

Examine the role of Faith Based Organizations in addressing HIV/AIDS

By Erasmus Tanga, Lyne Atuyambe and Sarah Woldeham

Introduction:

There is significant global interest in involving Faith Based Organizations in mobilizing HIV prevention efforts as well as providing care and support services. UNAIDS Global Strategy Framework on HIV/AIDS calls for partnership of key social groups. Uganda promotes multicultural approaches; public-private partnerships and community based responses. Faith based organizations have long delivered social, educational and health services. Their activities however have not been documented despite their increased involvement in HIV/AIDS activities. Independent analysis of FBO's impact has been lacking.

The study aimed at conducting an independent analysis of the role of FBOs in addressing HIV/AIDS pandemic, assess the important work of FBOs in meeting the challenges of HIV/AIDS, identify the areas where FBOs, can play a role in further development and explain the perceptions of FBOs involvement.

Methodology:

The study was a qualitative research conceptually grounded in the Global Strategy Framework on HIV/AIDS. Semi-structured interviews were conducted; administered to professionals working in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Thirty key informants selected from community-based organizations, FBOs, Donor agencies, health care facilities, International Governmental Organizations, pharmaceutical companies and research institutions, were interviewed. All the interviews were held verbatim and analyzed using qualitative software (ATLAS ti).

Results:

The study showed that FBOs are an important part of Uganda's National response / HIV/AIDS. They are active from national to community level and symbolize the multisectoral approach deemed necessary to fight HIV/AIDS. FBOs have a key role in fighting stigma and discrimination by mobilization of followers and changing social norms. People trust FBOs and therefore they should be involved in prevention. They also remind people of social norms and values that reinforce protective behaviors

Informants were divided on the issue of believing that FBOs advocate for A and B of the ABC of prevention avoiding promotion of condoms and not talking about prevention at all; we must recognize their comparative advantage. So do not expect a Bishop to go and start demonstrating how to use a condom, if you know it is against his whatever. Use him for what he is best to deliver.

With regard to treatment, FBOs have done well, providing a quality service in comparison to Government and should continue through their network of Hospitals They have developed good models of health care that can be utilized to scale up interventions like the provision of ARVS.

In conclusion, FBOs should be involved in all aspects of prevention, care and support; mitigation of the impact of HIV/AIDS. Perceptions of the key informants was found significant and will provide basis for policy dialogue and decision-making leading to

improved prevention efforts and will positively expand care, support and treatment of PLWA and other affected by the disease.