Film: A Supplementary Aid for HIV and AIDS prevention education in rural areas of Nigeria

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Although the HIV prevalence in Nigeria is lower than in sub-Saharan Africa, there are indications that the epidemic is on the rise. Perhaps because the prevalence has been low, relatively little prevention education has taken place with the general population, particularly in the more rural areas. This paper reports on a study that investigated the use of Nigerian movies as a supplementary aid for HIV and AIDS education with rural populations who have limited access to the normal print forms of HIV and AIDS teaching material due to low literacy levels. A qualitative study was carried out, within an interpretivist paradigm, with 15 purposively selected adults who had very low levels of reading literacy. The study confirmed the usefulness of Nigerian popular film as a means of information and education about HIV and AIDS with rural adults. The findings also highlighted the need for on-going education about HIV and AIDS, especially among the rural illiterate, findings that are not only significant for Nigeria but for HIV prevention education in any context of rurality.

Key words: adult education, awareness, film/movies, HIV and AIDS, illiteracy, knowledge, prevention, rural.

INTRODUCTION

The need to educate people, both formally and informally, about HIV/AIDS has become a priority in all countries of the world (Ovbiebo and Quan-Baffour, 2010). Although the prevalence in Nigeria is significantly lower than in sub-Saharan Africa (UNGASS, 2010) with around 3.6 per cent of the population being infected, the relatively high number of deaths has contributed to reducing the life expectancy of Nigerians to 52 years (UNAIDS, 2010). In addition, the low position of Nigeria on the UNDP poverty index (UNDP, 2011) has increased the challenges it faces in reducing HIV prevalence, as much of the population lives in rural areas where literacy levels are low and communication via media is restricted (Ovbiebo, 2012).

It is well documented that a bio-medical approach to HIV prevention has not been able to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS in the developing world, particularly in Africa (UNESCO 2002; Indrani, William and Shalini, 2013). Awareness programmes are conducted using various types of printed teaching aids, but such campaigns may not have a significant impact on rural communities because the majority of adults in rural areas cannot read or understand written information in their home language, not to mention in a foreign language. They cannot read in order to learn about the disease (Goldburg, 2004). The question then arises how best to educate about such issues in populations that are functionally illiterate, not to mention situated in remote areas that are often difficult for prevention educators to reach (Yahya, 2009). In such areas, cultural beliefs around sex, gender and disease are often deeply entrenched (Daniel, Apila, Bjorpredo and Lie, 2007), posing yet another barrier to open discussion around sexuality and HIV. Stigma around HIV is also rife in traditional communities, promoting cultural silence (Allen and Heald, 2004); and denialist attitudes that hamper discussion of the difficult questions and challenges that HIV present in communities (Daniel et al., 2007).

Governmental and non-governmental organizations in Nigeria have used written media (Ojieabu, Erah, and Okafor, 2008) to educate about the HIV/AIDS pandemic and yet there has been little evidence of people adopting safer sexual practices (Goldburg, 2004). In fact, studies...
have shown that knowledge around HIV transmission is low in Nigeria in general and particularly in rural areas. This led us to ask whether a medium such as film, which is both visual and auditory, would be a viable instrument for raising awareness about the multi-faceted causes and consequences of the pandemic, with the ultimate aim of making people think about their need to adopt preventative measures.

In this article, we address the following research question:

Could film be useful as a supplementary teaching aid in educating rural and illiterate adults about HIV/AIDS?

We first outline our conceptual and theoretical framework, before explaining our methodology. The findings are then presented and discussed in relation to relevant literature. We conclude with several recommendations for the use of film as a means of prevention education for HIV and AIDS.

The use of film for the education and prevention of HIV

Most HIV and AIDS campaigns have been unsuccessful in achieving their goals because of poor conceptualisation and narrow strategic approaches (Qakisa, 2003:45). Media are important in society, especially as regards promoting a health issue such as HIV and AIDS, because they can legitimise an issue and increase human focus on movies and its relevance to the general population. In addition, they raise awareness and provide a framework of meaning (Qakisa, 2003:46). However, most of the organisations involved in HIV/AIDS programmes and campaigns have not yet realised the important role which film may play in their campaigns.

