

**Factors Influencing Women to Access HIV Voluntary Counselling and  
Testing (VCT)**

**Services in Mwanza City**

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Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) is the entry point for prevention, care and support. Women's access to VCT services is associated with several factors. A descriptive cross-sectional study was undertaken in Mwanza city during May and July 2004 to determine the factors influencing women to seek HIV voluntary counselling and testing (VCT). A total of 395 women over the age of 18 were interviewed and six focus group discussions (FGDs) were carried out. The respondents were selected from four wards. A semi-structured questionnaire and FGDs were used to generate data. The results revealed that 86.6% of the women are aware of VCT services, but only 19.8% had sought the services. Radio (88.5%) was the major source of information about VCT. 78.2% of the respondents were aware of a site where VCT services can be obtained. The study concludes that multifaceted factors influence women to access VCT. Improved communication campaigns to address awareness and knowledge as well as benefits of VCT services are necessary to stimulate demand. Reducing cost or providing free VCT would also increase utilization. Finally, expansion of VCT services to include mobile VCT services would reach additional populations.