Adolescents, young people and linkage to HIV and SRHR services: a sport-based model for demand creation towards the “first 95”

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BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Adolescents and young people face a range of health challenges, including barriers to accessing HIV-related services. UNAIDS has presented the ambitious Fast Track targets of 95% of people living with HIV knowing their HIV status, 95% of people who know their status receiving treatment, and 95% of people on HIV treatment having a suppressed viral load by 2030. Adolescents play a key role in achieving 95-95-95, as an estimated 50% of new HIV infections globally occur amongst ages 15-24, making it a priority population for behavioural and biomedical interventions.

Grassroot Soccer (GRS) uses sport-based programmes to connect adolescents with key health information, creating demand for HIV-related service uptake and linkage to care. GRS programmes aim to build the ASSETS of young people – increasing their health knowledge and confidence to use it; improve ACCESS to quality health services; and improve ADHERENCE to healthy behaviours and repeat uptake of services.

INTERVENTION OVERVIEW

GRS implements a number of programmes in Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. The core GRS programme, known as SKILLZ, ranges from 7-14 sessions and combines life skills and soccer activities to empower adolescents through provision of key sexual and reproductive health information, and facilitate linkages to health services. SKILLZ is facilitated by near-peer mentors (Coaches) aged 18-24, trained in key health information and youth facilitation. SKILLZ can be delivered in single- or mixed-sex groups.

METHODS

Between January - December 2018, 12 different SKILLZ Health programmes were implemented in five provinces in Zimbabwe, seven provinces in Zambia, and three provinces in South Africa, through direct implementation by GRS as well as partnerships with other organisations. Routine data was collected on each programme, including session attendance, service uptake and referral to HIV-related services. Analysis of the collected data focused on reach, uptake and linkages to HIV-related services.

KEY FINDINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Referral</th>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Q3</th>
<th>Q4</th>
<th>% of Overall GRS Reach</th>
<th>Avg. Participant Age</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIV Testing Services</td>
<td>9,773</td>
<td>6,591</td>
<td>8,991</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>26,192</td>
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<tr>
<td>ART Initiation</td>
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<td>260</td>
<td>114</td>
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<tr>
<td>SKILLZ Plus 1</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>863</td>
<td>1,415</td>
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<td>SKILLZ Plus Clubs/Support Groups</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>726</td>
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<td>VMMC</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>232</td>
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<td>Condom Distribution</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>SGBV</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>658</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Total Referrals 1</td>
<td>11,100</td>
<td>8,368</td>
<td>10,767</td>
<td>3,112</td>
<td>33,347</td>
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</table>

1) SKILLZ Plus is a GRS intervention for young people living with HIV, facilitated by Coaches living with HIV. After completing the 12-session intervention, participants are enrolled in SKILLZ Plus Clubs, peer support groups that meet monthly.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The GRS model shows promise as a demand creation strategy for adolescent uptake of HIV-related services, making a contribution to the first 95 in the 95-95-95 cascade. Given these results from routine programme monitoring, GRS recommends the following actions and lines of inquiry:

- Aim to increase reach of young people aged 20-24
- Examine non-school avenues for recruiting participants to ensure that GRS programmes reach all segments of adolescents
- Investigate reasons why participants elect not to test for HIV after taking part in a GRS intervention
- Introduce a service needs assessment with programme participants to find out:
  1. What health services do they require?
  2. Who knows their HIV status?
  3. Who are first time and repeat testers?

GRS results demonstrate that sport-based interventions can strengthen the adolescent prevention and treatment cascade and contribute to the global HIV response by creating access to this target population.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES


Presented at the 9th SA AIDS Conference 2019

GRASSROOTSOCCER

Pepfar

Usaid

From the American People

Grassroot soccercamp

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