

Multi-pronged mobilization strategy for increasing uptake of HIV Testing and Counseling Services: Lessons from East Central Uganda

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Issue

The Strengthening TB and HIV&AIDS Responses in East Central Uganda (STAR-EC), a new USAID supported program, conducted a baseline survey in 2009. Of those who knew where to get tested for HIV, 54% (adults 15-54 years) actually took the test thus presenting a gap. There is a need to identify programs which can address this gap. Based upon data from the Uganda HIV/AIDS Sero Behavior Survey (2004/05) which revealed that 56% of adults 15-49 years reported radio as their major source of HIV&AIDS information, a radio campaign was proposed as part of the response strategies.

Description

In December 2009, STAR-EC supported six districts to conduct five day outreaches as part of the World AIDS Day activities. Ten health facilities in each district were provided with test kits, facilitation to health workers and onsite technical support. Negotiations were held with radio stations for radio programs and announcements. Joint planning meetings were held with the district and other stakeholders to decide on appropriate mobilization channels.



Drama performance as a channel to mobilize communities for HCT in Kaliro District

The mobilization channels used included involvement of influential community members, Village Health Team members, other volunteers and local leaders to let their communities know about the importance of HCT uptake and where to access such services; use of radio talk shows and announcements; placement of manila papers

with messages directing community members to outreach sites in public places; and use of public address systems on mobile mobilization vans reinforcing what was heard over the radio, print and through word of mouth. Application of different mobilization channels led to testing of 9,634 (4,248 males and 5,386 females) community members compared to 3,352 (1,487 males and 1,865 females) community members tested by the same facilities during outreaches carried out in November 2009.



Community Members receiving HCT services during an outreach in Namutumba District

Lessons Learned

Use of different community mobilization avenues results into convincing more community members to access HCT services. Mobilization of communities for HCT works well with facilitation of health facilities to provide the service. Use of existing community structures like Village Health Teams is important in mobilizing communities for HCT.

Way Forward

Application of multi pronged mobilization strategies results in mass community members accessing HCT. These strategies should also be used in mobilizing communities for other health services