

STD & HIV/AIDS 2018: Prevention of HIV/AIDS/STIs among most at risk populations in Uganda - Christine Namukasa - Allied Efforts for Community Network Organization, Uganda

Christine Namukasa

Allied Efforts for Community Network Organization, Uganda

This presentation documents the experience of Allied Efforts for Community Network Organization; a rural community-based organization in Uganda targeting Most At Risk Populations (MARPs) to HIV/AIDS. The project implemented aims at reducing HIV/AIDS/STIs (Sexual transmission) among the MARPs which include commercial sex workers and their clients, particularly, truck drivers. Strategies deployed include establishment of health service centers, psychosocial support, economic empowerment for safer income alternatives, HIV counseling and Testing (HCT), peer education, dissemination of messages on socio-cultural factors escalating HIV/AIDS and safer sex. Commercial sex work is illegal in Uganda, but policy on HIV/AIDS acknowledges the victims as at-risk populations. Policies provide the framework guiding interventions that include bringing on board local community members, government, community organizations and beneficiaries for community mobilization and awareness rising on HIV/AIDS. Project challenges include limited resources and upsurge in demand for services. As a way forward, it is imperative to continue sustainable combination HIV prevention strategies to curb its surge. HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is one of the leading causes of death worldwide; Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the most gravely affected region of the world. In Uganda targeting of prevention efforts to Most-at-Risk Population is a strategy being used to address HIV epidemics. By focusing programs towards

populations and behaviors conferring a large proportion of new infections, greater impact can be made in halting the epidemic. Although commercial sex work is illegal in Uganda, the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan (NSP, 2016–2017), recognizes those commercial sex workers and their clients is one of the most at-risk populations. The modes of transmission study 2017 reveals that, commercial sex workers, their clients and partners of clients contribute 10% of new HIV infections. Sex workers serve several clients a day and each sexual encounter is associated with some form of risk hence a community risk. There is also evidence that, while 99% of commercial sex workers report use of condoms, consistent condom use is very low among their clients. Such sexual practices with inconsistent condom use are a danger to the community. With the emerging issues in the prevention of HIV that include the right to health and services, gender-based violence, male medical circumcision, post exposure prophylaxis among others we have a challenge and an opportunity to strongly adopt these issues as we strive to the curb the escalation of the AIDS (Acquired Immuno-d Deficiency syndrome)/STI's (Sexually Transmitted Infection) epidemic. These are challenges and the opportunities in the provision of HIV and STIs(Sexually Transmitted Infection) prevention and control services to most at risk populations today in a developing country. Strategies and good practices address the empowerment of most at risk populations.