

AND LUBE

GLOBAL LUBE ACCESS MOBILISATION

GLAM

The GLAM Toolkit

Advocacy to improve access to safe,
condom-compatible lubricant in Africa

Version 1.0

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**Global Lube Access Mobilisation (GLAM)
Toolkit Version 1.0
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Advocacy Steps for Improving Access to Safe, Condom-Compatible Lubricant

Background and Introduction to the GLAM Toolkit

Background on Lube Access

All men, women, and transgender individuals across the globe deserve the right to have safer sex and protect themselves and their partners from HIV and other STIs.

Using male or female condoms consistently and correctly is considered the best way to prevent acquiring HIV and STIs during anal (and vaginal) intercourse. Importantly, the use of condom-compatible lubricants (lube) is associated with a decreased risk of condoms breaking or slipping. Condoms work better with condom-compatible lube, especially during anal intercourse.

Many men, women and transgender people use some type of lube during vaginal or anal intercourse. While the healthy vagina is self-lubricating, women sometimes need extra lubrication to facilitate intercourse, particularly if they have sex frequently, as is the case with female sex workers. And the anus does not lubricate on its own, so the majority of individuals who practice anal intercourse always use some form of lube.

However, throughout the world, condom-compatible lubricant is inaccessible for most people. A number of analyses in various settings amongst different populations indicate the use of oil-based products is the most common form of lubrication – and oil-based lubes significantly reduce condom effectiveness.

Faced with the lack of safe, affordable, condom-compatible lubricants, people often resort to other products such as body lotion, soap, cooking oil, spit, pre-cum, antibiotic creams, and even motor oil to provide lubrication during sexual intercourse.

The lack of appropriate lubricant products for people who practice vaginal and anal intercourse is unacceptable.

To address this situation, creative community activists and organisations have developed makeshift strategies to make condom-compatible lubricant available. Some community-led initiatives have resulted in national level support for such efforts; however, most have not. And many of these makeshift strategies – such as concerned individuals bringing home suitcases full of lubricant sachets after visits abroad – are clearly unsustainable and barely qualify as stop-gap measures.

Background and Introduction

GLAM and Project ARM

In April 2012, International Rectal Microbicide Advocates (IRMA) released a report through its Project ARM (Africa for Rectal Microbicides) initiative called “*On the Map: Ensuring Africa’s Place in Rectal Microbicide Research and Advocacy*” (see: www.rectalmicrobicides.org/ProjectARMreport2012.pdf).

A key recommendation in the report is to make safe, affordable, condom-compatible lubricant available to all Africans who engage in anal intercourse, including GMT (gay men and other men who have sex with men, and transgender individuals) and heterosexual men and women. For that matter, condom-compatible lubricant should also be made available to people engaging in vaginal intercourse who want or need extra lubrication, including sex workers.

With this recommendation, Project ARM, IRMA, amfAR’s GMT Initiative and AVAC launched the Global Lube Access Mobilisation (GLAM). Because GLAM is a priority of Project ARM, the work to expand lube access is focused on Africa. While increasing access to safe, condom-compatible lubes for people who engage in anal intercourse is of utmost importance, GLAM also supports lube access efforts for those who practice vaginal intercourse.

During the 2012 International AIDS Conference, GLAM officially launched the “And Lube” social marketing campaign. Stickers promoting condom-compatible lubricant access were distributed with the “And Lube” tagline, emphasizing that whenever and wherever male and female condoms are provided as part of comprehensive HIV prevention programming, appropriate lubricants must be part of the package. **When “condoms” are mentioned, “And Lube” must be part of the discussion.**

And now we’re launching the GLAM Toolkit, Version 1.0.

About the Toolkit

In an effort to propose concrete lube-access strategies for local and national activists in Africa to implement, GLAM developed this toolkit. It is intended to offer tools and ideas for civil society and government partners to secure affordable and sustainable condom-compatible lubricant. Within the toolkit you will find a fact sheet, case studies that can serve as a source of learning and inspiration, the results from our survey and review of African National Strategic Plans on HIV/AIDS, and a list of proposed advocacy activities you can undertake.

Background and Introduction

Use of the Toolkit

The tools included here are designed to encourage activists to engage Ministries of Health, UN agencies, funders, non-governmental organisations, and other development partners to make safe, condom-compatible lubricant a priority by positioning lubricant as an absolute necessity, along with male and female condoms.

