

HIV/AIDS counselling in the Ugandan army: does it promote behaviour change?

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Abstract: Issue: Soldiers are at high risk of HIV/AIDS but do not have access to counselling and education. Project: An HIV/AIDS outreach program targeting soldiers, their families and neighbouring communities for counselling and HIV/AIDS education using trained Counsellors and Health educators was initiated. The strategies used were: one to one counselling, group counselling, sensitization, training of peer educators, recreation and education through post-test clubs, condom supply and food aid supply. Results: After mobilisation, sensitization and training of peer educators soldiers came up for counselling and testing. Within 1 1/2 years 2,478 people had come up for pre-test counselling, of these 2,230 people (90%) had turned up for post-test counselling, 1,561 people (70%) had registered as post-test club members, 248 people (10%) had received pre-test counselling but had not gone for testing. 1980 people had requested for counselling yet to be offered. There has been notable behaviour change among people counselled indicated through increased demand for condoms, people willing to educate others and bring them for testing and self-confessed behaviour change by post-test club members. Lessons Learned: HIV/AIDS counselling and education appears to reinforce social norms related to safer sex behaviour and this is an important base for influencing behaviour change.