

# BARRIERS TO RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF HIV NEGATIVE BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN INTO BEHAVIOURAL HIV PREVENTION PROGRAMS

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HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

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## BACKGROUND

- Carefully designed HIV prevention behavioural interventions are necessary to curb the spread of the HIV epidemic in South Africa.
- Recruitment and retention of participants present a major challenge for medical and behavioural intervention trials.
- Very little has been done to understand barriers for participation in behavioural HIV prevention programs, especially among HIV negative who know their status.

## SISTA SOUTH AFRICA INTERVENTION

- SISTA (Sisters informing other Sisters on the Topic of AIDS)
- Intervention developed for young African American women and adapted among HIV negative black South African Xhosa women
- Evaluated in a RCT:
  - Intervention (adapted SISTA): 3 sessions about HIV risk reduction strategies conducted once weekly
  - Comparison: 2 session about general health and nutrition conducted once weekly

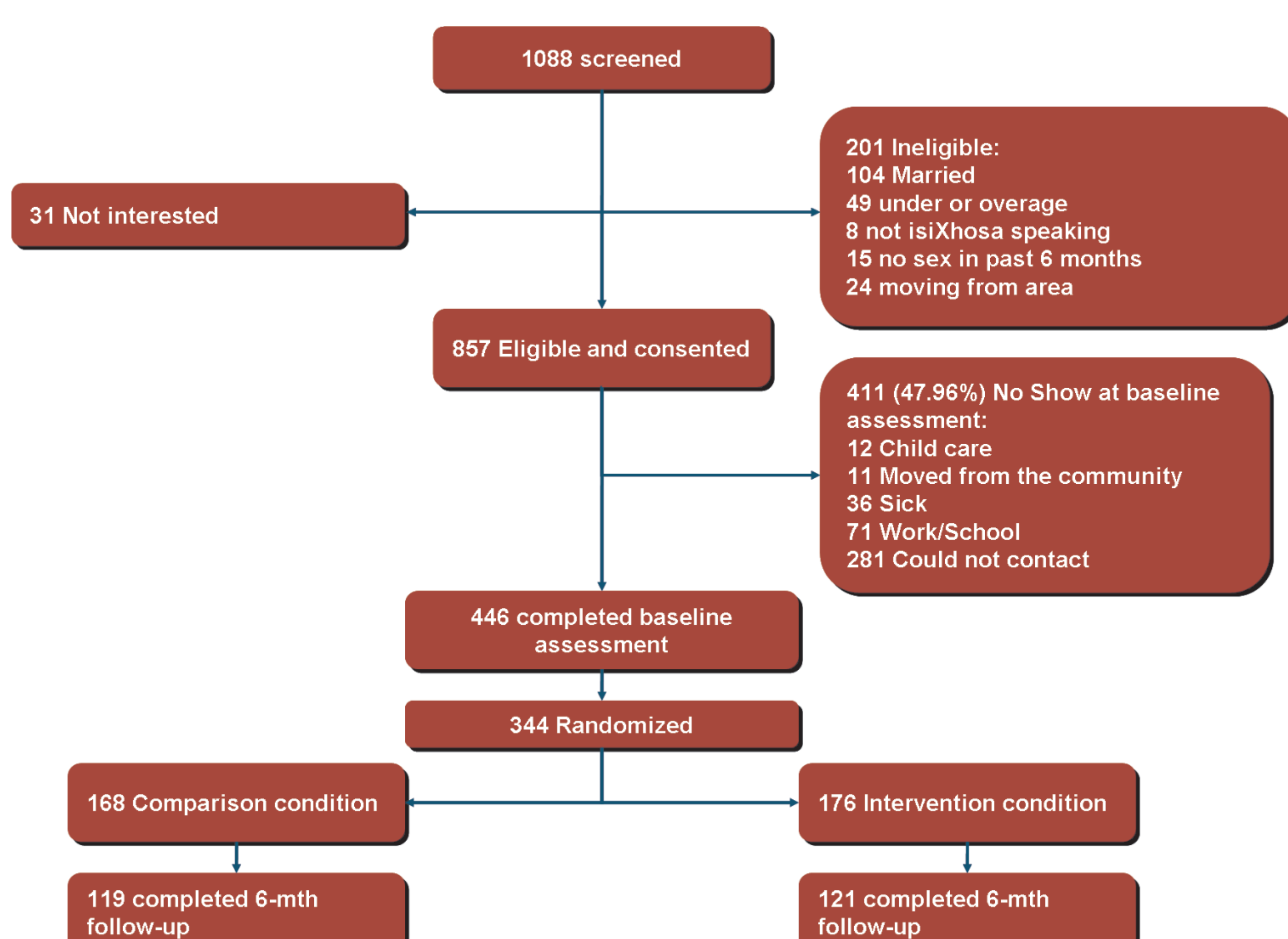
## THE AIM OF THIS STUDY WAS TO:

- Describe the process and challenges encountered while recruiting and retaining participants into the SISTA South Africa study
- Present qualitative data on the barriers to participation in a behavioural HIV prevention program among black HIV negative women.

## RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION IN THE SISTA SA STUDY

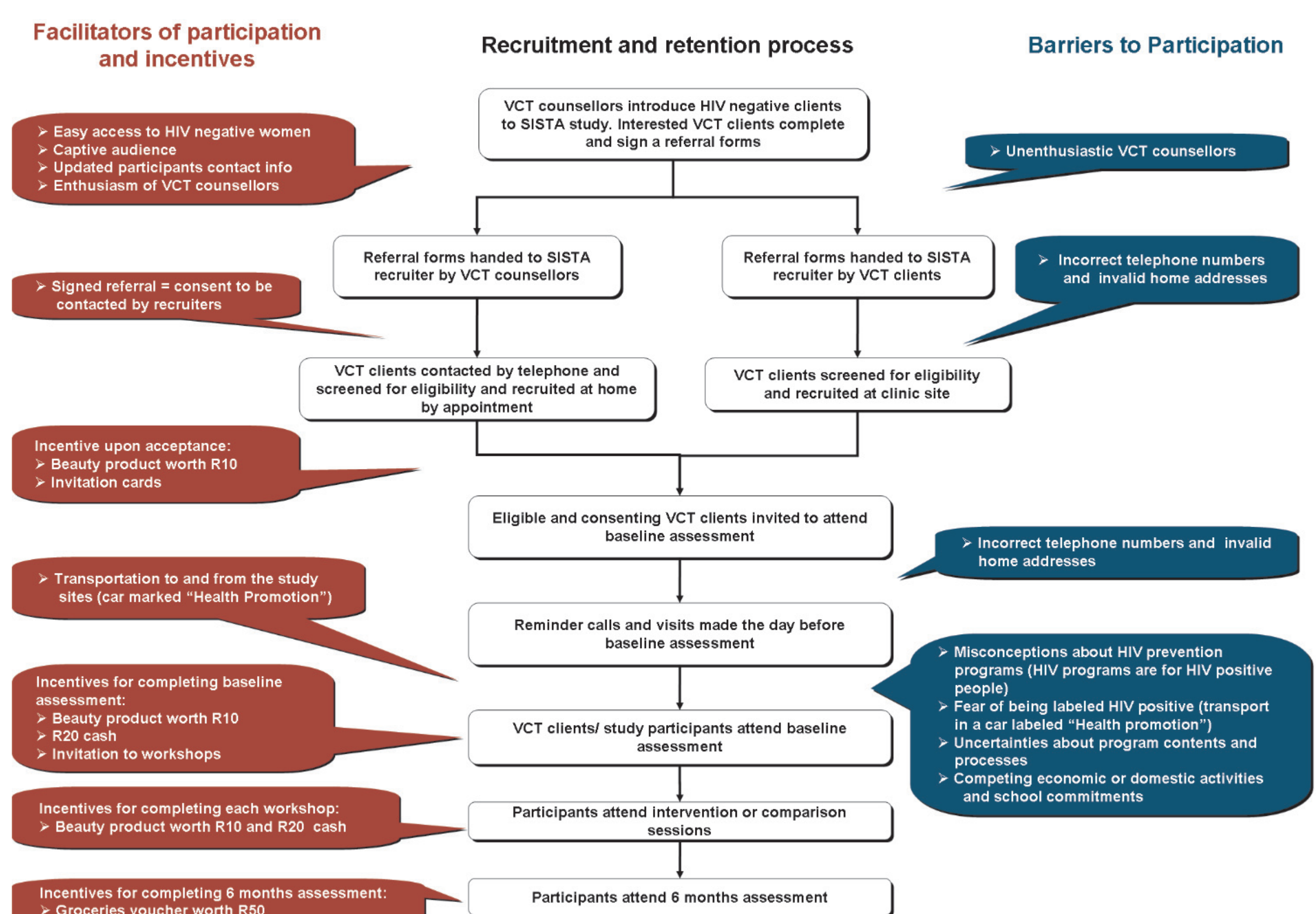
- The SISTA South Africa study was conducted in peri-urban areas of the Western Cape Province of South Africa.
- Participants were recruited into the study over a 2 year period, from January 2006 to December 2007.
- Women were eligible to participate if they were:
  - Single (never married)
  - Black (isiXhosa speaking)
  - Between 18 and 35 years of age
  - Had tested HIV negative in the previous 8 weeks at any one of 5 peri-urban primary health care clinics (PHC)

Figure 1. Diagram of participant recruitment and retention in the program



## BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS TO PARTICIPATION

- Focus group discussions were conducted at 3 of the 5 study sites where the SISTA South Africa study was conducted (Hermanus, Grabouw and Strand), by 2 isiXhosa speaking trained facilitators
- Women from the last round of recruitments into the SISTA South Africa study, at each of the three sites, were invited to attend if:
  - They had met the eligibility criteria and had provided informed consent to participate in the SISTA South Africa study
  - They did not attend the baseline assessment
- In total, 21 women attended 6 (28.6%) in Hermanus, 8 (28.6%) in Strand and 7 (35.0%) in Grabouw. in isiXhosa



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The SISTA South Africa recruitment process highlights the possibility for successfully referring HIV negative individuals from VCT clinics to small group HIV prevention interventions.
- It is important to understand the structure of organisations that may participate or impact on the recruitment process for bio-behavioural interventions in community settings.
- Initial assumptions about the setting may have to be revisited and recruitment approaches adjusted.
- Greater efforts are needed to reduce HIV stigma in South African communities.
- It is necessary to include the wider community in the discussions about HIV/ AIDS and even treatment and care of HIV positive individuals.
- In retrospect more attention to branding and marketing the SISTA South Africa study to the community and potential participants may have alleviated some of the uncertainties of potential participants.
- Providing for formal child care could have improved participation of women with young children.
- More women could have been recruited had the program provided VCT and collaborated with employers and school authorities in the process of recruiting women who were employed or still in school.
- Further research into the psychosocial determinants of participation in HIV intervention programmes are needed to adequately inform strategies to reduce hindrances to participation.