Please take special note of the “Lubricant – Basic Facts on Access and Safety” section of this toolkit. It is very important that advocates have an understanding of lube safety – what we know and what we don’t know. IRMA leads global advocacy efforts to improve our understanding of lube safety and is calling for the development of a lube safety research agenda to fill in the gaps in our knowledge.

Efforts to improve lube access should focus on integrating lubricant into national strategic and operational plans, as well as including lubricant as a line item in HIV prevention budgets.

While this document is focused on Africa, GLAM encourages advocates the world over to use and adapt the toolkit for their own local contexts.

There are limitations to this document. Case studies from every African nation are not included. And because the Toolkit is mostly focused on GMT, there is less content on lube access for heterosexuals such as female sex workers. But even with these limitations, it is hoped the information and advocacy steps inspire lube action to improve lube access for all populations in need.

As the Toolkit is a “living” document, we expect to update it on a regular basis to keep it timely and more relevant. Hence, this is Version 1.0 – to be replaced by updated versions as the work progresses with new information to report, and we hope, successes.

GLAM Toolkit

Lubricants – Basic Facts on Access and Safety

- Many people use some type of lubricant during anal and vaginal intercourse.
- Some lubricants (water- and silicone-based) are safe to use with condoms; others (petroleum-based products) are not safe to use with condoms.
- Using condom-compatible lube reduces the risk of condoms breaking or slipping.
- Condom-compatible lubes are inaccessible to most people around the world.
- Promotion and distribution of condoms and safe condom-compatible lube should go hand in hand.
- More research is needed on the safety of lubricants to determine which products are safest.

The use of male and female condoms is considered the best way to prevent acquiring HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) during sexual intercourse (anal and vaginal).

In addition, the use of condom-compatible lubricants (lube) reduces the risk of condoms breaking or slipping.

Many men, women and transgender people use lube during anal and vaginal intercourse to ease insertion. Some of these products are commercially available water-based, silicone-based or oil-based lubricants (often called “personal lubricants”) designed for use during sexual intercourse. Other times, people use commonly available products such as hand creams, cooking oils or petroleum jelly. Saliva or vaginal fluids are often used on their own or in combination with other products.

Not all types of lubricants are condom-compatible.

Water-based and silicone-based lubricants are generally compatible with condoms. Petroleum-based products, including commercially-available oil-based lubricants, as well as hand creams, cooking oils and petroleum jelly degrade the latex in most condoms. These types of lubricants increase the risk of condoms breaking and therefore, they are not condom-compatible.

Lubricants – Basic Facts on Access and Safety

Unfortunately, throughout the world, safe, condom-compatible lubricant is inaccessible for most people who engage in sexual intercourse.

A [study¹](#) of female sex workers in Kenya, presented at the 17th Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections, revealed that 33% used lubricants during vaginal and anal sex but “all lubricants mentioned contain mineral oil or other products known to degrade latex condoms.” [Data from a dozen countries²](#) show that the majority of African GMT (gay men, other men who have sex with men and transgender individuals) are not using condom-compatible lube. Faced with the lack of condom-compatible lubricants, people often resort to such products as body lotion, soap, cooking oil, spit, pre-cum, antibiotic creams, and even motor oil to provide lubrication during sexual intercourse. Most of these products are not condom-compatible and may pose other serious health risks.

The lack of appropriate lubricants is unacceptable. Promotion and distribution of safe, condom-compatible lubricants should go hand in hand with condom promotion and distribution programs.

While condom-compatible lube helps condoms remain intact and in place, we know very little about the actual safety of lubricants themselves. At this point, there are limited data on how commercially available lubricants affect the rectal mucosa or the female genital tract. It is unclear whether any particular type or brand of water-based or silicone-based lube might increase, decrease or have no effect on acquiring HIV and/or STIs. Since no firm conclusions can be made, obtaining data on the relative safety of products used as sexual lubricants is incredibly important. This information could be used to promote use of safer lubes, while discouraging use of lubes that are less safe.

More research is needed into the safety of lubes. Clarity is needed on the effect of lube use in preventing or facilitating the acquisition of HIV. We need to know which lubes are safest to use.

In the meantime, we know that condom-compatible lubes facilitate the use of condoms and help ensure they don't slip or break during sexual intercourse; therefore, it's important to advocate for their access.

