

ABSTRACT

In 2008 the government of South Sudan developed a national strategic plan to mitigate the HIV epidemic. The strategy included awareness raising and behaviour change communication (BCC), preventive actions through HIV counselling and testing services (HCT), and the prevention of transmission of HIV from mother to child (PMTCT). The evaluation targeted eight health facilities in Wau County. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the progress made on utilization of HIV services, and determined what worked well and what did not work well. The study also examined factors that hindered the utilization of HIV services among young people and pregnant women

The study design was an evaluation of HIV services, and a descriptive cross sectional study of young people (14 – 49 years) and pregnant women who utilized HIV services in Wau County. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were applied. The method of the evaluation involved retrospective analysis of data recorded from January 2008 to September 2011, in eight health facilities. Questionnaires were developed and administered to 280 respondents, 34 health workers and 6 health managers. Qualitative analysis was done through focus group discussions with the respondents in health facilities. Observations and check-lists were used by the researcher within the health facility.

The researcher analysed the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent, level of satisfaction on the health education program, number of clients tested, accepted results and refused to be tested. The questionnaires were analysed using excel.

Results indicated that the overall utilization of HIV services progressed in the four-year period (2008 – 2011). Eighty nine (89%) per cent of young people (15 – 49 years) and pregnant women were satisfied with the health education provided in the health facilities. Furthermore, the percentage of young people tested in Wau hospital voluntary counselling and testing clinic increased from 6 % in 2008 to 30 % in 2011. Also, 73 %, 50 % and 52 % pregnant women were counselled for HIV testing in 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively. But only 27 %, 50 % and 48 % accepted to be tested for HIV in the respective years. The acceptance rate on average was found to be only 43 % among pregnant women.

Barriers that affected the utilization of HIV services were attributed to limited space in health facilities that compromised with confidentiality, stigma, late delivery of supplies and funds, literacy level of the population, low involvement of men in the PMTCT program and low level of awareness on HIV prevention and services. Factors that increased utilization of HIV services were attributed to increase in level of awareness in the health facilities, expansion and acceleration of community outreaches on HIV/AIDS as well as in the health facilities.

The researcher recommends that policy makers should prioritize capacity building of health workers to enable them improve on service delivery, particularly on PMTCT services. Expand HIV counselling programme to other health facilities. Strengthen supply chain management system, and to produce improved quality educational materials to promote awareness on HIV prevention and utilization of the services.