

P2.7. Prevention of Mother to Child HIV Transmission Not Understood by Young People in Uganda - Evelyn Namubiru, Straight Talk Foundation Uganda; Patrick Walugembe, Straight Talk Foundation Uganda
E-mail: pwalugembe@straighttalkuganda.org

Background/Significance: Ministry of Labour and Social development/CARE/CORE together with Straight Talk Foundation (STF) implemented a one-year HIV prevention awareness program for engaged and newly married young people. It targeted young people aged 15-24 years in Busoga and Kupsabiny regions of Uganda. Program aimed at empowering young people to adopt safer practices. Beneficiaries reached through weekly 30 minutes *Straight Talk ABY* radio shows and interpersonal counseling.

Main Question/Hypothesis: In June 2006, an end of project evaluation was conducted to explore the short-term outcomes of the campaign. Parameters assessed included young people's HIV knowledge, attitudes, practices and listener ship to *Straight Talk ABY* radio show. Since target audience in productive age, survey assessed awareness and perceptions on PMTCT and VCT services. This information was to be incorporated in STF HIV prevention activities, which aimed at reduction of infants HIV infections.

Data: Survey activities covered a total of 327 young people aged 15-27 years. These were the expected beneficiaries of the program. Over seventy percent were young people aged 20-27 years, 52.6% married, 50.5% females, 49.5% males and 81.3% sampled from a rural setting.

Methodology: Survey covered two districts randomly selected from the two interventional regions. Kamuli (109) and Jinja (110) represented Busoga and Kapchorwa (108) district Kupsabiny region. Households cross sectional survey, data collected using a face-to-face semi-structured questionnaire. Respondents sampled using a multistage random sampling technique. Every selected household had one eligible respondent. Data collected was entered in Epi data computer program and analysed using SPSS. Analysis reflected comparisons between exposure and non-exposure to program, gender and area setting.

Findings: Findings indicated that young people do not have adequate knowledge on mother to child HIV transmission mode. Only 41.6% could spontaneously cite MTCT as one of the HIV transmission modes.

Surprisingly when prompted, many (75%) knew that a mother could transmit the HIV to her baby during childbirth. A few were aware of the transmission that may occur during breastfeeding (52.6%) and pregnancy (19.0%). And 11.9% were not aware of any means through which a mother transmits HIV to her baby.

When asked to mention strategies on how a mother could prevent the transmission of HIV to her baby, a half (51.4%) cited taking of ARVs during pregnancy if ever tested positive, 46.5% mother not to breastfeed, 40.1% mother having adequate antenatal care, 10.1% thought of safer sex practices (abstinence and condom use) and 12.8% did not know any protective strategy.

Fifty six percent (56%) were aware of a VCT center in their locality. A few (39.8%) had ever taken an HIV test. Only 15.4% reported to have tested with influence of a partner. When asked to mention what someone can do to avoid contracting HIV, only 13.1% mentioned VCT.

Those who had never conducted an HIV test gave various reasons for not testing. The common reasons given included, fears associated with receiving results (33.5%), Felt no need for testing (33.5%), not aware of any testing center in their locality (12.7%) and others said that process is money consuming (7.6%)

Knowledge Contribution: Findings indicated that Ugandan young people have insufficient knowledge on prevention of mother to child HIV transmission. Nevertheless, the consciousness and uptake of VCT services is also poor. Since these are people in the productive age, they should be prepared to prevent HIV infections amongst themselves and their children. This would help them and their children go through the youthful age free of HIV. The research provides pertinent information that could be used by HIV prevention programs targeting youths.