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# Using HIV&AIDS 'Knowledge Rooms' to Enhance Male Uptake of HIV Counseling and Testing in High Risk Populations in East Central Uganda

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## Background

Attracting males to HIV&AIDS services has remained a challenge in programming in most countries. Data consistently shows more females than males accessing services especially at static sites.

This trend is no different in East Central Uganda where STAR-EC operates in nine districts with funding from USAID. During the period August 2009 to March 2012, HIV counseling and testing (HCT) was provided to 686,799 individuals of whom only 34% were males

## Methods

In order to foster greater male involvement, STAR-EC has supported the setting up of HIV&AIDS 'Knowledge Rooms' at two sites in East Central Uganda that have a high concentration of populations (fisher folk and commercial sex workers) at increased risk of HIV infection.

The 'Knowledge Rooms' are a 'one stop' center for basic information about HIV&AIDS. They have:

- Trained counselors who talk to clients and provide HIV counseling and testing services
- Recreational facilities such as board games, pool tables and televisions to provide entertainment

We found that these facilities are mainly frequented by male clientele and used this as an opportunity to reach out to them and provide HIV&AIDS prevention services



Counselor teaching men on HIV prevention in a 'Knowledge Room'

## Results

During the period October 2010 – March 2012, these 'Knowledge Rooms' provided HIV counseling and testing to significantly more males than females – a characteristic that is unique for a static site as evidenced by the differences between testing at the 'Knowledge Rooms' and at a Health facility as shown in Tables 1 and 2. The differences in gender between those testing at 'Knowledge Rooms' and those testing in health facilities was found to be statistically significant ( $p<0.0001$ )

Table 1: HIV Counseling and Testing from a 'Knowledge Room'

HIV&AIDS 'Knowledge Room'	Received HCT		HIV Prevalence	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Lugala (Mainly Fisher folk)	100 (54%)	85	9.0%	3.5%
Naluwerere (Mainly Truckers and CSWs)	626 (58%)	448	4.2%	9.4%
<b>Totals</b>			<b>4.8%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>

Table 2: HIV Counseling and Testing from two Health Facilities

Health Facility	Received HCT		HIV Prevalence	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Iganga Hospital	6,713 (41%)	9,794	7.7%	9.4%
Kamuli Mission Hospital	5,509 (31%)	12,539	4.7%	4.5%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>12,222</b>	<b>22,333</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>6.6%</b>

## Results

'Knowledge Rooms' are an innovative way to provide HCT services to males in high HIV prevalence communities because they provide health services in a non-clinic, non-threatening and edutainment environment and can serve as an entry point for combination prevention approaches including voluntary medical male circumcision.

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