For more detailed information on lube safety, please consult the [factsheet³](#) and [more detailed Q&A⁴](#) produced by IRMA, the leader in global advocacy efforts to improve our understanding of lube safety.

¹ <http://www.retroconference.org/2010/PDFs/1024.pdf>

² [http://www.rectalmicrobicides.org/docs/Chris Beyrer MSM Africa microbicides.pdf](http://www.rectalmicrobicides.org/docs/Chris%20Beyrer%20MSM%20Africa%20microbicides.pdf)

³ [http://www.rectalmicrobicides.org/docs/Lube safety fact sheet FINAL Oct 13.pdf](http://www.rectalmicrobicides.org/docs/Lube%20safety%20fact%20sheet%20FINAL%20Oct%2013.pdf)

³ <http://www.rectalmicrobicides.org/docs/Lube%20safety%20Q&A%20FINAL%20Oct%202013.pdf>

GLAM Toolkit

Review of African National Strategic Plans on HIV/AIDS Inclusion of Lubricant

GLAM conducted a desk review of African National Strategic Plans (NSPs) on HIV/AIDS, to investigate the responses of governments' inclusion of lubricant and condoms. NSPs from 43 African countries were systematically analysed, with attention to any mention of lubricants. English-, French-, and Portuguese-speaking countries were included.

Findings

- **Out of 43 countries reviewed, only seven incorporated lubricant into their NSPs.**

Those countries were:

- Burundi
- Djibouti
- Gabon
- Namibia
- Nigeria
- Rwanda
- South Africa



- Of the 43 countries reviewed, all of them included condoms; however, none of them specifically mentioned “condom-compatible” lubricant. Even the seven countries with lubricants stipulated in the NSPs did not specify the importance of water- or silicone-based lubricants.

Concerted action is needed to integrate safe, condom-compatible lubricant in NSPs, governmental health policies, operational plans and budgets.

Methodology

NSPs were obtained electronically. Most were downloaded from the websites of the International Labour Organisation, UNAIDS, UNAIDS Regional Support Team for Eastern and Southern Africa, and

Review of African National Strategic Plans on HIV/AIDS

local National Agencies for the Control of AIDS (NACAs). In those countries whose NSPs were not available online, members of Departments of Health or NACAs were contacted directly to request an electronic copy of the latest NSP. NSPs were included in the review if the period of implementation included 2011, or if it ended before 2011 and a later NSP was not available.

The following countries were included in the review. Those highlighted include lubricant in their NSP.

1. Algeria
2. Angola
3. Benin
4. Burkina Faso
5. Botswana
6. [Burundi](#)
7. Cameroon
8. Cape Verde
9. Central African Republic
10. Chad
11. Comoros
12. Democratic Republic of the Congo
13. [Djibouti](#)
14. Ethiopia
15. Eritrea
16. [Gabon](#)
17. Gambia
18. Ghana
19. Ivory Coast
20. Kenya
21. Lesotho
22. Liberia
23. Madagascar
24. Malawi
25. Mali
26. Mauritius
27. Morocco
28. Mozambique
29. [Namibia](#)
30. [Nigeria](#)
31. Republic of the Congo
32. [Rwanda](#)
33. Sao Tome
34. Senegal
35. Sierra Leone
36. Sudan
37. [South Africa](#)
38. Swaziland
39. Tanzania
40. Togo
41. Uganda
42. Zambia
43. Zimbabwe

GLAM Toolkit Lube Procurement – Africa Case Studies

Introduction

During the 2012 International AIDS Conference, GLAM collected case studies documenting lube procurement efforts of individuals and organisations in Africa. In-depth interviews were conducted with about a dozen men speaking from their own personal experiences. Their individual thoughts, perspectives, and conclusions may differ from others in their countries.

These case studies are simply intended to shine a light into the creative efforts various African advocates have undertaken to improve access to safe, affordable condom-compatible lubricants. See the “GLAM Toolkit’s Advocacy Steps for Improving Access to Safe, Affordable, Condom-Compatible Lubricants in Your Country” for ideas on how you may use these case studies to support local lube access advocacy efforts. While the case studies focus solely on GMT (gay men, other men who have sex with men, and transgendered individuals) in Africa, there are lessons and insights here that can be translated across populations and countries.

