

# Harnessing Storytelling for Uptake in HIV Prevention, Testing, and Treatment in Ghana

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## INTRO AND OBJECTIVE

Stigma and discrimination surrounding HIV negatively impact behaviors, hindering prevention, testing, and treatment efforts. Addressing this through social and behavior change interventions aims to promote positive attitudes, encourage testing and treatment uptake, and foster inclusive communities.

## METHODS

- The USAID Strengthening the Care Continuum Project, implemented by JSI, provided training between 2019 and 2023 to 10 local civil society organizations (CSOs) on effective storytelling techniques.
- The project and CSOs collaboratively collected real-life narratives from more than 100 people living with HIV to resonate with persons/communities navigating HIV diagnosis or acceptance struggles.
- Individuals living with HIV, supported by HIV case managers and peer educators, shared personal anecdotes of adherence and resilience to guide treatment engagement and retention.

## RESULTS

- More than 11,200 individuals who interrupted their HIV treatment between October 2019 and March 2024 were brought back into care in Ghana's Western, Western North, and Ahafo Regions. By providing individuals living with HIV a platform to share their stories, the project supported their transformation into agents of change within their communities.
- Storytelling cultivated unity, dismantled stigma, and encouraged sustained engagement with treatment services, leading to improved outcomes and strengthened community support systems.

**Storytelling transforms HIV-related stigma into solidarity, driving HIV acceptance and treatment.**



*HIV case manager (left) using storytelling and discussing next schedule of HIV counseling and testing services with the leader of a spiritual healing center. Credit: Richard Adupong, JSI.*

## CONCLUSIONS

- Scaling up storytelling and community engagement initiatives to reach additional populations and regions affected by HIV is crucial for extending the reach and impact of interventions.
- Tailored approaches should address diverse community needs, ensuring inclusivity and effectiveness. Integrating storytelling and community engagement strategies into existing HIV/AIDS programs and policies will create lasting behavioral change, reduce stigma, and foster supportive environments for those affected, contributing to sustainable public health outcomes and improved well-being across communities.
- By amplifying the voices of those living with HIV and fostering understanding and empathy, these efforts will drive positive social change and support the journey towards ending the HIV epidemic.

