



# BeyondZero

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## Barriers to accessing health care among trans-people in four South African districts

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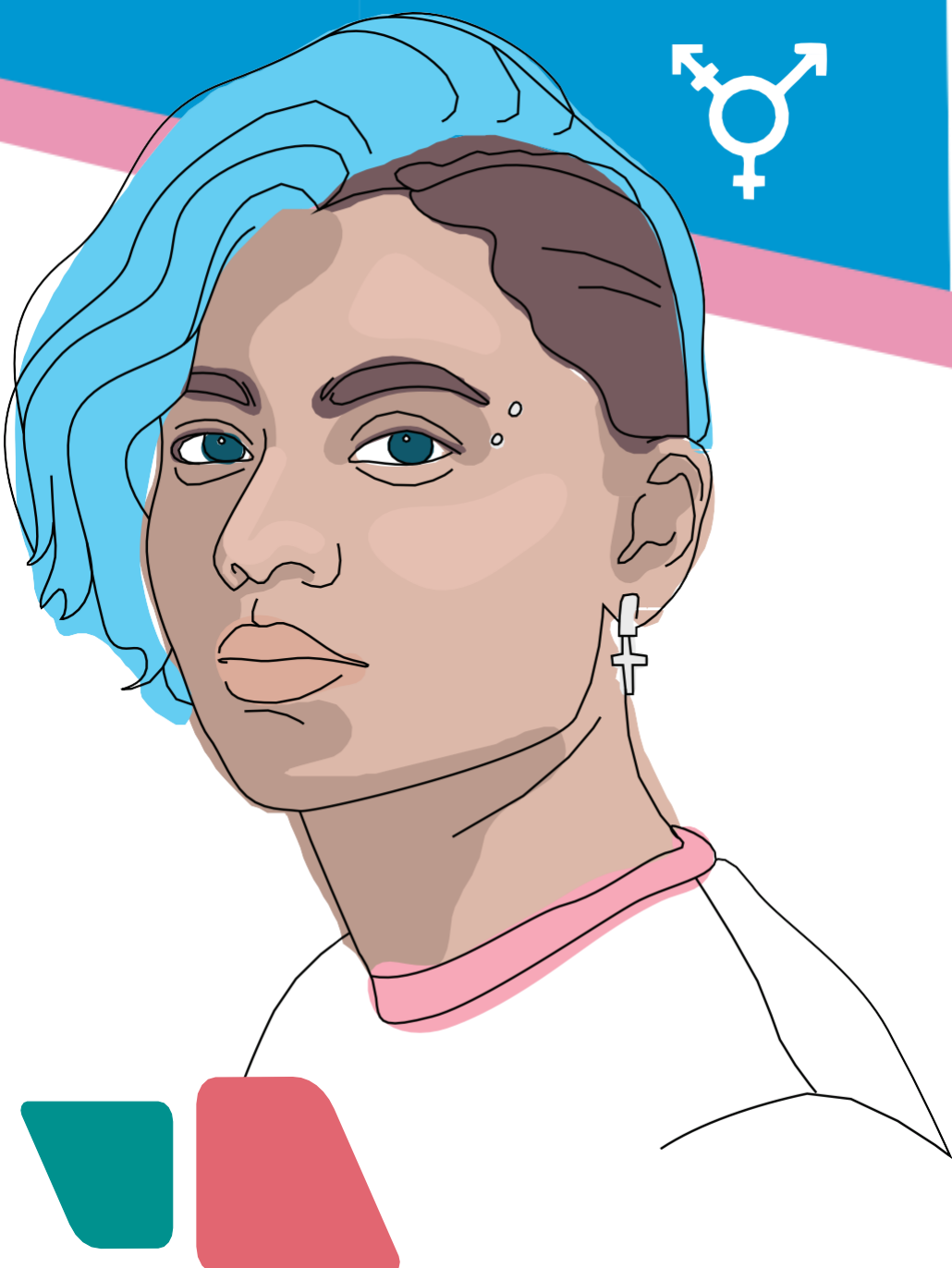
Track: Research

### BACKGROUND

In support of South Africa's National Strategic Plan and the National LGBTI HIV Plan, 2017-2022, HIV, TB and STI intervention program was implemented from April 2019 to reduce the incidence of HIV amongst trans-people in four selected districts of South Africa. This abstract highlights areas that have significant implications for the developmental agenda of SA regarding the plight of trans-people as well as the healthcare service delivery.

