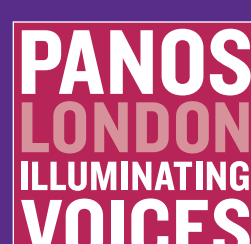


Start the press

Working with UK media to
combat HIV stigma

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Background

Supporting better engagement with media, people living with HIV and leaders among African communities can raise awareness about stigma and tackle the discrimination experienced by HIV positive migrants in the UK. Given the high HIV prevalence rates among African migrants and high levels of stigma felt by people living with HIV, the African HIV Policy Network, Panos London and Thomson Foundation analysed the representation of HIV and migrants in UK print media.

'I have sometimes been asked by journalists "How did you get infected?" This can feel offensive. However, I respond positively by turning it around and focusing on how I live positively. It can be tricky. But for me what is important is how I live with HIV, not how I got infected.'

African person living with HIV
Community engagement meeting, June 2007

Methods

The findings of our research drew from a content analysis of the coverage of HIV in national and Black and minority ethnic media, and two community engagement meetings with leaders within the African community, people living with HIV and journalists from the national and ethnic press.

'A lot of times you [HIV advocates] have got something that the journalist wants – you've got the quotes, you've got the stats, you've got the figureheads...It's all about who has the power in generating a story.'

Journalist
Community engagement meeting, July 2007

Results

Our research highlighted that people most affected by HIV are not often interviewed as sources in articles, with government spokespeople, doctors or civil society organisations being the main sources of information. A close analysis of the coverage of one story illustrates how the framing of the story and the conflation of unrelated issues (such as HIV and undocumented immigration) may contribute to the experience of stigma. The research process and outcomes were used to foster relationships between HIV positive migrants and journalists, and to train HIV advocates to engage the media. The launch of the report brought stakeholders together, generating greater coverage of HIV issues in the UK on World AIDS Day 2007.

'The message that comes out is: "I am a person living with HIV, but I am a normal person, just like everyone else." Media can help to challenge that stigma.'

Editor
Community engagement meeting, July 2007

Conclusions

Media coverage could do more to promote debate about the underlying inequalities and stigma that make people more vulnerable and which hinder access to appropriate health services. Migrants living with HIV and community advocates can engage the media to show the human stories behind living positively with HIV, and work with journalists to challenge, rather than perpetuate the stigma that exists around HIV in the UK.

'We need role models in the media. They don't need to be famous, but to be able to portray and reflect the positive issues in our community.'

HIV advocate
Community engagement meeting, June 2007