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Music as a vehicle for reducing HIV stigma and increasing access to testing in rural Uganda: A quasi-experimental, mixed-methods study

Category 5: Global Initiatives

New HIV infections in Uganda rose 21% between 2003-2013. Since 2014, Global Livingston Institute works with community partners to produce the "iKnow" Concert Series in rural Uganda. This annual, free concert series brings musicians/celebrities to stress that people can live long, healthy lives while being HIV-positive, aiming to decrease stigma. Additionally, there is free, on-site HIV testing, counseling, and treatment services, and free condom distribution/education.

This study seeks to assess the familiarity and opinions of Kabale community members to the concerts, and gain deeper understanding of HIV-related knowledge and stigma in the region. We hypothesized that the concert is an effective intervention to increase knowledge and reduce stigma surrounding HIV in rural Uganda.

202 interviews were conducted, with mean total HIV/AIDS Knowledge score of 9.4 out of 11 and a Mean total HIV-related stigma score of 32.4 out of 90. A multivariable linear regression analysis was run to predict HIV-related stigma and HIV/AIDS Knowledge from gender, age, employment status, religion and education. These variables statistically predicted a significant association with reduced stigma and level of education and higher levels of education being associated with reduced stigma.

Education level is significantly associated with reduced negative attitudes and beliefs towards people living with HIV/AIDS. Those who report having completed High School and higher, score almost six points lower on the stigma scale, on average. This study informs our efforts to increase accessibility to testing and services for rural communities while also reducing stigma and educating concert participants on disease prevention and treatment.

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