During the era of the silent film, it was assumed that film was the universal language because people from different language backgrounds were able to understand certain images and symbols. According to Wegner (1977:6), film is the most influential art form since the advent of literature. However, it is not an enemy of literature, but rather an integral part of event-changing, literary communication. What the written text was to the highly developed oral tradition, film has become to the printed text. One stage evolves into the other, and it would be naïve to believe that film is the final stage of literary evolution in the history of mankind.

The use of film does not negate the use of other media in HIV/AIDS campaigns but it should, rather, be seen and used as a supplementary aid, especially in the rural areas where the majority of the people are illiterate and cannot read printed educational material. Film has been seen as the most influential and seductive tool available for use in teaching and in convincing and transmitting ideas and information, or simply as showing the world as it is. Audiences respond more emotionally and react more quickly to film than readers do to books, including pamphlets, magazines, and newsletters. (Brown, 2008:56)

If film does, indeed, have such potential, then it is disconcerting to see how little it is being used in HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention campaigns. We are continuously surrounded by the effects of film and television and yet, in most instances, the organisers of such campaigns have failed either to use film or to teach members of their organisations what film is capable of achieving.

Pramaggiore and Wallis (2008:3) maintain that watching a film may be both emotionally satisfying and intellectually stimulating. Helping rural illiterate adults to learn about HIV/AIDS through the medium of film may offer an effective antidote to the widespread criticism of HIV/AIDS education and awareness campaigns. Although commercial films are designed to entertain, they may also engage people emotionally as well as intellectually (Brown, 2008:56). The challenge for educators has always been the balance between educational versus entertaining when it comes to film/video choice.

Film offers the potential to motivate people, help people obtain access to diverse perspectives, develop empathy with characters and situations in contexts different and similar to their own, and to connect their lives, values and concerns to those of others. The researcher assumes that film may help people to develop their own insights into different aspects of life, particularly when analysed as a primary source reflecting the time period and culture in which they were made. (Roger, 2005:357-367)

In communities where people find it hard to access and process written information, visual methods have proven to be an effective tool. I have made it a practice to use popular film to illustrate important concepts and problems surrounding schools as organizations and social systems. (Roger, 2005:357-367). In particular, popular film allows the multiple social, economic, political and medical aspects of the pandemic to be portrayed in a relatively short time, and in a way that is entertaining and engaging (Pramaggiore and Wallis 2008:3).

Refining a research problem involves identifying a theoretical framework upon which to base the research problem and the methods that were used (Blanch, 2007:20). This study is underpinned by constructivist and Andragogy analysis theory, which allows the researchers to express their comments or judgements based on spoken communications, discussions and conversations with participants in the study. It is concerned with how individual construct their own knowledge and meaning from new information, as they interact with others around new ideas and information. According to constructivist theory, learning is a social and dynamic process in which the learner constructs its significance (Niaz 2011:175). That is, in the environments of constructivist learning, the individuals are required or expected to utilize their prior knowledge and experiences to formulate new, related,
Andragogy is "the art and science of helping adults learn" through a process of social negotiation..." (Van Doren, 1999). Learning shifts from one of subject centeredness to one of application, and accordingly his orientation towards the developmental tasks of his social roles, and increasingly to the immediacy of problem centeredness (Smith, 1999).

Andragogy theory assisted the researcher in analysing how film can be used in teaching adults about HIV/AIDS. Andragogy is "the art and science of helping adults learn" as opposed to pedagogy, which is about teaching children (Okech 2004:14). Knowles' Andragogy theory is based on four assumptions. These assumptions spell out the difference between adult learners and child learners:

i. An adult person's self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality towards one of being a self-directing human being,
ii. An adult person accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that increasingly becomes a resource for learning,
iii. An adult person's readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles, and
iv. An adult person's time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his orientation towards learning shifts from one of subject centeredness to one of problem centeredness (Smith, 1999).

According to Kabuga (2004:14-15), Andragogy has potentialities for liberating adults to believe in themselves, to think and to create. It puts an end to the long-standing problem of teacher-student contradiction where, in the words of Freire, 'the teacher teaches and the students are taught; the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing; the teacher thinks and the students are thought about...' (Freire, 2009:163-174).

