

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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Groups of young people in Zimbabwe who should be targeted with HIV interventions

1. Orphans
2. Young girls in rural areas
3. Youth Militia
4. Tertiary students
5. School drop outs
6. Unemployed teenage mothers

Factors which make them vulnerable

Orphans

Young adolescent orphan girls are vulnerable because they are left with the responsibility of looking after their siblings and in most cases they have dropped out of school and relatives are poor or live far from them, such that they cannot help. They end up selling sex in the community for survival.

Intervention:

The government through the Ministry of Social welfare should put in place structures and policies that cater for this group. It should have social workers engage with local community workers in trying to identify households which are adolescent headed and have frequent visits analysing their way of living and in the end try to have those children put in orphanages and make sure that they all have access to education and all relevant information necessary for their development.

Young adolescent girls in rural areas

In traditionally practised societies in Zimbabwe, young adolescent girls are vulnerable because if their family is poor they are given to older men or to rich families for money, to appease avenging spirits, to replace an aunt who has died as the wife. Such encounters make them vulnerable as they get involved with older men with a lot of sexual experience or whom they cannot defy to what they say.

Intervention:

There is need to educate communities on the dangers of such practices and how they endanger these young adolescents' life. There should be community structures where adolescents can report to in the event that their families make them victims of such practises. The government through the ministry of Culture and Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers Association should have consultation meetings and come up with other ways of responding to these traditional practises without endangering young adolescents' lives.

Youth Militia

Zimbabwe ventured into a patriotic training of youth programme meant to discipline the youth. There has been an allegation that these youth have intimidated people in different communities and women have been raped during election period. Fellow young women trainees have also been taken advantage of, under the influence of alcohol and drugs.

Intervention:

The Ministry of Gender, Youth Development and Employment creation under which this training falls, should work in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Adolescent department and other Non-governmental organisations working on adolescent and youth issues. Whilst they training, HIV related programmes should be implemented, educate them; teach them on the advantage of safer sex, abstinence as the key to staying HIV free.

Tertiary students

University Education has to be paid for and most people cannot afford to pay tuition fee and even fend for themselves as most people are coming from other cities around the country and are unable to pay for accommodation and food.

Intervention:

The government of Zimbabwe should renovate the state institutions, in such a way that the students are able to reside at the University, provide food and provide loans that will enable to students to study well without indulging in commercial sex that enables them to survive campus life. Reproductive health services should be provided at the campuses to enable easy access for students. Free distribution of HIV preventive contraceptives and promote the use of female condoms.

School drop outs

It is very easy for young adolescent to indulge in any kind of behaviour as they have plenty of time loitering around. Adolescent stage is when they have a first experience of everything so they will use their time to experience anything that their friends are doing at the same time responding to their body needs.

Intervention:

The government should put in place projects like carpentry, piggery, sewing, drama groups in communities, sport clubs that will help school drop outs to occupy themselves than to loiter in the streets. It should also engage social workers who are able to follow up on school drop outs, find out the reason why they are out of school and try to offer help and counselling on how they should continue school or be involved in some kind of activity.

Unemployed teenage mothers

This is a vulnerable group because they lack reproductive health knowledge, have little or no power on contraceptive use, which makes them more vulnerable to infections and subsequent pregnancy. In the event that they are not married, they will indulge in selling sex for survival or involve themselves with multiple partners to get money and also men will take advantage of them because they can easily have sex with them.

Interventions:

The Government should create teenage mothers associations in communities to facilitate discussions, exchange of information among themselves. This can help them learn from each other's experience. Social workers or counsellors should also be present to help them with their problems. Social workers should also visit teenage mothers as well and have a one on one talk with them.

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.](#)