### DESCRIPTION

A mid-term evaluation of the intervention program was conducted during February and March 2021. Qualitative data collection methods including in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions in line with the evaluation objectives, explored various categories of the intervention program stakeholders including program beneficiaries, peer educators and program managers, as well as other key informants involved in policy formulation including LGBTI, AIDS Council and Civil Society. Purposive sampling was conducted for these interviews with a total of 10 interviews conducted across the various categories.

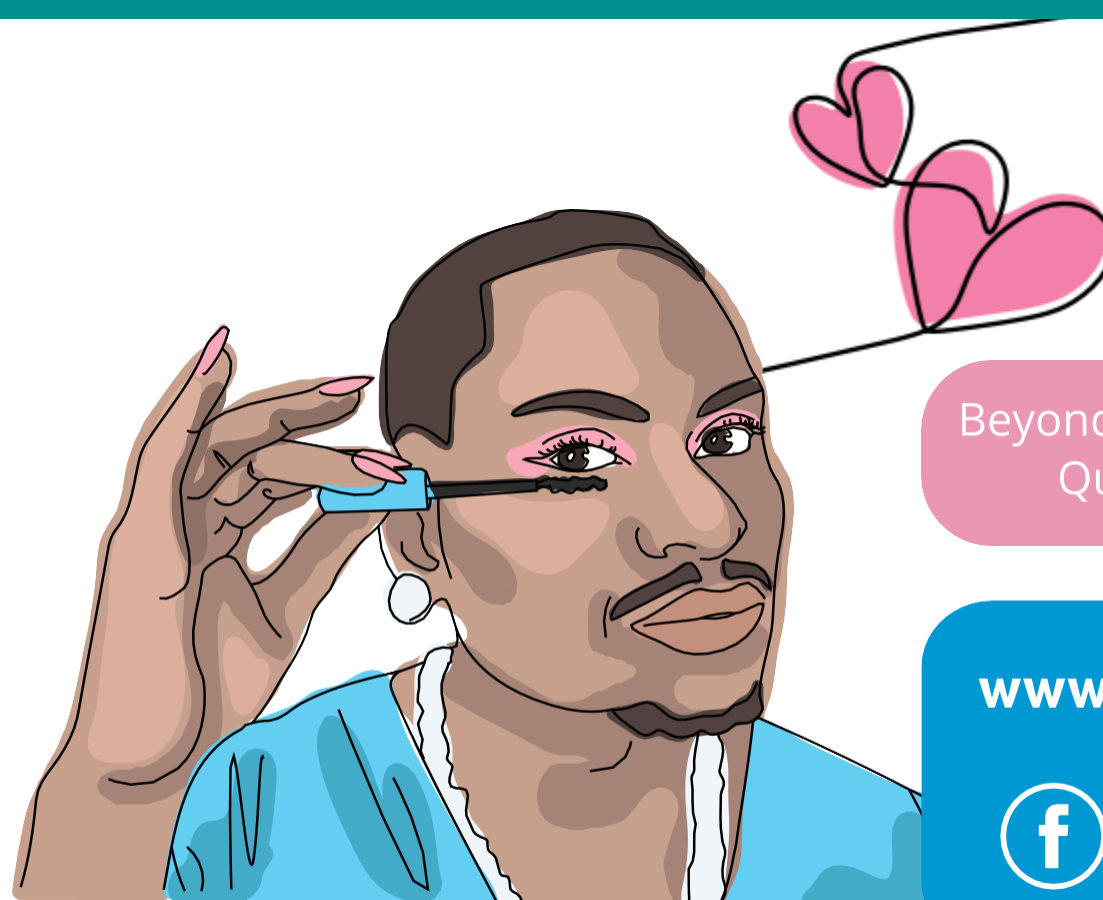


### LESSONS LEARNED

Inequalities in society and in the SA health system was raised as the primary challenge. The biggest barriers to health care reported is lack of access due to suboptimal training of healthcare workers (HCWs) on transgender health issues, combined with judgmental and discriminatory attitudes. The absence of national policy guidelines on gender affirmation surgery or hormonal therapy for gender affirming healthcare seekers also contributed to lack of access to care, resulting in high costs to access these services in specialized academic centers or private sector clinics. Other barriers cited include health systems barriers (inappropriate electronic records, forms, lab references, clinic facilities) and socio-economic barriers (lack of income, marginalization in the communities and poor mental health).

### CONCLUSION

Trans-people require health care that addresses their unique health concerns, including transition-related medical procedures and mental health. This requires inclusion of members of trans-community in health policy decision making spaces at national and local levels. In addition, there is a need for rigorous national research to determine (1) the ability of the national health care system to provide adequate care for transgender individuals, (2) HCW knowledge and biases on trans health, and (3) socio-economic barriers including mental health.



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