Andragogy, therefore, shatters the myth that knowledge is the private property of teachers. The theory posits that one person merely helps another person learn. andragogy, education is a meaningful whole, seeking to exploit the best in a human being at whatever age he is. It seeks to utilize all sources of information and rejects the myth that the written word is the only source of information (Kabuga, 2004:14-15). Thus, it is possible to educate adults about HIV and AIDS without the written text. The theory dispels the myth that knowledge and learning can only take place in formal education, and positions adults as self-directed learners who can make use of any resources available to turn ourselves into fully functioning liberated human beings (Kabuga, 2004).

Constructivism and Andragogical theories are beneficial in teaching and assessing health protection or disease prevention behaviours, especially among the illiterate adults (Barikor (2002), Bryman, (2004), Nwankwo (2002), and Nzeneri (2002)).

**METHODOLOGY**

In this study a naturalistic, interpretive, qualitative methodology was used. We used a qualitative approach because we wished to understand the lived realities of the participants.

15 male and female adults who had not completed formal schooling and were thus illiterate but who had been involved in previous HIV prevention initiatives were purposively chosen. These participants, ranging from 20 to 55, represented a variety of cultural groups and both genders. They were involved in the HIV and AIDS campaign in the area and could give information-rich responses regarding their experiences of means of HIV and AIDS campaign in the area. The participants voluntarily participated in the study and the usual ethical measures were taken and approved by the ethics board of the university overseeing the study (University of South Africa).

Data generation was done by means of structured and unstructured interviews. The structured interview schedules was adapted from an interview schedule that we had used in a previous research project where 15 participants ideology were explored and understanding regarding HIV and AIDS. Focus group interviewing is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive non-threatening environment (Krueger and Casey, 2009:6). The researchers encouraged participants to use their own words in describing their experiences of using film to educate people about HIV/AIDS. The reason for this was to allow the data to truly emerge from the participants.

**Data analysis**

The identified frequencies, themes, patterns and biases that emerged from the theses were described and compared to provide explanations. This was done manually through the use of open coding approach to make the analysis simple and the data manageable.

**Trustworthiness**

An important element in qualitative research which
relates to the level of dependability or reliability of the data gathering of instruments is trustworthiness which followed in the gathering of data, the quality of data gathered and their validity. To ensure validity and reliability in this research, all responses from the participants were written down and recorded. This was to achieve and maintain the dependability and credibility of the final product of the empirical study. Triangulation was achieved by comparing the responses of the participants from the different groups.

**Ethics**

Ethics concerns the system of moral principles by which individuals may judge their actions as right or wrong, good or bad (Denscombe, 2002:174). Polit and Beck (2006:499) support this view of ethics in terms of research as a system of moral values that apprehends the degree to which research procedures adhere to professional, legal and social obligations as a result of participation in a research study. Singleton (2010:47) maintains that ethics helps human beings to act in moral and responsible ways. Research ethics involves the application of ethical principles to scientific research. Pera and Van Tonder (2005:4) point out that ethics is a code of behaviour that is considered to be correct. These codes were established in order to guide the moral choices in terms of the researchers’ behaviour in relationship to others and, especially, in relation to his/her research project.

The main purpose of ethics in research was to ensure that no harm is inflicted on research participants as a result of the research activities. Ethical considerations are fundamental to the design of any research that involves human beings in order to try to protect the rights and dignity of the research participants. It is also essential that a study be conducted with fairness (Burns & Grove 2005). During this study, the following ethical issues were observed, namely, informed consent, right to anonymity, beneficence and respect for persons (Brink et al 2006:32-35). These are discussed in the following sections.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

It was discovered that female participants dominated the campaign. It was observed that some of the organisers of the campaign were not able to answer questions from the participants correctly probably because they too were not well informed about the disease. The teaching aids used also posed another problem; the participants were given pamphlets, flyers, and magazines for their perusal forgetting that they are illiterates. When given condoms some of them were ashamed to receive them, because it was done in the public. In spite of the commitment of the organizers of HIV/AIDS campaigns in the area, financing of HIV/AIDS campaign is far from satisfactory. Due to inadequate funding, the organizers did not have facilities of their own. Generators were often borrowed from those that have because there was no electricity often in the area. Facilitators were not well informed about the disease.

