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# SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

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## Use of social media to increase HIV/AIDS awareness, testing and support among the young LGBTs in Kampala city: A case study in Uganda

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**Introduction & Aim:** Research shows that young Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBTs) in Kampala have less access to HIV information, testing and support thereby being at a risk of HIV infections. Vijana Na Children Foundation-Uganda (VINACEF) used social media to provide access to information and support services. This study focused on observing whether youth LGBTs who access HIV information can seek testing and support from friendly providers.

**Method:** VINACEF approached leaders of LGBTs who helped us to identify LGBTs peers (60 in total aged 19-25 years and 40 were male). VINACEF trained them as peer educators in prevention and support. It enrolled them on social media to help with rolling out the opening of peers accounts and orienting them on usage. VINACEF peer educators issued coupons to enable peers for access internet periodically. Educators started social media discussions on HIV awareness and support. Peer educators issued referrals/treatment vouchers to enable LGBTs peers access free services and more information in friendly centers. A data tracking tool was developed/used to collect data periodically, analyzed it to come up with results. A total of 948 peers were reached during the study.

**Result:** 43% HIV/AIDS related risks awareness, prevention and care among young LGBTs were realized from 51% at baseline. 35% of the target peers had social media accounts at baseline compared to 98% at the end of the study. 91% Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) compared to 71% Women who have Sex with Women (WSW) used social media to share concerns with their peers. 61% WSW picked coupons to access testing services compared to 89% MSM. At baseline 42% believed that circumcision stops HIV transmission compared to 8% at the end of the study. 13% of enrolled peers tested positive to HIV, enrolled on Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) program and support groups. 24% accessed STIs' treatment and 88% accessed condoms.

**Conclusion:** Findings suggested that a big proportion of young LGBTs in Kampala can access HIV related information through social media and accelerate HIV awareness among them. Young LGBTs friendly strategies should be explored to increase access to services. Knowledge on circumcision should be intensified and appropriate networks for support are important in warranting young LGBTs access to services.

### Biography

Benard Ssembatya is a MSM from the LGBTI community Uganda. He has also achieved a Diploma in Social Development from Nsamizi Institute of Social Development in 2010.

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