

Assisted Partner Notification Highlights HIV Disclosure Gap among Sexual Partners

John Snow, Inc. Authors: Pamela Donggo, Samuel Engulu, Gilbert Elijah Sangadi, Med Makumbi

Problem

In Uganda, UPHIA (2016-2017) found only 84% of people living with HIV know their status.

Response

The Uganda national consolidated HIV prevention, care, and treatment guidelines (2018) recommends assisted partner notification (APN) as a strategy to achieve widespread testing of those at risk.

Through this approach, an individual testing positive is supported to disclose, to their sexual partner(s), their status and encourage them to take an HIV test. **APN leads to improved outcomes such as linking couples to care, increasing adherence to treatment, and reducing stigma.**

USAID RHITES-North, Lango project, implemented by John Snow Inc, (JSI), trains health care workers in the Lango region of Uganda to implement partner testing through HIV services, including APN, where a trained provider helps consenting index patients notify their sexual partner(s) about potential exposure to HIV infection. The provider then offers HIV testing to these partner(s). Couples are encouraged to test together, and to disclose their HIV status to each other.

Results

Between October 2018 and September 2019, of the 21,081 index clients eligible for APN services, 8,742 (41%) were interviewed. They provided information on 12,434 partners, of whom 1,336 (11%) were found to be already on ART. Non-disclosure was two times higher among females aged 15-24 years compared to males of the same age and 1.6 times higher among older males above 45 years.

Conclusion

The goal of partner testing is to provide HIV testing to undiagnosed persons who are in a relationship with a person diagnosed with HIV. However, lack of disclosure among sexual partners may elicit partners who are already on treatment. HIV positive clients need support to ensure their partners are aware of their HIV status and get tested and linked to treatment or preventive services.

HIV disclosure gap: 11% of elicited partners were already on ART without the knowledge of the index client who was their sexual partner

21,081 INDEX CLIENTS ELIGIBLE FOR APN SERVICES