Lube-Related Stigma

While some countries have more lube access than others, many similarities exist regarding the scarcity of lube across Africa. Most respondents explained that, in order to comprehend the lack of lube access in their country, one must first understand the stigma attached to lube. Sexual lubricant is often associated with anal intercourse, a highly stigmatised, even criminalised, behaviour. As a result, in some countries lubricant distribution is equated with “the promotion of homosexual behaviour”. Thus the social stigma attached to lube poses significant barriers for GMT in Africa.

In some countries, one of the greatest challenges exacerbated by the stigma attached to lube is actually getting it across borders into countries. Many men shared their experiences of interrogation and extortion by customs officers who are unwilling to allow lube into the country. This stigma around sexual lubricants makes potential lube procurers apprehensive about being caught with lube for fear of being outed as gay – a potentially dangerous

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occurrence in many African settings. For these reasons, LGBT organisations across Africa have come up with innovative ways to distribute lube to GMT.

Lube Procurement

Respondents expressed interest in getting support from governments and ministries to procure safe, affordable condom-compatible lube for distribution, however few countries have achieved this. Many respondents indicated they are working with national councils and Ministries of Health to get lube written into their respective National Strategic Plans (NSPs), but progress has been frustratingly slow.

A large number of organisations have come to depend on donations of lube brought into the country by international visitors, often people working for international agencies who pack single-use sexual lubricant sachets in their luggage. Organisations are extremely grateful for this. Similarly, some staff members stock up when visiting abroad and bring lubricant home with them. For many organisations, their stock of lube consists entirely of donations and “souvenirs” from various conferences.

Lube Distribution

The various respondents described very similar methods for distributing lube. If and when sexual lubricants make it across the border, the single-use sachets are packed with condoms and stored at the organisation’s head office, usually in the capital. Most LGBT organisations have developed a two-prong approach for lube distribution. Program participants can either pick up the condoms and lube at the office or access it through peer educators.

Peer educators are trained to facilitate informative conversations regarding sexual health and HIV, while also supplying condoms and safe, condom-compatible lube to those who are interested. Many of them live in rural areas, traveling back and forth between home and the capital in order to maintain a stock of lube and condoms. In many contexts, this approach meets the need of some men who strongly value discretion when accessing condoms and lube. The system is dependent on a reliable supply of typically donated condoms and lube, which is too often far from reality.

African Case Studies

Provided below are country-specific case studies collected during the 2012 International AIDS Conference that describe the challenges and successes of making lube available to GMT in African contexts.

Zimbabwe

The LGBT community in Zimbabwe has mobilised to provide condom-compatible lubricant to GMT; however this has not been without challenges. A Zimbabwean organisation serving this community has established a resource center in Harare that provides professional counseling and education in addition to access to condoms and lube. Demand for lubricant however has risen significantly, causing community leaders to seek out a consistent supplier.

A linkage was formed with a reputable lubricant manufacturer in South Africa. Once orders were placed to the manufacturer, boxes of lubricant sachets were sent by plane and received by a member of the community at the airport. However, each time someone attempted to pick up the lube shipment, border officials presented significant barriers.

The first time a box of lubricant was received at the border, officials told the person receiving the package that the box must go through Medical Controls for what they referred to as “testing” before it could be released. During this process the individual was questioned regarding the legitimacy of their organisation and the intended use of the lubricant. This form of interrogation and intimidation points to LGBT stigma in Zimbabwe. The second time a box of lubricant arrived at the airport, border officials demanded a letter from the Ministry of Health, making it nearly impossible to acquire the box.

In order to avoid interrogation and bribe demands from border and customs officials, members of the community now travel to South Africa to collect the lubricant parcels. Once received, they carefully distribute the lube sachets into personal bags and pockets in order to carry the lube into Zimbabwe without hassle. It is clear that this method is not sustainable and serves as a short-term solution to the challenges of importing lube.

Currently the LGBT community in Zimbabwe is seeking to create linkages with other organisations based in Harare that focus on sexual rights and reproductive health to facilitate

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lubricant access. Organisations such as these tend to focus on women and therefore do not face the same homophobia and stigma LGBT organisations experience. It is hoped that lubricant parcels could be addressed to such non-LGBT organisations and thereby escape the kind of scrutiny that can lead to interrogation and bribe solicitation.

