

Community-Led Monitoring Study: Enhancing HIV Testing and Case Identification among Adolescents and Young People in the West Rand District:

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Background: In many underserved communities, key and vulnerable populations affected by HIV often remain unaware of their infection status, hindering effective service delivery interventions. This study aimed to assess the impact of community-led monitoring on case identification, with the goal of enhancing targeted interventions for adolescents and young people.

Intervention Description: A community-led monitoring study was conducted in five communities within the Rand West district, predominantly comprising informal settlements and rural areas. The communities were paired based on similar demographic and environmental characteristics. Randomization and assignment of communities to intervention groups were performed, and the interventions were not masked as they were community-based. The primary endpoint, HIV incidence, is awaiting completion of assessments following the intervention. This interim analysis focuses on the secondary endpoint, namely the uptake of HIV testing, differences in client characteristics receiving their first HIV test, and repeat testing. The analysis was limited to adolescents and young people.

Results: Among the participants from key and vulnerable populations, a higher proportion received their first HIV test in peripheral communities compared to center communities (57%). The mean difference in the proportion of adolescents and young people receiving HIV testing between peripheral and center communities was 39% across the five community pairs. HIV prevalence was higher in peripheral communities, but center communities detected nearly three times more HIV cases than peripheral communities across the identified sites. By the end of the intervention period, repeat HIV testing in peripheral communities increased to 31% of all those who underwent HIV testing.

Lessons learnt: Community-led monitoring should be considered a viable intervention to enhance HIV detection, particularly in regions with limited access to clinic-based services after testing.

Key message: Community-led monitoring is a valuable intervention to increase HIV testing and case identification among adolescents and young people in underserved areas.

Advocacy message: By implementing community-led monitoring, we can significantly improve the identification of HIV cases among adolescents and young people in underserved areas. This approach empowers communities to take an active role in combating the spread of HIV and ensures that targeted interventions are effectively delivered. Let us support community-led initiatives to increase HIV testing and case finding, promoting better health outcomes for all.

Keywords: Community-based intervention, HIV testing, case finding