**Participant knowledge and awareness regarding HIV/AIDS (n=15)**

It was an evident that the respondents had heard of the disease known as HIV/AIDS but, as regards what they understood by the term, it emerged that more than two thirds of the participants did not know what these terms stood for. This is in line with the report of Kalipeni et al. (2004:73), namely, that, for several reasons, the threat of a major HIV outbreak in Nigeria is severe, particularly as a result of the fact that knowledge about HIV in Nigeria is extremely limited. If people do not know, or even care to know, the name of a disease, then how will they ever be able to combat it?. Pramaggiore and Wallis (2008:2) confirm that the only way in which to educate rural illiterate adults is to use what captivates their interest and their attention.

This study further revealed that a large number of the respondents agreed that they had found out about HIV/AIDS from their friends, then from their parents and then their partners. The few educated respondents who had disagreed with the statement above had done so because they were literate. This finding indicates that the rate of HIV infection was high not only because people are poor and/or illiterate but also because of incorrect information and a lack of access to correct information. As the saying goes, if a blind man leads a blind man both will eventually fall into a pit. This may be the result of receiving incorrect information from people who are illiterate. The responses indicate that a lack of adequate and proper information may result in many adults taking the wrong decision or exposing themselves to the risk of HIV transmission.

**Explaining the role of film as a teaching aid**

In explaining the role of film as a teaching aid, the study revealed that most of the participants had never watched any films on HIV/AIDS despite the fact that they had television/video equipment either at home or where they lived.

This study revealed that a large number of the respondents, agreed that the use of film to educate adults about HIV/AIDS is a good idea/useful. The few educated respondents who had disagreed with the statement above had done so because they were literate. One of the respondents said:

*Of what use is giving a spoon to someone who has no...*
both hands? meaning Giving printing material is no good

This finding corroborates the finding of Benicia (2005) that an individual’s knowledge is a function of his/her previous experiences, mental structures and beliefs which are then used to interpret objects and events. They also argued that some people may learn new concepts more easily when they are presented in both verbal and visual forms, and that visual media make concepts more accessible to a person than text alone, and also help with recall.

As regards ownership of accessible equipment a clear majority of the respondents answered in the affirmative, namely, that they do have television/video equipment at home or where they live, and that they often watched television/films. However, as a result of electricity problems in the area and in the country as a whole, the majority of the respondents were not able to watch movies as often as they wished. Thus, when asked what happened when the power failed, the respondents were all in agreement stating:

We go to our neighbour’s house that has a generator plant or we relax until they bring back the light.

In other words, they go to their neighbours who have generators to watch their favourite film that are educative, informative and amusing (comedy) or else stay at home until the electricity is back on. This, in turn, calls for a serious attention on the part of the government to take steps to ensure that this area has a constant supply of electricity. Otherwise, the organisers of the fight against HIV/AIDS should buy mobile generator plants that they may move from place to place in order to be able to show films. This would help in creating an awareness and consciousness of the pandemic. The responses to this statement affirm Benicia (2005:10) that film engages the visual sense of students with more senses then being involved than is the case with the more traditional forms of instruction.

As regards whether they enjoy learning by watching films or by reading materials such as books, magazines, newspapers, etc, it was clear from the findings that most people enjoy learning by watching films rather than by reading materials such as books, magazines and newspaper. The participants clearly thoroughly enjoyed watching films at home and often watching Nigerian films, in particular. The indication is that people tend to believe more in what they see on the screen. If this is, indeed, true then the use of film to educate the people is, certainly, a good idea. However, the use of materials that were not effective in HIV/AIDS programmes and campaigns would immediately suggest that such programmes and campaigns would not be successful. In addition, it is likely that people in the relevant areas would not take the campaigns seriously and would not believe they were in danger of HIV infection. This is to say that film is needed because the participants cannot read.

**Illiterate adults’ responses to HIV and AIDS preventive practices using films**

These finding show the uniqueness of film/movie as an ideal aid in teaching rural, illiterate adults about HIV and AIDS.

