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**TARGETING RADIO FOR HIV/AIDS/STDs PREVENTION IN NIGERIA:
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES (KUNAMATATA)**

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ISSUES

The issue of HIV/AIDS/STDs prevention became necessary among young people because of the alarming rate in the spread of the pandemic in Nigeria; the radio is the primary communication medium for reaching to the largest segment of the population, which are the young people. The radio is a constant presence on the streets, in homes, market places and workplaces. Radio is also cross-cutting in its penetration, serving divergent populations, languages as well as gender, economic and ethnic affiliations. How can the radio be deployed to mobilize against HIV/AIDS/STDs in Nigeria?

DESCRIPTION

In 2007, Economic and Social Empowerment Of rural communities (ESERC) with support the MTV- International Network Staying alive foundation began a project on HIV prevention and constraints as well as build the capacity and create awareness on HIV/AIDS and how its preventive measures. The project involved focus group discussions with people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), Doctors and HIV/AIDS/STDs project managers in Nigeria. Site visits and discussions with news and program managers and interviews with groups of PLWHA. The project also included a training program for radio journalists on site to provide radio coverage to the listeners in Nigeria especially in the rural places since radio was the best way to reach them.

LESSONS LEARNED

Huge potential exists for mobilizing the radio massively against AIDS. Findings from the project however revealed a lack of capacity of many radio stations to provide quality coverage of HIV/AIDS. Many of the stations are handicapped by inadequate or outdated equipment, commercial pressures as well as low levels of HIV reporting skills among staff. Most radio media interventions on HIV/AIDS/STDs have tended to target reporters

only, to the exclusion of station managers and content gatekeepers, with the result that many radio journalists do not have the requisite skills to advocate for HIV prevention and care.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Radio must be at the core of any long-term media intervention on HIV/AIDS/STDs. Such interventions however must address the structural, organizational and skills capacity of stations and should aim at building long-term capacities of local partners to ensure sustainability.

Keywords: HIV/AIDS/STDs prevention; care; Nigeria; Radio; Young People; Communication, education, media