

A FORMATIVE STUDY FOR A COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION HIV INTERVENTION FOR YOUNG WOMEN IN RURAL KENYA

PI: Audrey K. Bangi, PhD, MPH

CO-PI: Gary W. Harper, PhD, MPH

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Guided by the Ecological Systems Theory of Human Development, this project will examine the multi-systemic factors that influence rural young women's health and well-being in Kenya. This project will use the photovoice method, in-depth interviews, and focus groups with 30 young women between 18 and 24 years of age living in Thigio, Kenya. Participants will be recruited from the young adult groups, health clinic, and training center overseen by the local community collaborator. Photovoice is a participatory action research methodology that will be used to actively engage young women in the development of a community mobilization HIV intervention. The proposed project will lay important groundwork for the future development of a community mobilization intervention that will decrease young women's susceptibility to HIV.

SIGNIFICANCE

HIV/AIDS disproportionately affects young women in developing countries, particularly those living in rural communities. Researchers have long acknowledged that factors within an individual's environment, those outside of individual control, can strongly influence HIV risk. However, there have been limited efforts to directly change aspects of the environment creating this risk. The PI's previous work with young women living in a rural community in Kenya highlighted several community-level determinants affecting their sexual health, including social networks, peer norms, and involvement in social organizations. However, additional research is needed to enhance our understanding of specific sociocultural contexts that influence HIV risk and resiliency in order to determine the most effective ways to intervene.

As the epidemic spreads among young rural women, we must continue to develop novel approaches to HIV prevention that are community-based, locally relevant, responsive to change, and sustainable. Effective community change efforts can only be brought about with a clear understanding of the immediate influences most salient to the lives of young Kenyan women and how they operate as barriers or facilitators to HIV infection.

PROJECT RECRUITMENT DATES: May – July 2008

PROJECT END DATE: August 2008