

**THE KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF  
REFUGEES ABOUT HIV/AIDS IN A MULTINATIONAL  
REFUGEE SETTING OF NAKIVALE REFUGEE CAMP IN  
MBARARA DISTRICT OF SOUTH WESTERN UGANDA.**

**A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY.**

**BY**

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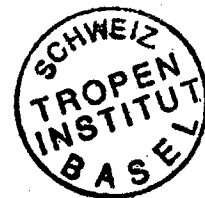
**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE  
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## **7. Summary:**

This study was undertaken as a dissertation in partial fulfilment for the ward of a Master's Degree in International Health. It aimed at getting baseline data on Knowledge, Attitudes, Beliefs and Practices in regard to HIV/AIDS among the multinational refugee population of Nakivale Camp in Mbarara District of South Western Uganda. The rationale behind the study was to use the findings in designing and/or redesigning appropriate intervention strategies with the view to controlling and preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS in this vulnerable population.

This study was designed with basically five salient and specific objectives:

- a) To assess the level of correct knowledge about HIV/AIDS among the refugees and determine whether there is any difference in the various nationalities in Nakivale camp.
- b) To find out whether the refugees in Nakivale camp have any negative attitudes towards the HIV/AIDS disease and the people living with HIV/AIDS.
- c) To ascertain if refugees have any specific beliefs, true or false, about HIV/AIDS.
- d) To find out whether refugees in this multinational setting indulge in practices that could predispose them to, or protect them from, acquiring HIV/AIDS.
- e) To explore the various sources of HIV/AIDS information available to the refugees and find out whether they are utilising these sources.

To address these objectives, a cross sectional study was carried out in Nakivale Camp in November/December 2001. A total of 325 respondents, 160 males and 165 females, were selected from randomly selected households. Data was

collected using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative technique involved administering a structured Questionnaire while qualitative technique used Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions.

**The major findings of this study were:**

1. In general, the level of correct knowledge about many aspects of HIV/AIDS among the refugees was fairly high. This level does not however match the often-held view that knowledge about HIV/AIDS has become universal. Exactly 47% of respondents correctly mentioned a virus as the cause of HIV/AIDS. The remaining respondents had difficulties in differentiating cause from mode of transmission. They mentioned sexual intercourse, multiple partners, and casual sex as causes of HIV/AIDS. Misconception about witchcraft as a cause of HIV/AIDS was held by a small percentage of 12%. Knowledge on modes or routes of transmission was found to be quite high. Various modes namely unprotected sex, blood transfusion, and use of non sterile syringes and needles, and use of skin piercing instruments were mentioned. There was a belief in 16% of respondents that mosquitoes transmit HIV/AIDS. Knowledge on the vertical mother to child transmission (MTCT) was unexpectedly high with close to 70% of respondents aware about it. The knowledge on incubation period was very low. Only 15% of respondents were able to say that incubation period could span from five to over ten years.
2. Negative attitudes do exist in the camp. When asked what should be done to HIV/AIDS victims, 57% of respondents advocated for removal from the camp or isolation of such people. These are measures that are discriminatory and stigmatising. Willing to take an HIV test, which could be a measure of attitude towards the disease at a personal level, was expressed by 67.6% of respondents. Seventy four percent of males were willing to take the test compared to females (61%). On the other hand,

majority of respondents (81.5%) knew the basic needs of an AIDS patient: namely nutritional, medical and psychological support.

3. Condom as an HIV/AIDS protective device was found to be unpopular even among groups that could be considered to be at risk. Majority of the respondents (82%) had never used a condom before and cited lack of knowledge about condom as the major reason for none use other factors notwithstanding. For those who used condoms, the man was more likely to initiate the process than the woman. In fact for those who accepted having initiated condom use, 75% were males and only 25% were females.
4. Sources of information about HIV/AIDS were found to be diverse but not widely and fully utilised. The majority of respondents relied on and received their information from, the radio. Other sources included health workers, posters, and camp meetings in that diminishing order of occurrence. The family as source of information was a disaster since 88% of respondents never discussed HIV/AIDS matters at home with their families. Key Informant interviews and Focus Group Discussions revealed that family discussions about HIV/AIDS could only occur following an AIDS death in the neighbourhood or after a man or woman had attended an HIV/AIDS seminar organised by Red Cross.
5. Majorities of refugees have given up cultural practices that they once cherished for fear of HIV/AIDS. Only 24% of respondents supported widow inheritance while 76% did not support such a practice. Even those that were in support did not in reality practise it.
6. The practice of alcohol consumption is still rampant and could lead to loose sex behaviours.