

COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION FOR A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL OF A COUPLES BASED INTERVENTION TO INCREASE TESTING FOR HIV AMONG HETEROSEXUAL COUPLES IN VULINDLELA, SOUTH AFRICA

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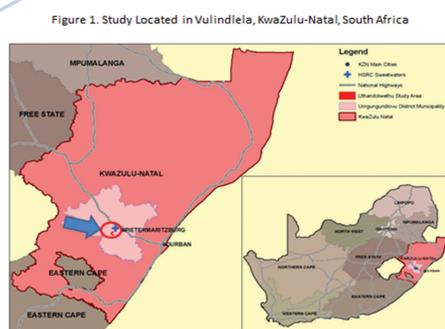
HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

BACKGROUND

- Community Mobilization (CM) strategies have been used to promote the expansion and acceptance of new innovations in health promotion and prevention (Babalola et al 2001).
- CM is a comprehensive approach that:
 - Works from the bottom-up
 - Encourages community-wide participation of people on issues that affect them
 - Is increasingly utilized in public health research (Jemmott et al 1998).

UTHANDOLWETHU PROJECT

- This is a couples-based-intervention to test the efficacy of a theory-based and culturally appropriate couples-based intervention on the following outcomes:
 - Rates of couples-based HIV testing
 - Sexual risk behaviour for HIV (with primary and any concurrent partners) (Darbes et al 2014).



CM OBJECTIVES IN UTHANDOLWETHU

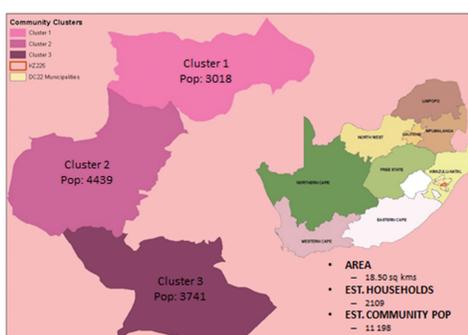
- We used various community mobilisation strategies:
 - To create a supportive environment for our couples based intervention.
 - To create social awareness about the value of a couples based intervention in promoting health relationships.
 - To create a context of collaboration between researchers and the community.
 - To establish a platform for community members to raise their concerns regarding all phases of the study.

CM STRATEGIES

- Community gatherings
 - To inform about the study and encourage participation.
- Social Networks mobilization
 - To get support and buy in from other organizations
- Community Based Mobilisers/ Couples Mobilizers
 - To impart information about the study in a culturally appropriate and understandable manner.
 - To increase knowledge and ensuring maximum participation
- Community Working Group
 - To increase community participation in the research project
 - To act as liaison between the community and research project
- Motorcade parade
 - To inform and create hype about the research project
- Information flyers and Posters
 - To create awareness and maximizing publicity
- Mob Talks
 - To involve and communicate study objective to all members of the community

Figure 2 shows how the study community was divided into three clusters

- To ensure equal distribution of mobilization activities.
- To ensure parity on participants recruitment.
- To ensure that couple mobilizers have the same and equal catchment area to impart information about the study.



COMMUNITY STRUCTURES

- We formed structures like Community Working Groups (CWGs) and Community Based Mobilizers (CBMs), which allowed us to maximize community input by allowing community members to raise unmet expectations and point out possible barriers in recruitment (Jemmott et al 1998).

Chart 1: Mobilisation Resources

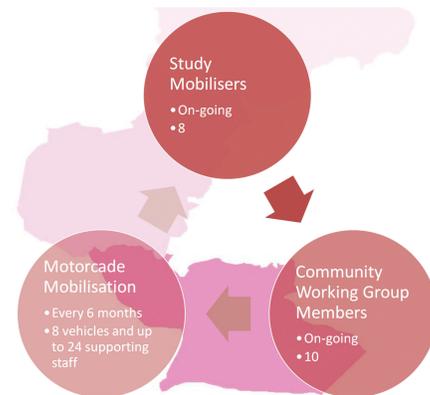


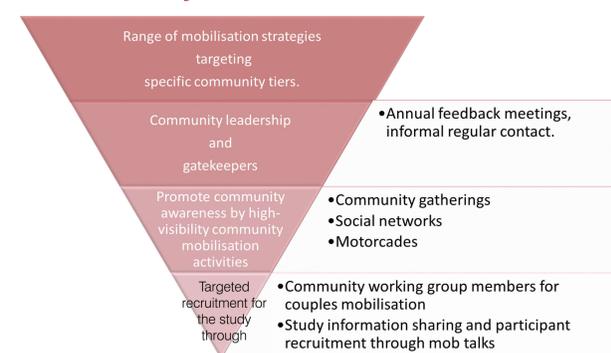
Chart 2: Community Mobilisation Estimates

Activity	#Activities	Months	Staff	Contacts Targeted	Cumulative Total
Community Gatherings	3	3	1	100	900
Social networks	1	29	1	30	870
Motorcade	2	3	6	20	720

Chart 3: Targeted Mobilisation Estimates

Activity	#Activities	Months	Staff	Contacts Targeted	Cumulative Total
Couples mobilisers	1	29	10	10	2900
Mob Talks	4	29	2	10	2320

Chart 4: Mobilisation Summary



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- Community Mobilization is a viable approach to create a conducive context that encourages community participation.
- For this to work, it requires time, energy and dedication.
- Implementation of CM strategies have positive impact on the overall rates of study acceptance, community buy-in and recruitment.
- Some ongoing challenges we have experienced are:
 - community members being sceptical about study involvement early on
 - political organisations wanting to use CM activities for their own purposes
 - difficulties in conducting community meetings due to lack of suitable community venues
- However, well conducted CM activities have proved to have great success in community participation.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Babalola, S., et al. (2001). "The impact of a community mobilization project on health-related knowledge and practices in Cameroon." Journal of Community Health 26 (6):459 - 477.

Darbes, L., et al. (2014). "Uthando Lwethu ('our love'): a protocol for a couples-based intervention to increase testing for HIV: a randomized controlled trial in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa." Trials Journal 15 (64): 1 - 15.

Jemmott, L., et al. (1998). "Building community partnerships to improve HIV prevention efforts: Implications for nurses." Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care 9(3): 29 - 40.