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HIV Risk Behaviors in Sub-Saharan Africa and Northern Thailand: Baseline Behavioral Data from Project Accept

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Abstract

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Background—Of 2.5 million new HIV infections worldwide in 2007, most occurred in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. We present the baseline data on HIV risk behaviors and HIV testing in Sub-Saharan Africa and northern Thailand from Project Accept, a community-randomized controlled trial of community mobilization, mobile voluntary counseling and testing (VCT), and post-test support services.

Methods—A random household probability sample of individuals aged 18–32 years yielded a sample of 14,657 with response rates ranging from 84–94% across the five sites (Thailand, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and two in South Africa). Individuals completed an interviewer-administered survey on demographic characteristics, HIV risk behaviors and history of VCT.

Results—In multivariate analysis, females, married individuals, less educated with one sexual partner in the past 6 months were more likely to have had unprotected intercourse in the previous 6 months. Rates of lifetime HIV testing ranged from 5.4% among males in Zimbabwe to 52.6% among females in Soweto.

Conclusion—Significant risk of HIV acquisition in Project Accept communities exists despite two decades of prevention efforts. Low levels of recent HIV testing suggest that increasing awareness of HIV status through accessible VCT services may reduce HIV transmission.