

P4.6. Local Language Radio Shows Increase Uptake of VCT and PMTCT: Straight Talk's Experience in Kapchorwa - Isaac Kato, Straight Talk Foundation, Uganda; Evelyn Namubiri, Straight Talk Foundation, Uganda; Patrick Walugembe, Straight Talk Foundation, Uganda
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Background/Significance: The Abstinence Be faithful for Youth (ABY) program began in October 2005 after Straight Talk Foundation (STF) received a grant from CORE INITIATIVE. The project goal was to increase the proportion of newly engaged and married youth who seek HIV/AIDS prevention services, particularly VCT and PMTCT, in the Busoga and Sabinu regions, through weekly radio programs in the local languages, Lusoga and Kupsabiny.

In northeast Uganda, Kapchorwa has a population of about 193,000 served by one hospital, 27 health units, two health centers grade IV, 11 health centers grade III and 17 health center grade II.

Main Question/Hypothesis: Youth are willing to utilize services but do not have information about them. If they are sensitised and informed, the number seeking the services will increase with time.

Methodology: The radio show went on air in October 2005. After a year of broadcasts, retrospective study was conducted in 2006 August to determine if the Kupsabiny ABY show (Ngalaletap Manta) had contributed to an increase in the number of VCT and PMTCT seekers in Kapchorwa district. Researchers reviewed VCT and PMTCT records from three health facilities and interviewed staff in charge of the services. Out of the four health facilities that offered VCT in Kapchorwa, three were selected: Kapchorwa Hospital, FPAU clinic and Kaproron health center IV. Of these, only Kapchorwa Hospital offered PMTCT.

Client numbers were tallied from the health unit records for the time period from 2004 to 2006.

Findings: In all three-health facilities records showed that the number of VCT and PMTCT seekers had risen. All the VCT records reviewed showed an increase in number of VCT clients from 777 between November 2004 and August 2005 to 915 between September 2005 and August 2006, a year on year increase on 15%.

PMTCT records showed that clients increased from 520 between November 2004 and August 2005 to 1542 between September 2005 and August 2006. Service providers also attributed the increase to the ABY Kupsabiny radio show.

"When the radio program started running we were getting a lot of demand. People would come here saying that we have heard from the radio that you offer VCT services. Because of this I asked headquarters to resume supplying us with testing kits." In charge at FPAU

"They tell us that they heard on the radio that we are offering services of VCT, and when I ask them what about why have you come they simply say that they want to know their HIV status" In charge at FPAU

"The (radio show) helped to remove the fear of testing. You know people naturally used to fear testing for HIV." in charge of PMTCT Kapchorwa hospital

The same providers noted challenges in provision of the services and uptake. Clients have to travel far through hilly terrain to reach the three units offering the service. Another key limitation is that test kits frequent run out.

"We have now spent a month without getting the testing kits from Kampala." Director District Health Services, Kapchorwa

Lessons Learned/Conclusion: The ABY radio show in the local language, Kupsabiny, clearly contributed to an increase in the number of VCT and PMTCT seekers in Kapchorwa district by increasing awareness about where to get the services and their importance. The radio shows also played a role in decreasing one obstacle to testing for some people: fear. However, the increase in uptake creates its own problem: inadequate test kits to meet the increased demand.