

“You can say anything without fear of being judged”: High acceptability of community-based integrated HIV and sexual and reproductive health service among youth clients in Zimbabwe

Mackworth-Young C.R.S.^{1,2}, Mavodza C.^{1,2}, Simms V.^{1,2}, Nyamwanza R.², Nzombe P.², Dziva Chikwari C.^{1,2}, Tembo M.^{1,2}, Dauya E.², Ferrand RA.^{1,2}, Bernays S.^{2,3}, and the CHIEDZA trial team.

1. London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. 2. Biomedical Research and Training Institute. 3. University of Sydney

Background

- Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and HIV services often do not appeal to youth, leading to limited engagement and poor HIV outcomes.
- We co-designed and trialled a community-based HIV and integrated SRH service with and for youth (16-24 years) in Zimbabwe (CHIEDZA).
- We investigated acceptability of CHIEDZA among youth who attended.

Methods

- An endline population-based cross-sectional survey to ascertain outcomes with 16,800 18-24-year-olds included questions on acceptability for attendees.
- Qualitative data from observations of CHIEDZA sites and services (n=58), interviews with providers (n=51), clients (n=80) and youth in communities (n=42) were analysed inductively & thematically.

Youth want integrated, free-of-cost services, with compassionate providers and youth-centred care.

Results

96.1% of CHIEDZA attendees rated their overall experience as excellent/ very good. Valued features included:

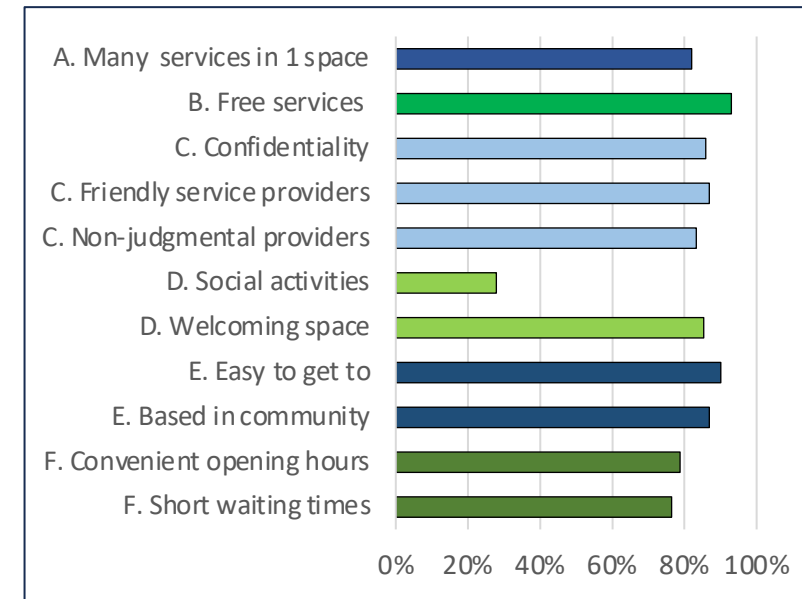
- A. Integrated services – convenient, increased uptake
- B. Free services – in context of clinic user fees and expensive products
- C. Non-judgemental, trustworthy and “open-minded” healthcare providers
- D. Community-based – convenient, separate to clinic
- E. Social activities – appreciated but restricted by COVID-19

“I came wanting pads, and then also got tested for HIV”

“these free services were really helpful and they also made young people use protection”

“without fear of being judged”

Figure 1. Features of CHIEDZA that were most often valued by youth attendees (n=2,135)



Conclusion

Engagement with HIV services by youth could be strengthened by offering integrated, free-of-cost, community-based SRH services and supporting providers to deliver compassionate and youth-centred care.