Burundi

The LGBT movement in Burundi has seen many changes and much growth since its inception in 2004. Burundi is one of the only countries in Africa to succeed in getting lubricant included in the National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS (see the Desk Review of African National Strategic Plans for HIV/AIDS in the GLAM Toolkit). The first Burundian LGBT organisation, ARDHO (Association for the Respect of the Rights of Homosexuals), created a formal partnership with the National Council on HIV/AIDS, which served as the foundation for many accomplishments thereafter.

Beginning in 2004, ARDHO gathered increasing support from UNAIDS as well as various embassies including Belgium, the Netherlands and the US. Funded through UNAIDS and small grants from the embassies, members of ARDHO began attending meetings within the Ministry of Health to advocate for the inclusion of men who have sex with men and lube procurement/distribution into the country's National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS.

In 2006, Burundi saw a prioritisation and influx of funding for GMT programming, which shaped the focus of ARDHO's activities. During this time, members of ARDHO and other community-based organisations attended workshops held by the National AIDS Council. Attending these workshops gave members of ARDHO an opportunity to speak out about HIV-related health issues specific to GMT, which included access to lube. Utilising this multi-level approach made it difficult for the Ministry of Health and the National AIDS Council to ignore the GMT-specific issues raised by ARDHO. In 2008 both GMT and lube were written into the country's National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS.

Since the inclusion of GMT and lube in the National Strategic Plan, MOLI (Mouvement pour les libertés individuelles) has been overseeing the implementation and distribution of lube to GMT both in the capital and in rural villages and communities. MOLI is an LGBT group created in 2010 when ARDHO splintered. It receives the lubricant directly from the National AIDS Council, however not without some challenges. At times the Council has taken up to 6 weeks to fill a lube order, forcing MOLI to carefully monitor stock and place orders well in advance.

African Case Studies

Another challenge MOLI has encountered points to the homophobia and stigma attached to lube distribution and use. While the National AIDS Council has shown support for GMT and lube, many public and private health institutions in Burundi are not as keen on promoting the use of lubricant. Many health providers consider lubricant to be “promoting homosexual behaviour” and for that reason do not support the lube access efforts of MOLI. These views are reinforced by Burundi legislation which criminalises any same-sex sexual relations.

Considering the potentially hostile circumstances related to lube, members of MOLI have taken careful precautions when transporting parcels of lube from the capital to rural villages and communities. In order to avoid uncomfortable questioning and unnecessary coming-out, peer educators often take the lube out of the boxes and carry the sachets in plastic bags from the markets or in their pockets, depending on the quantity.

Given these challenges, MOLI has made great strides for the health and safety of GMT in Burundi. Their hard work and strategic advocacy to get GMT and lube included in the National Strategic Plan is an example organisations should consider following.

Uganda

Since its inception in 2006, Queer Youth Uganda has addressed the urgency of providing condoms and lube to GMT in Uganda. As Queer Youth Uganda is one of the few organisations providing access to both lube and condoms, GMT have come to depend on them.

Unable to locate a local supplier of lube, Queer Youth Uganda has relied on donations of lube from visitors as well as collecting lube when members leave and return to the country. One member of Queer Youth Uganda was invited to Sweden to present on a panel hosted by the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights (RFSL). Upon his return, RFSL filled his bags with lubricant, enabling him to bring over 2000 lube sachets back to Kampala.

Visitors from RFSL and a number of other international non-governmental organisations regularly arrive in Uganda with suitcases of lube. The lube is then distributed through outreach efforts in bars and clubs, conducted by members of Queer Youth Uganda. These efforts have

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been widely successful and many GMT in and around Kampala have returned to the offices of Queer Youth Uganda in search of more condoms and lube.

While Queer Youth Uganda is proud of its successful outreach and education efforts, the instability of a donation-based supply of lube has become worrisome. From March to April in 2011, the stock of lube completely ran out, causing members to turn away program participants who needed lube. Members of Queer Youth Uganda became concerned that their efforts to educate GMT to “always use lube” were contradicted when lube was not “always” accessible.

The lube drought of 2011 motivated Queer Youth Uganda to seek support from the Ministry of Health. Since then small inroads have been made through meetings with Ministry officials; however, full support has not been granted. The Ministry of Health has heard Queer Youth Uganda’s concerns for providing consistent access of lube to all populations, as well their demands to have GMT services and lube included in the country’s National Strategic Plan on HIV. This has been a great challenge however, due to the fact that anal sex of any kind is highly stigmatised as homosexual behaviour (and homosexuality is illegal) and therefore considered by Ministry officials to be of less importance in the overall fight against HIV and AIDS.

