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# Strengthening Networks and Referral Systems to Improve Access To and Utilization of HIV/TB and Wrap-Around Services: Experiences From East Central Uganda

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## Background

Uganda's strategic response to HIV&AIDS has led to a decline in HIV&AIDS-related mortality rates; however, HIV&AIDS and TB services remain underutilized due, in part, to weak and ineffective referrals and linkages between health centers and community programs. Through the USAID-supported Strengthening TB and HIV&AIDS Responses in East-Central Uganda (STAR-EC) Program, JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. (JSI) and World Education, Inc. (WEI)/Bantwana, in partnership with the Ministry of Health (MoH), strengthened facility- and community-based linkage and referral systems by bringing together and equipping key stakeholders with the skills, tools, and support they need to improve HIV&AIDS and TB service access and utilization.

## Methods

Through STAR-EC, JSI and WEI/Bantwana support 11 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), 91 Health Centers (HCs), 700 Village Health Teams (VHTs), 548 Community Support Agents (CSAs), and 9 PLHIV networks. The Program identified and trained facility- and community-based Referral Agents and Health Workers in supported health centers on effective approaches for developing simple, effective referrals and linkages systems, which included routine follow up visits by Referral Agents to ensure clients accessed services. STAR-EC complement the training with updated community service maps, support for routine stakeholder meetings to jointly address gaps in the system and share successes and resources, and, support to strengthen district PLHIV networks to advocate for improved service quality.



Networking meeting conducted at district level to strengthen the referral system

## Results

From October 2010 to September 2011:

- ➔ **91,275 new clients (60% female) were referred for services**
- ➔ **78% of referred clients received services within a month of the referral**
- ➔ **These results demonstrate a ten-fold increase in client referrals for services from the previous year.**

### Clients Referred and Receiving Services Over a Twelve Month Period (October 2010 to September 2011)

Referred Service:	Individual Referrals (#)	Received Services (%)
HIV Counseling and Testing	41,100	97%
Prevention of Mother-To-Child Transmission	13,392	90%
ART Initiation	11,102	89%
Adherence Counseling	10,634	85%
TB	4,800	96%
Male Medical Circumcision	4,050	94%
Wrap around services	6,197	67%

## Conclusion

Strengthened referrals, linkages and collaborations between communities and health centers, combined with innovative approaches to working with community structures and support for routine sharing among stakeholders can significantly improve access to and greater utilization of critical HIV, TB and wrap-around services.



Clients accessing services following referral from the community

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