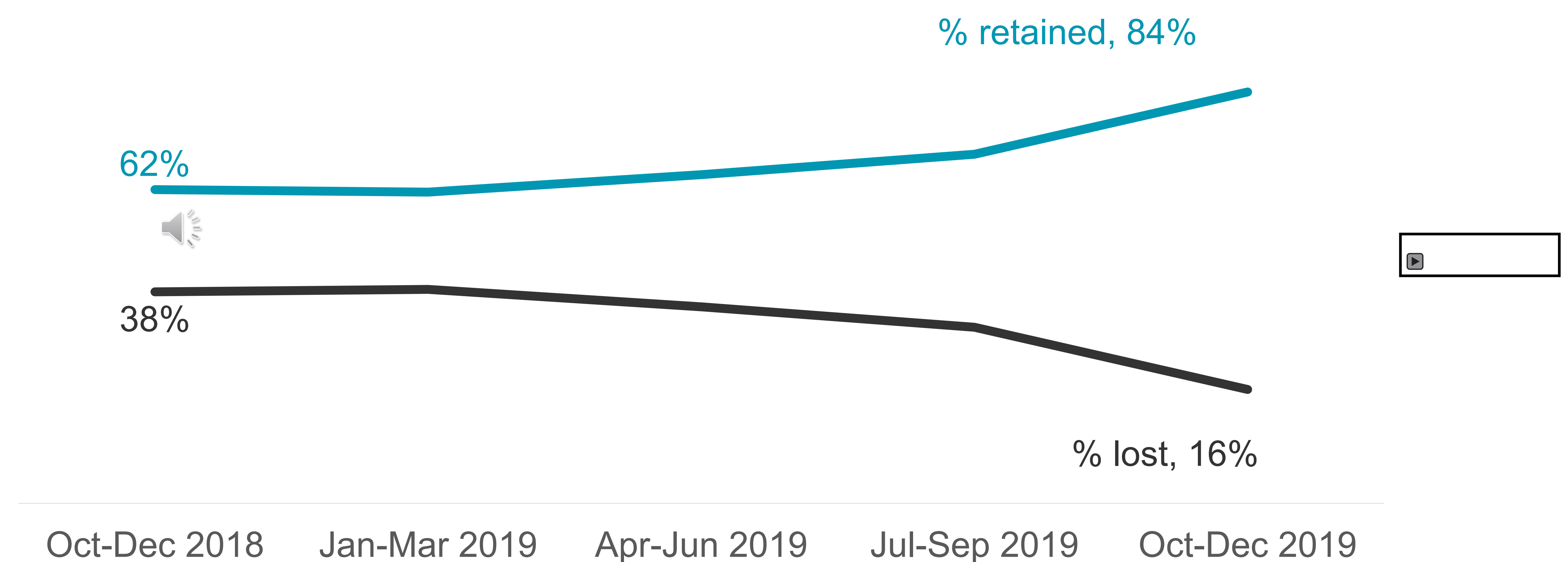
The project applied interventions to improve timely identification of lost clients, to increase return to care, and ultimately to improve retention in care.

Conclusion

Routine data-driven technical support to health facility teams ensures client tracking and follow up efforts are done in real time, an approach that is effective and can be adopted by similar HIV treatment programs.

Response

USAID RHITES-N, Lango conducted point of care (POC) data-driven reviews and real-time client follow up in 44 facilities that provide ART. Health workers and community volunteers (linkage facilitators) updated appointment registers, line listed the lost clients, developed a search list, and drew a client tracking plan. Client follow up was conducted by community volunteers and the tracking outcome was documented in the client registers at the facility. To reduce the increasing number of lost clients from care, daily tracking of missed appointments through phone calls and use of pre-appointment reminder messages were instituted at all ART sites.



Results

Six-month retention increased from 62% (October-December 2018) to 84% (October-December 2019), and the number of lost clients decreased from 38% to 16%. The total number of clients on ART increased from 73,595 in December 2018 to 83,279 clients in December 2019.