Queer Youth Uganda has not given up the struggle of gaining support from the Ministry of Health, continuing to raise awareness of the health benefits that lubricant provides not just for GMT but for all populations, including heterosexuals. In the meantime, they continue to collect lube from abroad in any way possible, either from international visitors or members returning from trips abroad. Until access to lubricant is sustainable, Queer Youth Uganda plans to continue distributing lube carefully and strategically to their program participants.

Kenya

Great strides have been made by the Ishtar MSM organisation to provide lube to GMT in Kenya. In 2009 Ishtar MSM submitted a proposal to UHAI – the East Africa Sexual Health and Rights Initiative – requesting funds for lube procurement. They made the argument that providing lube to GMT would increase the likelihood that they use condoms consistently and correctly. UHAI agreed and awarded them \$10,000 for lube.

Once the funding was granted, Ishtar MSM connected with a lubricant manufacturer in South Africa. The manufacturer offered to produce water-based, strawberry-scented lube sachets

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that were branded with Ishtar MSM's name and logo. Once the order was placed, the South African manufacturer worked quickly to have the lube made and delivered to Nairobi. Once the lube arrived at the Ishtar MSM office in Nairobi, members made it known to their larger network of organisations in neighbouring countries that they had an available stock. Word traveled quickly, and within a relatively short period of time members of similar organisations from Uganda, Tanzania, and Ethiopia arrived at the Nairobi office in search of lube. Ishtar MSM was pleased to be one of the major lube suppliers in East Africa; however, supplies began to diminish.

Within Kenya, Ishtar MSM has distributed lube through a system made up of peer educators who take the lube from Nairobi and distribute it to individual GMT in their neighborhoods, as well as through Ishtar MSM forums, peer-to-peer sessions, GMT hotspots and other distribution channels that include local groups of GMT. Utilising these GMT-specific networks led to complaints about distribution being too restricted. Female sex workers stated that they too needed sachets of lubricant, and wanted to be included as recipients. While Ishtar MSM would have liked to distribute lube to these female sex workers, and recognised the clear need they were expressing, the grant proposal was specific to GMT and the limited supply did not make it possible to open up the distribution channels to these women. Nonetheless, female sex workers did occasionally receive lube from Ishtar MSM.

In early 2012, the last Ishtar MSM branded lube sachet was handed out, causing members to utilise the reserve of lubricant sachets that have been gathered from various international conferences and visitors. Since funding for the next order of lube is unclear, Ishtar MSM has begun to advocate with key stakeholders such as the National AIDS Control Council and the National AIDS and STI Control Program in an attempt to get lube written into the country's National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS.

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Findings from Survey on Lube Distribution and Access

In August 2012, GLAM launched a short survey on lubricant distribution and access in Africa. It was promoted through a number of listservs, including IRMA's. The survey was made available in both French and English and was posted on SurveyMonkey. A total of 93 individuals (both aligned with organisations and non-aligned) responded to the survey; 80 in English and 13 in French. Once the surveys were collected, the open-ended answers were entered into a qualitative data management program (Atlas. Ti. V.7).

The following analysis describes the survey findings, which correspond closely with what was found in the Case Studies that are also described in this Toolkit.

Lube-Related Stigma and its Consequences

In countries where the use of lube is uncommon, it is likely to be stigmatised as something used only by GMT populations (gay men, other men who have sex with men, and transgender individuals). Indeed the majority of survey respondents reported that lube is stigmatised in their countries, and regarded as "promoting homosexual behaviour." As such, stigma associated with lube may pose significant health barriers for those in need, with many survey respondents reporting that stigma associated with lubricant is a limiting factor in lube distribution and access.

A respondent from Kenya described that, "only few have access to lube because many fear being identified as homosexual." Several respondents reported that lube stigma has provoked resistance from heterosexuals to use lubricant. Another Kenyan respondent commented that, "lube has been 'homosexualised' so that heterosexuals do not want to be associated with it."

