Lottery Incentives Slash HIV Risk for Women in Lesotho

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An intervention offering lottery tickets to those who remained free of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) succeeded in reducing by a third the number of new HIV infections among young women in Lesotho, aidsmap reports. Investigators conducted a study of nearly 3,500 men and women between the ages of 18 and 32 residing in one of 29 villages in Lesotho, which is geographically landlocked in South Africa and which has an HIV infection rate of about 23.3 percent among those 15 to 49 years old. The researchers presented their findings at the 7th International AIDS Society Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention (IAS 2013) in Kuala Lumpur.

The study participants were randomized into three groups: a high-value lottery ticket group, a low-value ticket group, and a control arm that received no tickets. All of them received screenings for STIs every four months during the two-year study. HIV tests were conducted at the outset of the study and at the 16-, 20- and 24-month marks. Each time a participant received negative tests for syphilis and Trichomonas vaginalis, he or she received a lottery ticket—the prizes were worth about $100 for the high-value group and $50 for the low-value group. Lottery drawings were conducted every four months, with two men and two women out of about 50 to 70 local participants winning in each village.

After two years, the intervention had no impact on young men. But for young women, the two lottery ticket arms reduced the number of new infections by an average of 33 percent. The high-value arm reduced infections by 39 percent among young women. Out of the women in the control arm of the study, 6.6 percent contracted HIV after 16 months, 11.6 percent after 20 months and 14.6 percent by 24 months. By comparison, among those in the high-value group, a respective 4.7 percent, 7.2 percent and 10.6 percent seroconverted by each benchmark.

To read the aidsmap story, click here.

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