

Journalist Training: A key Advocacy Strategy

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BACKGROUND

With the alarming increase in new HIV acquisitions among young people, journalists must have a necessary knowledge and skills to consistently and accurately cover its attendant issues. Media brings transformative experiences, weaponising against ignorance and stigma. Armed with accurate and up-to-date information, media can be a messenger of hope, reaching out to communities far and wide, breaking down barriers, and dispelling myths. Through print, broadcast, and social media campaigns, media is a strategic tool advocates can employ to translate scientific research and publicize new interventions, such as the vaginal and injectable PrEP, which have yet to be rolled out in Tanzania. The impact of informed media coverage is key to creating demand for new technologies, advocating for timely implementation, and ultimately controlling epidemics.

OBJECTIVES

- Increase demand for CAB-LA and DVR among AGYW and the community by disseminating their information via media outlets, ie, newspaper, blog, radio, and television.
- Increase awareness of HIV prevention choices and new options (CAB-LA and DVR) in a community targeting AGYW and government stakeholders, ie: Ministry of Health, NACP, TMDA.

METHODS

Advocates organised a journalist training in Dar esSalaam, entitled Journalists' Engagement in HIV Prevention where 13 journalists from 10 media houses (television, radio, newspapers, and blogs) participated. The agenda focused on the need for the implementation of injectable PrEP and the vaginal ring and increased scale-up of oral PrEP. Expert participants also included district media officers, health providers, and civil society advocates. A large focus was on HIV prevention services for adolescent girls and young women (AGYN). Implementation challenges were interrogated and opportunities in adopting new prevention literacy, initiate relations between media and HIV community advocates, create demand, and pressure national stakeholders to adopt new preventions options.

RESULTS

Journalists reported on the latest research and developments, highlighting injectable PrEP and the ring. Specifically, a total of four (4) national newspaper articles, 1 blog post, and 1 TV session covers these new prevention options urging government support. In total, almost 14 million Tanzanians - 23 percent of the country's population - were reached as a result of new media training.

DISCUSSION

Journalists hold a unique position at the center of HIV prevention. Their role extends beyond reporting the news; they advocates, educators, and catalysts for change. By using their platform responsibly and ethically, journalists contribute and significantly to the global efforts to combat HIV, reduce transmission rates, and ultimately create a world free from HIV/AIDS.

- Media is a key tool for translating science for lay audiences.
- Media engagement is a key advocacy strategy to pressure governments for new HIV options such as injectable PrEP and vaginal ring.
- Media can transform lives and behavior by amplifying stories.
- Media acts as a bridge between the community and the duty bearers when advocating for better HIV services.

CONCLUSION

- Include media as targets in HIV advocacy campaigns and scale-up of programs/projects
- Invest in HIV research literacy and training for journalists.
- Create platforms for ongoing dialogue and knowledge-sharing between journalists, researchers, and communities.
- Engage in digital media to mobilize youth voices for demand creation.