



PRELIMINARY RESULTS: A PILOT OF SOCIAL MEDIA RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES FOR TRANSGENDER WOMEN IN NAMIBIA, 2019

Keetmanshoop | Walvis Bay | Windhoek

Background & Objectives:

Transgender women (TGW) represent a unique key population who often experience higher levels of discrimination, barriers to care, violence, and HIV acquisition than other key populations. **The objective of this study was to assess novel recruitment strategies specific to the needs of TGW based on social media access. Qualitative in-depth interviews (IDI) and focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted in April 2019, with field testing to assess the acceptability and feasibility of the online recruitment strategy.** This project was reviewed and cleared by the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) Namibia, U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and the University of California San Francisco (UCSF).

To participate in this study, individuals had to identify as a transgender woman, reside within the study region for the six months preceding the study, be at least 18 years old, and speak English, Oshiwambo, or Afrikaans. Participants received NAD 50 for transportation costs.

This document is a summary of key findings from the pilot study. A full report of study findings is anticipated in 2020.

• Sample size:

Study region	Timeline	In-depth Interviews	Focus Group Discussion 1	Focus Group Discussion 2	Total
Keetmanshoop	8 April – 11 April	8	5	7	20
Walvis Bay	15 April – 18 April	8	7	4	19
Windhoek	23 April – 26 April	8	5	6	19
Total	8 April – 26 April	24	17	17	58*

**A total of 58 participants were recruited; A small number (but unknown) of participants participated in both IDI and FGD*

• Employment:

REPORTED EMPLOYMENT IN KEETMANSHOOP,
WALVIS BAY, AND WINDHOEK

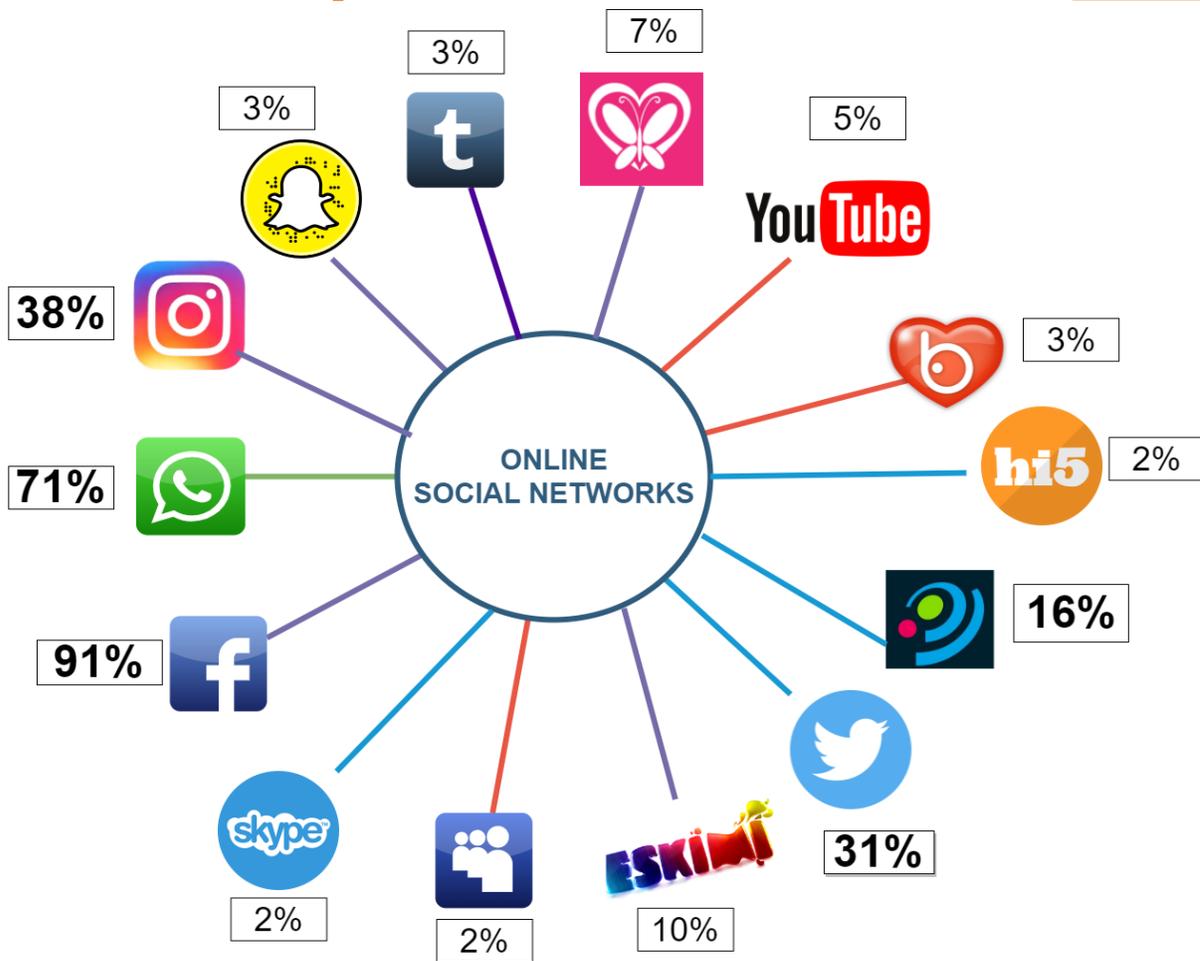


More than half of the participants in all cities reported being employed

Self-employment:

- Sex work
- Catering
- Beauticians
- Event planning/Decor
- Domestic work

• Online platforms



The most popular social platforms on which TGW interact with each other were Facebook and WhatsApp

- Sizes of TGW on online social platforms**

Social Media Platform	Personal Network Size*	
	Average	Range [†]
Facebook (n=25)	19	6-26
WhatsApp (n=9)	22	9-33

**Personal network size refers to the number of TGW the participant interacts with. [†]Range was defined as the difference between the upper (75%) and lower (25%) quartile values.*

- WhatsApp personal network sizes were larger than Facebook network sizes
- Daily use of WhatsApp and Facebook were common at every site
- Online topics:
 - Greetings/ commenting on pictures/gossip/ men
 - Clinic referrals
 - Promoting events/parties
 - Hotspots for sex work

Social Media Platform	Group Network Size*	
	Average	Range [†]
Facebook (n=10)	135	30-150
WhatsApp (n=8)	171	43-325

**Group network size refers the number of TGW on the social media network. [†]Range was defined as the difference between the upper (75%) and lower (25%) quartile values.*

• **Community estimates of how many TGW live in each region**

Study region	Median	Range*
Keetmanshoop (n=20)	40	30-78
Walvis Bay (n=19)	39	20-50
Windhoek (n=19)	650	175-12750

*Range was defined as the difference between the upper (75%) and lower (25%) quartile values

Participants were asked to estimate the number of TGW in their specific study region. Participants believed Windhoek had the largest population of TGW with an estimate of 650 TGW.

• **Field testing: methods & results**



- Two TGW key informants from each study region posted on their personal social media groups at least twice a week
- A code word, which was changed twice a week, was included in the post to track the number of TGW recruited
- **Example of a post from Walvis Bay is to the left**

RESULTS OF FIELD TEST

Study region	Total # recruited	Word-of-mouth through peers	Through social media
Keetmanshoop	44	29 (66%)	15 (34%)
Walvis Bay	28	0 (0%)	28 (100%)
Windhoek	56	39 (70%)	17 (30%)
Total	128	68	60

(53%)

(47%)

• Potential barriers to recruitment for future studies

Method		Quote
No access to smartphone/internet	TGW who do not have access to a smartphone or internet	"The thing is the one that has a phone will always go inform those not having a phone to ask if she has heard about this or this signal." "We are robbed of our phones quite often, the one thing you will never be robbed is your Gmail account, so you can access it basically everywhere"
Word of mouth through other TGW		
Email		
SMS/Phone call	Classes of TGW	"But SMS is like the language that is spoken by many TGW, TGW would run to their neighbors and ask to be assisted with a phone if they do not have a phone"
TGW groups		"The higher class of TGW are employed, financially independent, and most are online. Most of the middle class are not employed, financially dependent on their families, and most are not online; while the low class are unemployed, financially dependent on their families, and most are not online."
Radio/Newspaper		"Some of them do read newspapers during the day, I observed some in Walvis Bay train station. They are in the low class. With Facebook and WhatsApp because it is mostly close to our homes and for men. TGW who have medically transitioned to a woman and no longer want to be associated with the TGW community."
Visibility	Closeted TGW	TGW who are not out of the closet due to fear of rejection from family.
Social isolation	Violence	TGW who have experienced violence resulting in social isolation.
	Stigma and discrimination	TGW who have socially isolated themselves after experiencing stigma and discrimination from their community.
	Rejection	TGW who have socially isolated themselves after rejection from families. This often can lead to low self-esteem.

• Other recruitment methods

• Conclusions

- TGW in Namibia are a hard-to-reach population, but we were able to reach 58 participants through qualitative interviews (unduplicated) and 128 through the field test.
- Facebook and WhatsApp were the most popular online platforms where TGW interact with each other; with larger WhatsApp groups reported.
- Field test resulted in a sample of 128 TGW, with more than half of the participants recruited from word-of-mouth.
- Compared to the population size estimates provided by the participants, less participants were recruited in Walvis Bay and Windhoek while more participants were recruited in Keetmanshoop through the field test.
- Multiple barriers suggest online platforms might not be ideal as the only manner to reach TGW.
- Online recruitment, though feasible and acceptable, should be supplemented with other methods of recruitment such as: physical mobilization, SMS, newspaper or radio, and email.

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