As regards the statement as to whether film/movies may motivate people, including illiterate adults, in the fight against HIV and AIDS, most of the participants agreed that film/movies may motivate people, including illiterate adults, in the fight against HIV and AIDS. Goldburg (2004) says that the use of films in educating illiterate adults about HIV and AIDS will have a positive impact compared to using a medium such as a reading text. This finding also indicates the participants familiarity with the medium of film. This familiarity with or knowledge of films may also be reflected in their increased understanding of HIV and AIDS if the subject is presented to them on film. Accordingly, it would appear that it would be possible to educate the people of Igueben through this media and, thus, motivate them to take precaution as well as participate in the campaign against the disease.

Ovbiebo and Quan-Baffour (2010) confirm that low levels of education may affect health indirectly through their association with unemployment, ignorance and poverty. It was amazing to realise that the participants’ knowledge about the use of film/movies in disseminating messages was widely accepted. This may be as a result of the popularity of Nigerian films which have become a major source of income in the country. Most of the participants stated:

Who will not like to watch movie that is more of practical than theory? We learn so many things from watching movies, so also we can learn how to use condom because we can see it clearly on the screen.

All the participants felt it was right using film and were of the belief that the use of films would help to educate people on how to use both male and female condoms. However, they maintained that the HIV and AIDS campaigns were not as successful as they should be because the organisers of these campaigns focused on the theory regarding the use of male and female condoms and not the practice. The participants were of the view that practical demonstrations should be included.

A female participant said:

I believe every person, especially the illiterate adults, should be taught how to use the condoms, especially the female condom which often time is not easy for most people to use.
The majority of the respondents were quick to draw the conclusion that the use of film in HIV/AIDS campaigns may be especially effective in influencing the participants themselves and the community as a whole.

An adult male participant stated:

> Most of the things we see our young boys and girls are doing today, are they not what they have watched on movie especially on our Nigerian movie?

A female participant added:

> The level of influence movie can have on people cannot be overemphasised.

### The use of film-related educational strategies in the fight against the HIV and AIDS pandemic

Most of the respondents regarded the questions under this theme as necessary. They clearly believed that the use of such strategies might help to bring the reality of HIV and AIDS home to the people and perhaps convince them or persuade them that those infected/affected by the virus are still normal human beings, thereby reducing any stigma as a result of incorrect information.

One of the adults confirmed these findings by saying:

> Showing people who are infected/affected and let them speak for themselves — will both help to stop or reduce all forms of stigma attached to HIV and AIDS and create awareness that the disease exists and you can still live a normal life among those who are not infected.

Some of the organisers of the fight against the pandemic who participated in the study also concurred with the use of film/movies as some of them had not even seen people infected with HIV and AIDS. The indication is, thus, that film may assist people in knowing how to handle HIV and AIDS victims, what to say or not to say in counselling and where to go for help should the need arise. In view of the fact that, at present, there is no known cure for HIV and AIDS and if one accepts that prevention is the best way of combating the pandemic, then it is essential that a way be found to ensure that HIV and AIDS awareness programmes succeed.

One of the participants, a market woman emphasised this point by saying:

> Showing people through film who are infected/affected with the pandemic will definitely improve the level of participation in HIV and AIDS awareness/prevention programmes. Showing the pandemic in a movie helps bring the disease into reality. People can see the effect of the disease and be ready to go all out to join in the fight against the disease.

This indicates that, unless adequate and relevant educational resources such as film are made available and used as a matter of priority, the wish of the organisers of the campaign against the pandemic to see adults participate in HIV and AIDS programmes will not be realised. The majority of the respondents viewed stigma in a negative way. However, the few educated participants regarded ignorance as the root cause of the stigma attached to HIV and were of the opinion that the stigma could kill faster than the disease itself. In order to remove the stigma, the education (i.e. awareness) of illiterate adults about the pandemic must be taken extremely seriously. This affirms Goldburg's (2004) view that if film could be used, not only as a form of entertainment, but also as a form of education, then every other approach used would also be successful. This is particularly true in view of the fact that the majority of the adults in the rural areas of Edo State are not able to read, speak or understand the English language and, even if the information is written in their home language, they are, in case, not able to read and, thus, to inform themselves about the disease (Goldburg 2004). This confirms the conclusion that film may be used as a supplementary medium in teaching adults about HIV.

