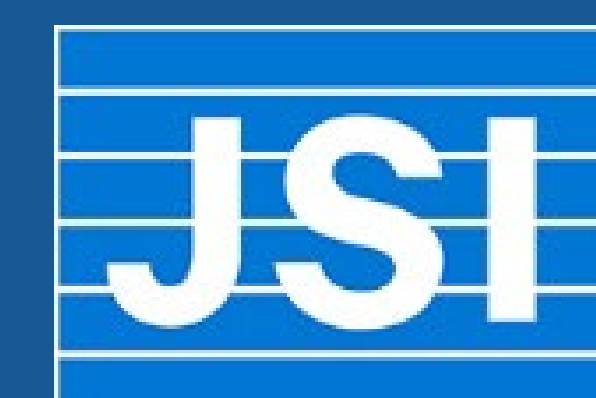


Even the devil was given audience by God: Discourse analysis of the rhetoric against men who have sex with men in Ghana



Bruce, Egbert K¹; Adiibokah, Edward²; Thompson, Shirley¹; Komlagah, David¹; Tagoe, Henry²; Eifler, Kristin³

1. JSI Research and Training Institute Inc., Accra, Ghana

2. Population Council, Accra, Ghana

3. JSI Research and Training Institute Inc., Boston, United States

PROBLEM

HIV prevalence among men who have sex with men (MSM) is 16 times (18.1%) that of the general male population (1.1%) in Ghana (GAC et al. 2018). As such, the National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan (NSP) espouses the public health and rights-based approaches to mitigate HIV infection among MSM. The media is a critical medium for information communication and a tool that drives social and behavioral change.

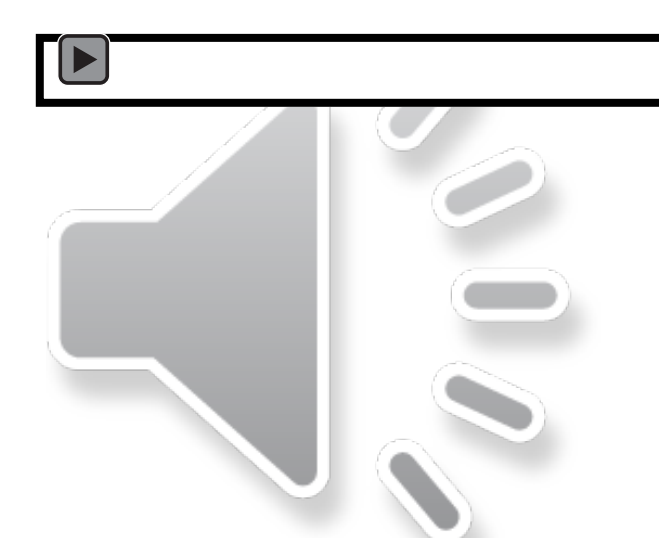
This poster presents an analysis of media representation of MSM and sexual minority issues and potential effects on HIV epidemic control as part of the National HIV response.

RESPONSE

Under the USAID Strengthening the Care Continuum Project, implemented by JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc., with Population Council, we collected and analyzed 50 public and private media pronouncements and publications, both electronic and print, covering MSM and sexual minority rights issues.



The period of review spanned 25 months (December 2016 to December 2018) after which we conducted a critical analysis of discourse statements for their constitution of power and ideology.



RESULTS

The rhetoric around MSM issues was mainly power-based, unscientific and ideologically driven, and aimed at engendering violence, social exclusion, marginalization, stigma, and discrimination toward MSM.

Most discourse emanated from high level political figures from both parties in power and opposition.

The electronic and print media representation of MSM issues converged and was emotive, negative, and misleading.

100% (50 out of 50) were negative toward MSM and sexual minorities.

58% (29 of 50) of the explosive rhetorical instances around MSM was upto early 2018, when there was a new government in place.

24% (12 of 50) of sources touched on health, social, reproductive rights or human right issues.

The rhetoric and media representation of MSM issues has the potential to increase stigma and discrimination and negate HIV epidemic control efforts among MSM, and towards the national HIV response.

CONCLUSION

JSI recommends, as a short-term measure, the Ghana AIDS Commission (GAC) should intensify its sensitization efforts for the executive and legislative arms of the government as well as members of the general public about HIV interventions.

The GAC should intensify advocacy efforts to improve the legal environment by removing antiquated, punitive laws against homosexuality on the public record

MSM-led or MSM-friendly CSOs should be strengthened and capacitated to adopt creative approaches to identify, enroll, and retain MSM living with HIV on treatment.

