

Module 5: HIV/AIDS and young people - Adolescent health and development with a particular focus on sexual and reproductive health - Assignment

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Who should be targeted for HIV interventions in Kenya?

In order to adapt prevention strategies to changing patterns of HIV risk, we need to understand the behaviors that put people at risk of infection and how new infections are distributed among risk groups. Studies have shown that new HIV infections in Kenya were mainly transmitted through heterosexual contact (90%), while a small but significant number were related to injecting drug use (4.8%) and men who have sex with men (4.5%).

1. Sex workers and their clients are extremely vulnerable group, not only for the acquisition of HIV, but also for the transmission of sexually transmitted infections. Most sex workers are young females who are forced to engage into this practice due to poverty, lack of education and information and lack of parental guidance. Condom use is usually low in such sex practices and this increases the rate of HIV and STI transmission. Most of the sex workers also engage into anal and oral sex practices, which are known as a higher risk practice in HIV transmission.
2. Drug users: Young people who are drug users especially those using injectable drugs are at a higher risk of HIV infection and other blood transmissible infections like hepatitis B and C. A review of studies from East Africa has shown an increase in injecting drug use in Kenya. The study shows that heroin is freely available on the Kenya coast, that 45% of heroin users in Nairobi are injectors, that heroin injectors share injecting equipment and have sex with each other and with non-users, and that 50% of injecting drug users interviewed in Nairobi was HIV positive.
3. Homosexuals: Reports that male homosexuality is fashionable among young men and is practiced in prisons, boarding schools, and colleges, as well as studies suggesting homosexual activity among truck drivers, especially between older men and young boys, have provided evidence to suggest that sex between men in Kenya is more common than generally believed. Sex between men and men carries a higher risk of HIV transmission due to biological factors.
4. For others, their environment or high levels of mobility leave them more susceptible to HIV infection. This mobility may be voluntary, as for migrant workers, or forced, as for victims of trafficking and refugees and internally displaced persons. Isolation from families and communities makes them more susceptible to multiple and unsafe sexual encounters.

List of interventions

1. Providing basic education and information for young people: has been found to be the most important initial stage for the reduction of HIV infection in Kenya. The government started Free primary education in 2003 and this has been drastically found to have reduce the number of girls engaging as sex workers .Education provides the young individual knowledge of his/her body and future opportunities of employment. For those young people who were provided with education and still engaged in sex work, are found to be more responsible in using condoms and avoiding sex, which increases risk of HIV infection.

This intervention targets:

- By 2005, ensure that at least 90% (and by 2010 that 95%) of young people have access to the information they need to reduce their vulnerability to HIV.
- By 2005, ensure that at least 90% (and by 2010 that 95%) of young people have access to the skills they need to reduce their vulnerability to HIV.

2. Sustainability, building capacity and strengthening the government policies in HIV projects and health services for young adults: The government initiated the Adolescence friendly clinics to educate the young people and to provide them with knowledge, which will make them less vulnerable to HIV. In addition, health policies recommend free PEP to all vulnerable groups and this reduces HIV infection during high-risk situations. Other policies for interventions are to target the refugees, sex workers and the displaced individuals. Information and prevention strategies should be well covered to reach these high-risk young people. Other services include detox programs for drug users.

3. Involving the families, community and religious leaders: These groups of people have a higher impact on young individuals and their behaviors and can help in reducing their vulnerability and HIV infection. The initiation of the Abstinence and Be Faithful Programs in schools, communities and churches have helped in educating the young and making them less vulnerable.

Assignment document

1. [Ferguson J. HIV/AIDS and young people. Paper presented at: Training Course in Sexual and Reproductive Health Research; 2010 Sep 26; Geneva.](#)