



FAMILY LIFE AND HIV EDUCATION
and the
HIV PREVENTION 4 RURAL YOUTH PROGRAM
IN EDO STATE

Research Feedback to Parent-Teacher Associations

January, 2010

What is Family Life and HIV Education (FLHE)?

- Family Life and HIV Education, also known as FLHE, is the Ministry of Education approved curriculum for teaching about family life, sexuality and HIV and AIDS.
- It is offered at the junior and senior secondary school and tertiary levels.
- Teachers get trained to teach the FLHE curriculum if the Ministry has funds.
- The current national curriculum has FLHE at the junior secondary school level.

What is HP4RY?

- HIV Prevention for Rural Youth (HP4RY) is a four year research project that is developing and teaching ways to decrease youths' risk for HIV infection.
- It is using research to build, strengthen and evaluate the ways schools and communities work to prevent HIV infection.
- In junior secondary schools, teaching about HIV prevention is done through support for delivery of a strong FLHE program in schools that are working with HP4RY project.
- In the rural communities, HIV prevention happens by looking at protective behavior that reduces youths' chance of HIV infection and dangerous practices that expose youth to HIV infection.
- It is working with all youth, teachers and community members to design, implement and evaluate activities that will assist communities and schools prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.

What is HIV/AIDS and why are we concerned about it?

- HIV is a virus that attacks a person's immune system and leads to AIDS or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.
- A person infected with HIV is easily infected by viruses, bacteria and parasites such as TB and malaria and cannot fight off infections which eventually kill him/her.
- HIV is **most often** spread through sexual activity; but also through using the same needles or sharp objects in body cutting, scarring or tattooing; blood transfusions with infected blood; and breastfeeding.
- HIV is **NOT** spread through shaking hands, sharing cups or plates, coughing, flies, or mosquitoes.
- HIV/AIDS is **not** curable, but **it can be prevented**.
- We can **greatly reduce our risk** of HIV infection by **abstaining** from sex, by being faithful to only one sexual partner, and by **correctly using a condom every time we have sex, when we cannot abstain**.

What have we learned about youth and HIV/AIDS?

In October-December 2008 research was conducted in 30 junior secondary schools and in February-April 2009 further research was conducted in 10 communities in Edo State.

What we learned about youth sexual activity:

- Many boys and girls start having sex early.
- 50% of the JSS boys and 38% of the girls had already engaged in sex
- Many students feel pressured to have sex by friends, family, older community members, sexual feelings or urges, and through exchange of gifts
- Some youth reported being forced to have sex
- Of those who were engaging in sex, few correctly used condoms.

What we learned about youth and HIV prevention:

- Many students were aware of HIV/AIDS but their knowledge of how to stay safe from infection was poor
- Few students got information about HIV/AIDS from their parents.

Students said they needed role models and guidance from parents, teachers and professionals on sexuality issues.

What we learned from parents, teachers and community leaders:

- The adults we spoke to knew that JSS boys and girls were sexually active
- Many of the adults believe that youth, and especially girls, should abstain from having sex
- All of the teachers felt it was important to teach about HIV
- Teachers were not sure that it was safe for them to teach about sexual behavior in schools even though most said they were teaching about HIV.
- Communities welcomed activities to assist them stop the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

What are we doing with this knowledge?

In August and September 2009:

- Teachers in 21 junior secondary schools were trained to teach the FLHE program
- Youth Corpers were trained to work in 10 communities to help these communities reduce youth vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.
- Once these programs are evaluated, they will be available to be used in more schools and communities.

What else can parents, teachers, and adults do to protect youth from HIV and AIDS?

Parents and teachers can

- Provide young people with correct information about HIV, AIDS, sex, sexuality and the importance of staying healthy for a good future.
- Provide enabling environments to assist young people in staying safe.

From the research we learned how young people talk about, understand, and experience sex and sexuality. Parents, teachers and communities can use what we learned to reinforce ways of thinking and behaving that help keep youth safe from HIV.

How did young people talk about waiting to have sex or abstaining from sex?

- Both girls and boys saw waiting to engage in sex until they finish school as an important step towards a good future and strong family.
- They know that waiting prevents pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and HIV.
- Youth know that pregnancy can force a girl to drop out of school, compromising her future.
- Boys spoke of **real men** as those who could control their bodies and urges and resist women's beauty and could wait to have sex until they were established.
- Boys said that the time to have children is when you have the resources and time to raise them up properly.

We can help youth abstain from sex by:

- **Encouraging girls to focus on their education to secure a good future. Let them know that there is plenty of time in the future to have babies.**
- **Talk to boys about the qualities of a real man who is a man who can control his desires and waits to have sex until he can raise his children up properly.**
- **Encourage young people who have already had sex to stop in order to secure their future.**

How do young people become involved in sex?

- All of the students spoke of places and community events where they are often enticed or forced into engaging in sex.
- Many said when boys and girls spend time alone together, sex is likely to happen.
- They said that having a boy/girlfriend meant they would have sex.
- Many felt they had to have sex in return for a gift.
- Girls often spoke of rape and being forced to have sex. Boys told stories about forcing girls, this was often when the girl had refused to have sex with them.

How can we help youth avoid situations that lead to sex?

- Help youth identify and avoid places where they know they are likely to be enticed into sex.
- Help youth practice strategies to resist sex when they are being enticed or tricked.
- Encourage youth to spend time in groups rather than alone with a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Encourage youth NOT to accept gifts from the opposite sex.
- Work with boys so they recognize that forcing, tricking, or raping a girl is unacceptable, weak, and NOT what a real man does.

What about young people who continue to have sex?

Not all young people will wait to have sex.

- When youth do not abstain they need to know that condoms can protect them from pregnancy, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Boys spoke of condoms as protecting their manhood, securing their virility, showing you care about a girl.

What can we tell youth who continue to have sex?

- Condoms can protect them from pregnancy, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Condoms are used by men who are responsible. They protect their own future and that of the girl they love.

SOME FINAL WORDS

Teachers: Anonymous question boxes in schools, FLHE clubs and peer educators can be very useful in delivering key messages to students and helping them stay safe from early pregnancy, disease and HIV.

Parents: JSS students told us that they want their parents to talk about sex, sexuality, abstinence and diseases with them. This means that parents' opinions and values were important to the youth. Parents should help children secure a good future. Talk to them about sex, sexual activity/behavior, pregnancy, diseases and AIDS.

Youth: Your sexual and reproductive health is in your hands. Make responsible choices to avoid disease and pregnancy. Then, you will have a bright and promising adult life, and be real men and respected women.

Remember, what we know from research is that:

- **Talking** about sex with young people and giving them correct information **does not lead to early initiation of sex, promiscuity and waywardness.**
- In fact, **if we don't talk** and provide correct information on sex, sexuality, diseases, and pregnancy to young people, they often seek answers themselves from pornographic materials, friends and peers and **they may acquire incorrect information**
- **Talking** about safe sex practices including abstinence, condoms and having one sex partner and remaining faithful to that partner **helps young people make responsible and good decisions** that will safeguard their lives and future.

Simple tips from experts for parents and caregivers

- Seek 'teachable moments' to share your values
- Remind yourself that it is OK to feel uncomfortable
- Do not wait until your children ask questions
- Be 'askable'
- Consider the 'question behind the question'
- Listen
- Keep in mind that you are talking to your children because you care about their happiness and well-being