

Toward Understanding Community Mobilization for HIV Prevention in the African Context

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Project Description

Increasingly HIV prevention specialists are focusing efforts on community social mobilization (CSM) strategies as a powerful and sustainable means of combating the HIV epidemic. This study aims to

- Develop a conceptual definition of CSM, including exploration of dimensions of CSM appropriate to the context of rural South Africa. We will conduct focus group discussions with young men and women and in-depth-interviews with community leaders in order to adapt and refine prior work conceptualizing the definition and dimensions of CSM to fit the rural South African context.
- Generate context-specific items that capture dimensions of CSM and evaluate the properties of the new community mobilization measure. We will generate a pool of items measuring the dimensions of CSM, pilot test the items among 100 young people, conduct exit surveys, and evaluate the scale properties in order to refine the measure for use in a large scale survey.
- Test the measure of CSM in the large scale community survey of young people aged 18-35 years (1,200 people in 25 communities) being implemented in the study entitled “Effects of cash transfer and community mobilization in young South African women.” The scale performance will be evaluated for reliability and validity using both item response modeling and confirmatory factor analysis in a large sample.

Significance

Health promoters and researchers have made important strides in recognizing that mobilizing communities to improve health is a powerful and sustainable tool to combat the HIV epidemic. However, further conceptual development of CSM, including examination of the dimensions of mobilization and the means or pathways through which CSM encourages HIV prevention, is needed in the field. Performing an in-depth examination of CSM, furthering conceptual development and improving measurement of CSM will improve the design and evaluation of future mobilizing interventions, which are particularly important in high HIV prevalence settings.