

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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In Uganda the HIV prevalence is about 6.5%. The groups of young people in Uganda with a generalized HIV epidemic who should be targeted with HIV interventions include the following:

- Street children and adolescents who are very desperate for earning a living by begging during day time and sleeping in insecure places while some are sexual workers at a tender age.
- Commercial sex workers.
- School dropouts and those about to drop out of school.
- School going children of aged 14 years and above with much emphasis those from the rural schools.
- Orphaned children and those vulnerable to sexual abuse.

The factors that make the above groups vulnerable include the following:

- Poverty is generally affected most Ugandans and this has made people look for various survival methods which includes begging on the streets to get money from sympathizers for way of getting upkeep.
- Orphanage to some individuals coupled with torture and harsh living by guardians has forced many individuals to drop out of school for “safe heavens” which includes going to streets or becoming prostitutes and these have become infected with HIV.
- Drug abuse especially cannabis and alcohol use in Uganda by the youth who think that it is good to use such drugs have ended getting into trouble by raping people, practicing unprotected sexual intercourse and getting infected or infecting others.
- Hunger due to draught in North Eastern Uganda (Karamoja) which forces people to move to favorable areas to earn a living and most of these migrants end up being coerced into sexual activities or trading in sex.
- Lack of enough schools in most parts of the country that would enable the young to be fully at school.
- Lack of motivation to retain students in schools as often there is a very good enrollment of >95% in P 1 and by P7 it drops to 65%.
- Lack of adequate information on HIV, its transmission, prevention and treatment to most individuals makes many ending up getting infected.
- Lack of access to health care services including VCT, PMTCT and condom supply to adolescents is a big problem especially in the rural areas.
- Cultures that encourage early marriage.

- Gender inequity which often discriminates girls from attending to school as some parents they prefer to educate boys to girls but also girls drop out of schools because various other reasons.

Interventions that are most important for each group that would lead to achievement of the UNAIDS goal of reducing by 30% the new infections among young people (15-24 years) by 2015 in Uganda with a generalized HIV epidemic includes the following:

Sexual workers

These need to be assessed and categorized by under age of 18 and those above 18years, and then specific intervention can be offered which include

- For those below 18 years there is need to enforce child protection rights as some may be coerced into this activity.
- To all sex workers they need to be offered with information about HIV, VCT and transmission and prevention with sources of condoms.
- Those who may wish to quit this activity will need to be rehabilitated and followed up on the copying up mechanism.
- Offer education opportunities and vocational training to have life skills for employment opportunity and income.
- Open up STI clinics for early treatment and detection of the STIs, ART centres, HCT units including outreach programs.
- Reduce on the demand of young sexual workers by criminalizing those who seek their services.
- There is need to establish self-help groups that offer counseling and guidance to each other.

Street Young People

- The street young people need to be offered safe places to stay after work on the streets as opposed to sleeping on the roads and other insecure places where they end up being raped or defiled.
- The street people need to be empowered by being taken back to schools and vocational training institutions to develop some life skills.
- Offer outreach programs and protection and care services to the street young people as often they have no access to health services and offer VCT, ART services.
- Improve of the policy and laws of the country to specifically address the causes of young people going on the streets e.g. harassment by care takers or poor parenting and also establishment of orphanage homes to handle young people who are vulnerable to such occurrences.

Alcohol and cannabis abuse

- Offer Information on the dangers of using these substances by counseling to this group and offer substitute drugs as you temper of the drugs for complete stoppage of use of these drugs.
- Improve on the current laws and enforcement to deter new entrants into the group.
- Offer employment opportunities through vocational training to minimize boredom that often stimulates such behaviours.

School going young people

- These need to be offered information about HIV, its cause, transmission, prevention and control plus services available.
- Creation of adolescent friendly health facilities.
- Mass media programs on HIV/AIDS.
- Inculcate HIV/AIDS in the curriculum.

School dropouts

- Offer second chance to go back to schools and vocational training.
- Offer income generating activities through microfinance schemes to enable them generate some income especially for the women.
- Provide information on HIV, causes, transmission and prevention through community outreach programs.
- Address issues of exploitation and enforce child protection as early marriages, sexual coercion and violence are common to this category.

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.](#)