Other respondents reported that lube-related stigma has resulted in local governments resisting the efforts of organisations to improve lube access and distribution. Stigma can even lead to arrests. One respondent from Burundi reported that, "some peer educators have been arrested by the police while distributing lube under the pretext that they were promoting homosexual behaviour." Similarly, another respondent from Cameroon reported, "some men have been arrested by the police because they were in possession of lube."

Survey on Lube Distribution and Access

Another challenge associated with stigma is simply transporting lube across the border. A number of survey respondents reported having issues with customs officials when attempting to bring lubricants into the country. “Some of the border officials refuse to allow it in based on their belief that it is used to promote anal sex,” a Nigerian respondent commented. Likewise, a respondent from Uganda wrote, “border officials really want to know that you are not bringing lube for homosexuals, but they let it go by telling them that [the lube] is meant for ladies with low vaginal fluids.”

Support for Lube Procurement

Obtaining support from large international agencies such as USAID, or through National Councils on HIV/AIDS or Ministries of Health at the country level can be crucial to maintaining a sustainable supply of lubricant for distribution. However, less than a third of survey respondents indicated that they receive such support. One respondent from South Africa explained that condom and lube procurement and distribution is funded by a number of donors via organisations that serve GMT. South Africa’s Department of Health does not distribute lube at this time.

Given that the majority of respondents do not receive any form of structural support, restocking lube supplies can be very difficult. While a large portion of respondents reported being able to contact international agencies such as USAID to restock lube when supplies run out, very few of the survey respondents indicated they are able to contact local government agencies for restocking lube. In fact, the majority of respondents rely on their own organisations themselves to restock lube supplies by any means possible.

“We got funding for lube once. Since then we either borrow from other organisations or when our office staff travel, they come back with [some lube],” wrote a Kenyan respondent. A respondent from Nigeria explained that, “we replenish our stock of lube based on available funding. If the stock runs low and funding is not available, then we are left with no other options.”

Restocking lube can also take a long time. Some respondents are able to restock their lube supply in a relatively short period of time. However, the majority of respondents expect to wait

Survey on Lube Distribution and Access

more than a month, and many have to wait more than 3 months, 6 months, or even up to a year to restock lube supplies.

Lube Distribution

Among respondents who indicated targeted populations to which they distributed lube, the most commonly mentioned population was GMT. Almost as many respondents indicated that they distribute lubes to all populations, including GMT and heterosexuals. Few respondents indicated that they distribute lubes to sex workers.

For those who have successfully brought lubricant into the country, there are three common methods for distributing it: through peer educators and/or peer networks, at an organisation's office, or at a medical center or clinic. The most common distribution method among survey respondents is the use of peer educators or peer networks. Others reported distributing lube exclusively through their organisation's central office, often located in the country's capital. Many survey respondents reported using a combination of both of these methods of distribution. A smaller number of survey respondents reported distributing lube exclusively through clinics and medical settings.

Many respondents pointed out that lube is often not available at all for distribution. As one respondent pointed out, "there is little to no lube to be distributed in Africa".

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Advocacy Steps for Improving Access to Safe, Affordable, Condom-Compatible Lubricants in Your Country

Toolkit available here: <http://irma-rectalmicrobicides.blogspot.com/p/project-arm-africa-for-rectal.html>. You may download the entire toolkit as one document, or you can choose to download specific sections. Have questions or need help? Send an email to rectalmicro@gmail.com.

- 1) **Integrate the need for safe, affordable, condom-compatible lube into all of your community trainings, sensitisation sessions, and workshops.** Take every opportunity to talk up lubricant and help create community demand.
- 2) **Download GLAM’s “And Lube” sticker** and other graphics from the link above and produce them locally for distribution at workshops, sensitisation sessions, meetings and conferences. (“And Lube” is a slogan to remind advocates and condom users that safe, condom-compatible lubrication is a necessary component in safer sex. Lube prevents condoms from breaking and slipping. So any time someone mentions condoms, we say “...and lube!”)
- 3) **Print the “Lubricants – Basic Facts on Access and Safety” fact sheet and distribute** copies at workshops, sensitisation sessions, meetings, and conferences, and where condoms are distributed. And share the entire toolkit widely – both in the “real world” and online.
- 4) **Read the review of National Strategic Plans HIV/AIDS (NSPs)** and see if your country includes the provision of lube. If we missed it, please let GLAM know that your country is indeed providing lube.

