

Innovative Holistic Approaches to Improve Health Outcomes among socially vulnerable MSM communities

engage
men's health



Introduction

- OUT started in 1994 and second oldest Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender (LGBT) NGO in South Africa
- Many successes: first quantitative research on LGBT hate crimes (2003), first MSM clinic in 1997 and same sex marriage in 2006
- Current work focus on hate crimes & human rights; health/HIV services for MSM; mental health and skills development for MSM; support for young LGBT and their families
- Health program for MSM. 5-year USAID grant for 3 South African cities including City of Johannesburg (biggest city in South Africa)

Health for MSM

- In the last 5 years, have provided 106,594 preventions interventions, 13,776 MSM on Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and initiated 4,124 MSM on Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART)
- In COJ, there are health teams per health region as well as a fixed site clinic. Different profile of client: clinic is middle class with better health seeking behaviors
- Major shift in program consolidated after COVID: move from hot spot to high risk networks & consistent work in areas to form relations
 - In current year, Program is performing well and by the end of the last financial year (September 2022) we have met or exceeded all key performance targets.
- Very good data and M&E procedures allows for data-driven programming with tools and processes that includes daily dashboards of achievements and quarterly deep-dives which correlates with central health targets and behaviors



Major factors impacting on health

- There are two major factors impacting on health: unemployment and the associated social vulnerabilities. i.e. housing and food insecurities
- Unemployment is high in South Africa (34%) and in programs up to 70% of clients are unemployed. In Oct-Sept 21 a total of 58% of clients were unemployed and it went up to 75% (Oct-June 22)

- Within unemployment, there are 2 vulnerable groups:

1. MSM who use drugs is organized around drug houses in township areas (majority black and poor). There is sexualized drug use often accompanied by exchange of money and drugs
2. The second group is the 'blesser/blessee' phenomena where there is an age gap of about 20 to 30 years between partners where older man provides and there is a high risk of intimate partner violence.

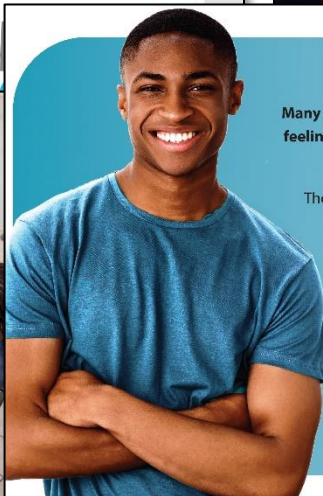
Towards holistic programming

- Secured two dedicated MSM spaces in COJ through local government in homeless shelters in two different regions Webley and Florida
(ongoing planning to increase from 2 to 7 spaces)
- Monthly spaces organized around physical fun activities for unemployed MSM such as hikes, going to the movies etc.
(to expand their social context and create safe social spaces where barriers to health can be discussed)
- Current pilot program addressing skills development and structural issues, mental health and sensitization training of Government Officials
- Skills sessions include access to computers and internet. Basic skills and assistance around getting an email address, updating CV's, cover letters, Microsoft Word etc.
- A total of 4 skills sessions (4 meetings) took place. 216 men attended and 31 were placed in jobs and learnerships

**You'll need more
than a pretty face
to get a job.**

**Get the basic skills
you'll need for
employment and
boost your
chances of
getting a job.**

**Free 2-day skills
development
sessions available
in Joburg!**



MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Many men will feel anxious or sad from time to time, but ongoing feelings of anxiety and depression can be a sign of an underlying mental or emotional challenge that you shouldn't ignore.

There is no shame in having these feelings. They are very common and can happen to anyone. What is important to know is that these feelings can be improved by speaking to a professional.

So engage with us and let us help. We offer free telephonic, online, or in-person counselling sessions in Johannesburg for gay, bi and other men who have sex with men. You get three sessions, with bookings available from Tuesdays to Fridays, from 9:00 till 15:00.

To make a free appointment with our mental health support team, call or WhatsApp 063 649 5116.

Interventions

- **Home deliveries:** are cost intensive but effective in ensuring retention in care to the socially vulnerable.
- **Collaborations:** Health programming does not fund food parcels or social development activities, therefore collaborations with local government is essential for sustainable and successful programming.
- **Alternative funding:** OUT had to source funding beyond the scope of our current health programmes to compliment and enhance services (i.e. mental health, skills and sensitization trainings) to MSM that goes beyond HIV preventions services.

Results

- **Home deliveries:** Mitigated all logistical barriers that prevents PrEP or ART medication to get to MSM clients. With the implementation of this intervention our retention increased from 60% to 80% at that point in time. Use of local champions to mobilize community for treatment?
- **Collaborations:** With the assistance of the local government, City of Johannesburg, OUT was able to ensure that staff at homeless shelters are sensitized to the MSM community and in two of the seven regions, create dedicated spaces for homeless MSM.
- **Alternative funding:** Specific to our health programme, OUT managed to secure additional funding to explore mental health amongst MSM and quantify how it affects health outcomes. The funding also allows for skills development specifically to empower MSM to get employed i.e. creating CV's, linking to internships etc.



Thank you!