

**Presentation title:** A collaborated intervention extending HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention to rural Uganda with integration of Family Planning.

**Focus:** HIV/Awareness & Prevention

**Organisation:** Reach A Hand Uganda (RAHU)

**Presentation type:** Poster Presentation

## Background

The HIV/AIDS epidemic remains one of Uganda's main public health concerns affecting young people (aged 18-35) who constitute over 75%<sup>1</sup> of the country's population, and although there has been a reduction in the prevalence rate from 7.3% in 2011 to 6% in 2017<sup>2</sup>, the country still registers 50,000<sup>3</sup> new infections each year. According to the 2017 Uganda Population-based HIV Impact Assessment (UPHIA), Ugandans living in urban areas are more likely to be HIV positive, with a prevalence rate of 9.8% compared to their rural counterparts with 6.7%.<sup>4</sup> This is due to the economic strife that pushes young people to engage in transactional sex. In 2014, the joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) and partners set the '90-90-90 target' aiming to diagnose 90% of all HIV positive people, provide antiretroviral therapy (ART) for 90% of those diagnosed and achieve viral suppression for 90% of those treated, by 2020.

Reach A Hand Uganda (RAHU) through the iKnow HIV/AIDS Awareness campaign, is contributing to these targets by creating avenues through which young people can get to know their HIV status. The iKnowKati Campaign is a RAHU communication channel targeting and equipping young people aged 16-35 years (*In-School & Out-of School*) with correct and accurate information on HIV/AIDS prevention as well as addressing critical barriers to young people's access to HIV services and information namely; stigmatisation, the limited access to testing facilities and information. The campaign also addresses the unmet need for Family Planning and other sexual reproductive health rights (SRHR) information and services.

## Strategy & Milestone

The project which started in 2014 with corporate talks, has grown into fully fledged concerts extending to the Central, East, North and Western regions of Uganda especially those with high HIV prevalence rates. The campaign employs the peer education model and cultural icons such as; musicians, beauty queens, comedians and leaders to lead in passing on HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention information. They also encourage young people to test for HIV and seek SRHR information and services including family planning. RAHU and partners design appropriate youth-friendly HIV/AIDS prevention messages, organise community youth engagement drives and outreaches, door-to-door mobilisation, flash mobs, movies, and musical concerts. The campaign serves a draws young people to one location offering free services. Since 2016, RAHU and partners increased access to a wide range of SRHR services reaching 15,364 young people with HIV testing and counselling, 1,344 people with family planning services and counselling, 539 people with safe male circumcision, over 100,000 people have accessed information on HIV/AIDS prevention, and a total of 1,977,474 online users were reached with HIV/AIDS information.

## Lessons Learned

- Music concert(s) is an effective tool in engaging young people with HIV prevention information and services.
- A collaborative approach is crucial in increasing HIV prevention awareness initiatives..
- Integrated outreaches (that includes; FP, HIV, & other services) brings value as young people's SHRH issues are diverse.
- Community health drives help communities access quality and affordable SRHR services
- It's difficult to engage and follow up on a large number of young people who attend the concerts.

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<sup>1</sup> Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) 2918 <https://www.ubos.org/explore-statistics/20/>

<sup>2</sup> Uganda HIV/AIDS Country Progress Report 2016/18 [https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/country/documents/UGA\\_2018\\_countryreport.pdf](https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/country/documents/UGA_2018_countryreport.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> HIV and AIDS in Uganda <https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-around-world/sub-saharan-africa/uganda>

<sup>4</sup> Uganda Population-Based HIV Impact Assessment 2016/17 <https://www.afro.who.int/sites/default/files/2017-08/UPHIA%20Uganda%20factsheet.pdf>

**Conclusion**

The iKnow Musical Concert Campaign served as a meaningful catalyst to bring people out to access integrated SRH services and information on HIV testing and reproductive health services including family planning in rural Uganda. The best way to reduce the stigmatization and encourage people to go for HIV tests and Family planning services is to use fun and interesting approaches like concerts and movies among other activities that spark the interests of the target audience. Additionally, the inclusive programming has reduce stigmatization and discrimination of Most At Risk Populations (MARPS).

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