### The role of film on the efficiency of current HIV and AIDS campaigns

This deals with the findings from each respondent as regards the effect of film on the efficiency of current HIV and AIDS campaigns in order to determine the optimum value at which the current efficiency is greatest. All the participants interviewed revealed that they had not ever witnessed the organisers of HIV and AIDS awareness and prevention campaigns in this area using film/movie equipment in their campaigns. One of the respondents explained that “From the start to date we have never seen the organisers of HIV and AIDS using film/movie in their campaign.” Another woman added:

> How are you sure they have money to buy such equipment when probably the money have been diverted into something else.

From the statements it is evident that the organisers of HIV and AIDS awareness and prevention campaigns in this area have never used film equipment in their campaigns and, possibly, that they do not have the necessary equipment in their possession. English and Steffy (1997) reiterate that an educational leader cannot afford not to use film in educating his/her learners or audience if success is to be achieved. McKinney (2003:42) reports that “although I tried to broach the subject in class with my students in discussions of various texts, it wasn’t until we watched people like us that the discussion really worked”.

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In view of the fact that the organisers of HIV and AIDS campaigns are rarely the managers of the programme and the screen, it is essential that the instructors involved in organising the campaigns learn more about the disease. It emerged from the participants that the organisers of the campaign were clearly not equipped with enough information about the disease. Accordingly, all of the facilitators of HIV and AIDS awareness and prevention campaigns must receive more teaching and training regarding their work. One of the participants reported that:

When you ask some of the organisers of HIV and AIDS some questions about the disease they don’t have answers, rather they leave you in the dark.

A woman and two young adult male participants concurred that:

Some of those involved in the campaign are people we know very well who do not live by what they preach.

The implication is, thus, that the organisers of the fight against the disease will not be able to do very much if they themselves are not adequately informed about the disease as well as adhering to the preventive measures which they advocate. As regards the statement regarding the lack of effective materials affecting the active participation of adults in the HIV and AIDS programmes, most of the participants answered in the affirmative and reported that the organisers use material in their campaigns that is suitable only for those who are able to read and write rather than the illiterate. Accordingly, it is highly likely that the use of films during HIV and AIDS awareness campaigns will make people more cautious about the deadly disease and will encourage people to participate in the campaigns and programmes. Majority of the participants stated:

Participating in the campaign is not the problem but knowing and understanding what you are doing in the organisation and what the fight against HIV and AIDS is all about. I strongly support film/movies to be used.

The implication is, thus, that, when movies are used in HIV/AIDS campaigns and programmes, this broadly targeted or ‘blanket education’ will be successful in promoting a widespread awareness of HIV and AIDS amongst the general population. A further implication is that, although film-based HIV and AIDS education is considered to be effective for raising the general awareness, it is not possible to measure its overall impact. It is, thus, essential that education go beyond promoting general awareness and instigate behavioural changes which will reduce the risk of HIV transmission.

The aforementioned explanation corroborates the findings of Weinstein (2001), in Benicia (2005), to the effect that the use of different techniques and a variety of film or video will provide the viewer with a wealth of possibilities in his/her environment. The fact that majority of the respondents provided positive responses to this statement is an indication that the use of film clearly has a strong influence on the participants. This, in turn, implies that film may generate an interest in the viewers.

In this paper the author propose the use of film in the dissemination of information regarding HIV/AIDS Nigeria. The author contends that the use of film in this regard could improve awareness, prevention, perception and attitude and also dispels the myths associated with the disease. The sharing of information about condoms, pamphlets and discussions are the methods most commonly used in awareness campaigns run by NGOs and government departments (Education and Training Unit for Democracy and Development 2011), but these have not been able to drive home the message to the rural illiterate adult population.

There is an urgent need for the If HIV/AIDS programmes are to become more responsive to individual and community needs, it is recommended that the governmental and non-governmental organisations which are involved in the fight against the pandemic should use films in their campaigns as a way of supplementing the other teaching media.

Conclusion

The major conclusion of this study is the fact that, unless the organisers of HIV and AIDS awareness/preventive campaign incorporate film into the other teaching media they use, there is little chance that their campaigns on HIV and Aids will succeed. In other words, the findings of this research study indicate clearly that film is an effective tool that may be used in the dissemination of information about HIV and AIDS among illiterate adults.

REFERENCES


