Parenting Programs: A Medium for Addressing Gender Based Violence and HIV Risk Reduction for DREAMS Girls.

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BACKGROUND

In Uganda, the HIV burden is almost four times higher among females aged 15-24 years than their male counterparts.¹ Violence against children is widespread and 35% of girls report experiencing sexual violence during childhood.² The USAID Sustainable Outcomes for Children and Youth (SOCY) Project implemented by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) works through The AIDS Support Organization (TASO) to implement the Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS free, Mentored and Safe (DREAMS) initiative, targeting adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) in Mityana, Gomba, and Rakai districts. Under reporting of abuse is a major problem in these districts. Parenting programs have been shown to reduce risky sexual behaviors among youth and reduce their exposure to violence and abuse. Strengthening families to parent positively is a core DREAMS intervention.

Jganda Population Based HIV Impact Assessment (UPHIA 2016-2017).

Violence Against Children Survey in Uganda report, 2017: Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MoGLSD) in collaboration with UNICEF, CDC & USAID.



DESCRIPTION

The Sinovuyo (Zulu for "We have Joy") Teen Programme is an evidence-based parenting intervention developed in South Africa to improve the caregiver-teen relationship. The 14-week training aims to reduce the risk of child abuse in families and HIV risk behaviors among participating teenagers. Identification and reporting of abuse is encouraged within the curriculum.

SOCY adapted Sinovuyo to the Ugandan context. Between June 2016 and September 2017, 9,144 girls (10-17-years) and their caregivers participated in Sinovuyo through 587 parenting groups. Communities provided safe spaces for weekly parenting group meetings. Caregivers and teens met jointly for ten sessions and separately for four. Role plays, songs and participatory activities enabled participants to practice new skills during sessions. Home practice was encouraged between sessions; participants reported their experience at the next session. Members selected "buddies" from within the group for support and updates on missed sessions.

The DREAMS attendance register below facilitates monitoring and tracking of layered services at Sinovuyo sessions.

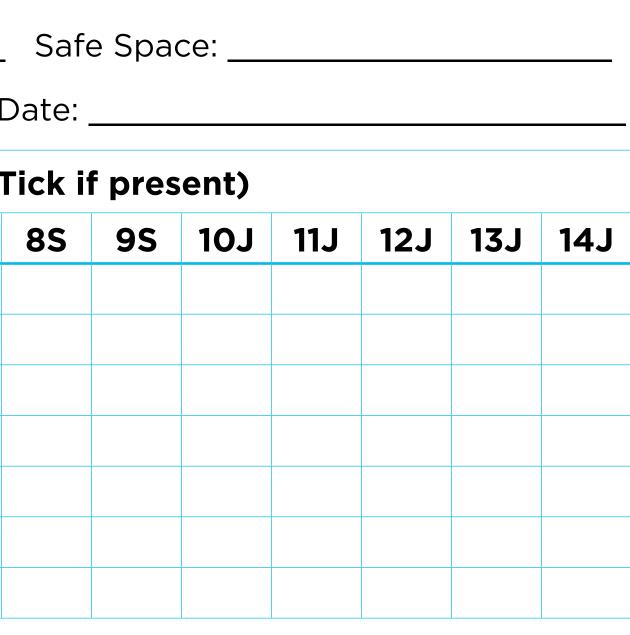
Name of Facilitator:					Group Name:						
Distri	ct:	Sub-county:									
Parish:				Village:							C
									Sess	sion/F	PCA (1
No	DREAMS ID	Name of participant	Age	Contact	1J	2 J	3J	4 S	5 S	6J	7 J
1.											
2.											
3.											

5.	
6.	
7.	

Use codes to track PCA=Parent/caretaker and child Attendance (1=only child attended, 2=only parent attended, 3=both attended, X=both didn't attend) Codes for sessions; 1J-Introducing the program& defining participants goals, 2J-Building a positive relationship, 3J-Praising each other, 4S-Talking about emotions, 5S-What do we do when we are angry?, 6J-Problem solving: putting out fire, 7J-Motivation to save and Budgeting, 8S-Dealing with problems without conflict, 9S-Dealing with problems without conflict, 10J-Establishing rules & routines, 11J-Ways to save money & make a family saving plan, 12J-Keeping safe in the community, 13J-Responding to crisis, 14J-Widening the circle of support (J=JOINT, S=SEPARATE)

"I want to become a police officer or judge and arrest any man who abuses young children."

-12-year-old participant, survivor of sexual abuse



LESSONS LEARNED

Participant feedback was captured upon completion of the curriculum. Participants felt it improved teen-caregiver relationships The most well-received sessions were:

SESSION NAME	POST INTERVENTION FEEDBACK
Building a Positive Relationship through Spending Special Time Together	Teens appreciated more positive interactions with caregivers, including listening to their experiences, challenges and fears. Caregivers appreciated the teens' increased openness and praise.
Talking about Emotions	Both teens and caregivers (and facilitators) recognized that poor emotional control contributed to harsh discipline and negative interactions.
Keeping Safe in the Community	Sessions offered teens, caregivers and community leaders a safe space to discuss violence and HIV risk reduction strategies to keep teens safe at home and in the community.

- Among the 9,144 girls enrolled in the program, all, except one, remained HIV-negative upon post-intervention re-testing, suggesting that Sinovuyo participation may have contributed to HIV risk-reduction.
- Home practice and buddy systems were key to the success of the intervention, ensuring immediate application of the new learning and retention.
- Sinovuyo provided a safe space for parents to talk about HIV, sex, violence prevention and risk reduction behaviors with their teens.
- The family budgeting session engaged girls in decision-making and increased demand for group savings and lending activities. Some parenting groups formed savings groups.
- To ensure regular attendance and completion, sessions were conducted when teens were more available—on weekends during school term and twice a week during holidays.
- Twenty parenting groups registered with the local government, providing access to government resources for community issues like health and school support.
- Few male caregivers attended sessions due to their length and work schedules despite being encouraged to participate by the girls.
- Community ownership of the program was crucial. Communities provided 280 safe spaces where Sinovuyo was implemented.
- Post intervention reporting of violence against children increased. Community facilitators supported children to report violence and linked 18 survivors to post-violence care services.

CONCLUSIONS/NEXT STEPS

Sinovuyo was popular and feasible to implement, but adaptations are needed to encourage greater male participation. Local government leaders were trained on the model to ensure buy-in and program support. Probation Officers have recommended OVC programs use Sinovuyo as a model for risk reduction for teens.



Teens and caregivers discussing **special time.** (Hugh Rutherford)





Phiona Najjuma (pictured left), 14 years old, completed the Sinovuyo Teen program with her caregivers. (CRS Staff)

"Session 2: Building positive relationship through spending special time together [Sinovuyo module] was a turning point. We discussed the benefits of spending special time with family members. When we reached home, my father gathered us in the sitting room and he asked me to share with the family members, now it is a routine we spend time together as a family."

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-17-year-old participant









