

UGANDA AIDS COMMISSION

NATIONAL YOUNG PEOPLE HIV/AIDS COMMUNICATION PROGRAM FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Concept paper 2001

- 1. Background:** Studies carried out in Uganda indicated that 17% of young people in primary schools are sexually active with the median age of sexual debut standing at 14.98 years. There are 12,000 primary schools and about 1460 secondary schools in Uganda. These institutions represent about 6 million children many of whom do not have regular, sustained and correct information about HIV and AIDS. Like youth in many parts of Africa, Ugandan youth begin sexual activity at fairly young ages and with little sexuality information. It is however recognized that with intense IEC campaigns, young people are the ones contributing to the HIV declining trends in the country.
- 2. Uganda AIDS Commission and the Youth Communication Program:** In response to the Presidential initiative which seeks to improve the HIV/AIDS communication support to youth in the country, UAC will spearhead a comprehensive communication program for young people in Uganda, starting with primary schools. This program will support intensive and sustained communication and community mobilization initiatives for children and young people for the prevention of further spread of the HIV in Uganda. The program will seek to immediately address the communication needs of young people aged 10-24 in schools, vocational training schools, out-of-school-youth, tertiary level youths and youth apprentices.
- 3. Youth HIV/AIDS Initiatives in Uganda:** The response against HIV and AIDS in Uganda represents a wide range of partners and strong policy support from the highest office in the land. The result has been a vibrant multi-sectoral response with a strong emphasis on prevention, care for the infected, impact mitigation and advocacy for the de-stigmatization of the pandemic. The rationale for this approach emanates from the fact that the AIDS virus is sexually transmitted, thereby laying emphasis on those whom, because of their sexual activity, are considered vulnerable. This has however de-emphasized the information needs of the majority of the non-sexually active, who happen to be young people. These offer the best window of opportunity for the arrest of the scourge in Uganda. However HIV/AIDS initiatives serving young people have been few and far between. Many are projects with a definite end-date.

HIV and AIDS initiatives in the country for young people can be looked at from three response levels: public sector response (including donor support to public sector institutions), civil society sector response and private sector response.

3.1. Public Sector Response: The public sector response is currently dominated by the sectors whose mandates include youth education and reproductive health. Five main institutions support activities in this area:

- a) Ministry of Education (MoE)--pilot IEC project in support to reproductive health in schools, including HIV and AIDS.
- b) The Ministry of Local Government (MoLG)-- Child Rights initiative based on the Local Government statutes.
- c) The National Council of Children (NCC)-- community-based child rights initiative meant to address, among other things, HIV/AIDS
- d) Ministry of Gender—adolescent RH initiative in collaboration with UNFPA through the pearl project
- e) The Ministry of Health (MoH) -- health education and reproductive health programs for young people in and out of school.

3.2. Civil Society Response: This sector has concentrated on media-based activities especially through the print media, service provision and operations research through the support of development partners. There are however a potential pool of 640 NGOs and CBOs which provide a wide range of interpersonal communication services for youth and which, can form part of the UAC program for HIV/AIDS. Some of these include:

- a) Straight Talk Foundation—youth IEC activities through print media (DISH Project support)
- b) AIDS Information Center (AIC)—Youth Friendly services and social marketing campaigns
- c) The DISH project—support to secondary school RH communication
- d) USAID- mixture of civil and public sectors responses. The next 6-year support framework for Uganda will include HIV and AIDS for young people.
- e) Youth Alive clubs

3.3. Private Sector response:

- a) Employers
- b) Informal workplaces (including “pubs” etc)
- c) Business Councils

4. **Analysis:** Overall, several points can be raised on the response against HIV and AIDS among young people:

- There is a preponderance of pilot projects, many of which could to be scaled up in order to meet the communication needs of young people in Uganda.
- Many projects are based on Reproductive and Sexual Health principles, which may imply that the communication needs of the non-sexually active young people are not being fully met.
- Lessons learned from previous and ongoing interventions do not seem to be informing the programming of youth HIV and AIDS initiatives. These lessons include:
 - Lack of supportive community atmosphere for the adoption of anti-AIDS behaviour by young people
 - Lack of correct information on the part of youth on various aspects of HIV and AIDS.
 - Low condom use among sexually active youth
 - Unfriendly service provider attitudes that discourage youth from seeking reproductive health services
 - Adult ignorance in reproductive health issues
 - Peer pressure among youth to engage in sexual activity
 - Most initiatives only meet the needs of youth who seek reproductive health services thereby leaving out those who do not.

5. **Goal:** The overall goal of the program is to increase the capability of young people to adopt life-long attitudes and practices that contribute to the prevention of disease, with special attention to HIV/AIDS, at individual, community and national levels. The program will aim at enabling young people to postpone sexual debut as long as possible, make prevention of disease part of their (sexual) lifestyles, and seek proper sexual health services (including counseling) whenever necessary. The program will also aim at instilling gender-sensitive values to the youth and ensure the internalization and respect for the different roles and expectations that society places on them as men and women. These goals will be achieved through direct communication to youth through a multi-media strategy (including interpersonal communication) and community capacity building and mobilization.

The Program will be guided by the need to build on, rather than re-invent the wheel with regard to youth issues in Uganda. The Program will therefore seek to:

- Identify and upscale on-going youth communication initiatives already going in the country.

- Advocate for communications programming that go beyond the sexual health model thereby immediately meeting the communication needs of the non-sexually active youth.
- Build on lessons learned and bring Ugandan (and other) best practices to bear onto communications programming for youth.
- Continuously seek to build partnerships with Youth Service Organizations YSOs, in order to ensure a comprehensive approach to the program goals.

6. Objectives: The program has three levels of objectives, i.e. communication objectives, community mobilization objectives and capacity building objectives.

6.1. Communication objectives

- To intensify and sustain HIV and AIDS education for school-going children and young people in the country
- To increase the capacity of parents, teachers and health service providers to engage in constructive deliberations with young people on matters related to HIV and AIDS
- To increase public debate on HIV and AIDS in support of youth serving HIV and AIDS prevention initiatives

6.2. Community mobilization objectives

- To identify, engage and increase the capacity of community support structures to support young people HIV/AIDS prevention behavior
- To engage different law and policy instruments to support youth HIV and AIDS prevention initiatives.
- To foster networking among all Youth Service Organizations (YSOs)

6.3. Capacity building objectives

- To train core personnel from different sectors on youth HIV and AIDS prevention methods.
- To improve the delivery of services to youth through the “youth friendly services” concept in collaboration with partners already working in this area
- Engage in resource mobilization for the program

7. Priority Audiences:

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| I. | Phase One- | Primary School pupils
Primary age youth
Communities and policy support structures |
| II | Phase Two | Secondary schools
Secondary school age
Youth out of school
Youth at work (apprentices etc), Youth leaders
Communities and policy support structures |

III Phase Three Tertiary level youth
Communities and policy support structures

8. Work schedule and Timeframe: The activities leading towards the development of the Uganda National Schools HIV and AIDS Communication Project will be varied and will be undertaken by the different partners in the multi-sectoral national response. The key activities are:

- a) consultative meetings with key stakeholders and public information
- b) finalizing the concept paper to form the basis of future deliberations
- c) conducting a baseline survey to determine key issues in the initiative
- d) project design and partnership building
- e) holding a consensus meeting with stakeholders and creating the partnerships necessary for the implementation of the project
- f) conducting resource mobilization forums
- g) materials design and production
- h) launching and implementation of the project
- i) monitoring and evaluation
- j) organizing forum for discussion phase one and re-planning for phase two

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.

