COVID-Alerts

An Initiative to Address COVID-19 Misinformation Among the Sex Working Community partners in Nairobi, Kenya

Toby Le, Delories Sikuku, Joyce Adhiambo, Rosemary Kasiba, Lyle McKinnon, Joshua Kimani, Keith R. Fowke

Rady Faculty of Health Sciences | University of Manitoba

Community Collaborations in Nairobi, Kenya

Context: HIV Researchers at the University of Manitoba (UM) have collaborated with the sex working community in Nairobi, Kenya for over 40 years

Problem: With the emergence of COVID-19, global communities were confronted with misinformation and/or lack of information about the pandemic

Objective: To implement a public health initiative (called COVD-Alerts) that provides weekly updates about COVID-19 to ~18,000 sex workers in Kenya

The collaboration between UM and the Sex Working Community was founded by Dr. Frank Plummer (Photo by Jo Kennelly)

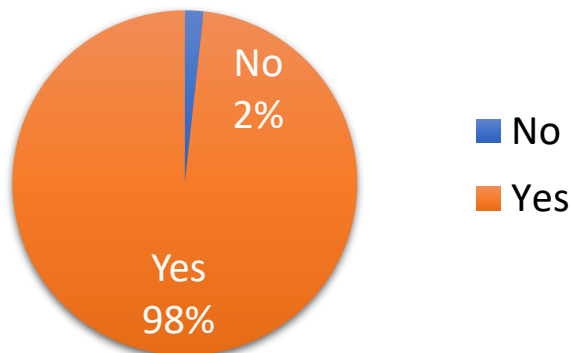Rady Faculty of Health Sciences | University of Manitoba

Methods

- Conduct a survey at local SWOP clinics to determine the most feasible modes of communications for sex workers

- Paper surveys, translated in English and Kiswahili, were administered at 7 SWOP Clinics:
  (1) Swop City
  (2) Swop Kawangware
  (3) Swop Langata
  (4) Thika Road
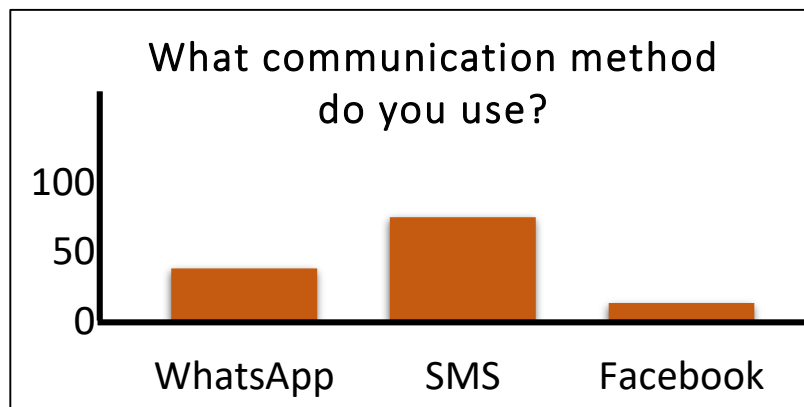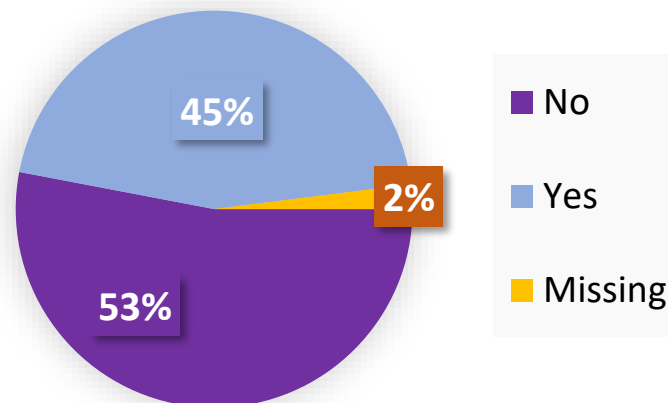 (5) Swop Majengo
  (6) Swop Eastlands
  (7) Swop Korogocho

Results

n=294 particpants

Are you interested in receiving weekly updates about COVID-19?

No 2%

Yes 98%

- ■ No
- ■ Yes

Do you own a smart phone?

45%

2%

53%

- ■ No
- ■ Yes
- ■ Missing

What communication method do you use?

100

50

0

WhatsApp   SMS   Facebook

Future Applications: This data provides insights for future public health initiatives that aim to communicate with the sex working community in Kenya about other public health concerns, including infectious diseases.

COVID-Alerts: Sample SMS Messages

Example #1: Wearing a mask shields others and yourself from droplets that carry COVID-19 virus. Tiny droplets come from your mouth when you talk or sing

Example #2: When you wear a face mask, it should cover your nose, mouth, and leave no gaps on the side of your face. Wash hands with soap & water before touching your mask.
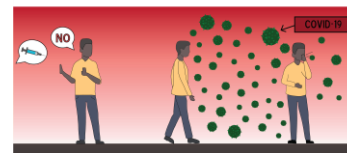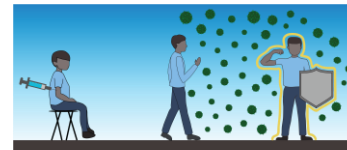
COVID-Alerts: Sample WhatsApp Messages
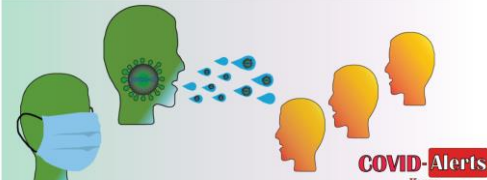
Community Feedback

"Yes, and they [the community] like the design [Visual graphics] as well"
- **Ms. Joyce Adhiambo** (SWOP community leader)

"The messages great! Perfect timing with the country going into and/or experiencing a second wave!" - **Dr. Joshua Kimani** (Clinician from Nairobi, Kenya)

"They [COVID-Alerts] are good.. Very good. Short n precise"
— **Ms. Rosemary Kasiba** (SWOP community leader)