Advocacy Steps

- 5) If the review shows that **your country does include the provision of lube in the NSP, follow up.** Is lube actually provided, or not? If lube is provided, who is providing the funding (government, other donors)? Just because lube is mentioned in the NSP doesn't mean the government is implementing. Are there gaps in the distribution which need to be addressed by advocates to ensure everyone who needs safe, affordable condom-compatible lube is accessing it?
- 6) If your country includes lube in the NSP, **is there a budget line for lube somewhere?** The budget line could be in the government's AIDS budget, in a program budget specific to condoms, or in an application to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. If not, ask for one. If there is a budget line, is it adequate to meet the needs? If the budget is in fact adequate, say "thank you!" If the budget is not adequate, advocate for more funds to meet the need. Of course, it must be stressed that funds could be allocated to lubricants and not expended for that purpose. It is important to know whether there is an operational plan that includes lube provision, and that lubes are actually provided with the allocated funds.
- 7) If the review shows that **your country does not include the provision of lube in the NSP, follow up.** Is lube truly not provided? Or, is lube in fact made available in your country despite its exclusion from the NSP? If lube is not included in the NSP and is not made available, advocate for inclusion of safe, condom-compatible lube in the NSP. For instance, you can consistently bring up the need for lube with funders, policy makers, and program implementers at stakeholder meetings. If lube is not included in the NSP but is made available nonetheless, rectify this discrepancy by advocating for written inclusion of lubes, with an appropriate budget line, in the NSP.
- 8) **Dig further for lube-friendly organisations and funders.** Whether or not your country's NSP includes the provision of lube, organisations and funders may still be working to make lube available and accessible in your country. Are there organisations in your country that distribute safe, condom-compatible lubes? Are there natural allies that

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could work together on lube access—groups working on HIV prevention, LGBT groups, sex workers’ groups, or groups working in sexual and reproductive health? Are there international, national, local funders that pay for the provision of lubes in your country?

If you are not already connected to them, reach out to see how you might work together. If you are an organisation serving primarily GMT (gay men, other men who have sex with men, and transgender individuals), consider partnering with groups serving heterosexuals, such as family planning groups. Many heterosexuals also need safe, affordable condom-compatible lubes for vaginal intercourse as well as anal intercourse. Partnering with a group that serves a heterosexual population could both enhance access to lube for people who need it as well as destigmatise lube provision itself, helping to take the “promotion of homosexuality” argument off the table.

Likewise, partnering with sex worker groups could be mutually beneficial. Sex workers need safe, condom-compatible lubes and like GMT, they are often criminalised and left out of NSPs. Working together could help ensure that NSPs address the needs of both GMT and sex workers, including access to lubes.

- 9) **Read the case studies and the analysis of the online survey, and share the findings** with stakeholders including policy makers, funders, organisations, and other advocates. The stories and quotes are valuable tools to demonstrate the need for safe, affordable condom-compatible lube with organisations and funders.
- 10) **Demonstrate local need.** It is important to document that individuals in your country are demanding access to safe, affordable, condom-compatible lube. Decision makers are most persuaded by data that are localised and relevant to their country context. A need-assessment exercise could help develop this type of information.
- 11) **Identify factors, such as stigma, that inhibit access to lubes.** Once such limiting factors are identified, policy makers, funders, program implementers and others can be encouraged to find ways to reduce them.

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- 12) **Encourage researchers working in-country to ask questions about lubricant use**, among GMT, sex workers, as well as heterosexuals. These questions could be added into existing studies, and the findings could provide powerful data for advocates to move the lube access agenda forward. Information on lubricant use by heterosexuals could work against stigma and the perception that lube is only for GMT.
- 13) **Adapt lessons from the stories.** What strategies described in the case studies can be adapted for your own efforts to improve access to safe, condom-compatible lubricants?
- 14) **Share best practices, and learn best practices from others.** If you are in a country where lube access is improving, share your knowledge with advocates in other countries. If you need help with your lube advocacy, reach out to others who have been successful.
- 15) **Share your own story.** Do you have stories of your own to share about the provision of safe, condom-compatible lube? What worked for you? What was challenging? Do you know of good manufacturers or other suppliers? If you'd like to share your own story for inclusion in the case studies, please email rectalmicro@gmail.com and we will contact you. We are especially interested in collecting case studies from countries not currently featured in the case studies, and from groups such as female sex workers.