



# ASKAIDS

## AFRICAN SEXUAL KNOWLEDGES ABOUT HIV/AIDS



### What Are The Aims?

To understand what primary aged pupils know already about sexuality and HIV/AIDs and to use it in developing the school curriculum for sexuality and HIV/AIDS education. To elucidate a theoretical framework for improving such education (pedagogy and curricula) in the developing world that will have the effect of reducing the rate of HIV/AIDS infections and will help in the process of poverty reduction in developing countries.

#### So our two research questions are:

1. What are the primary sources and contents of sexual knowledges for young people in sub-Saharan Africa, and how do these knowledges differ in terms of content and process of acquisition?
2. How do these knowledges interact with AIDS education received in the classroom, and how might young people's sexual knowledges be used to effect change in pedagogy and curriculum?

### Why This Project?

The evidence is that in most countries in the world we are not giving young people the sex education that they need and want. Young people are the most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Their lives and education are impacted upon profoundly by this disease. We also need to find a way to work with the complex and challenging sociocultural aspects of sexuality education in schools and their communities.

#### WHAT WE DID

- We worked in 3 primary schools in poor contexts in Kenya and Tanzania and 2 schools in South Africa.
- We worked with 20 pupils in each school (total of 240 pupils), 6 teachers in each school (total of 48) and 6 stakeholders in each school (total 48.)

#### THE RESEARCH HAD FOUR PHASES

1. Rapid ethnography.
2. Perceptions of pupils, teachers and community members Photovoice – the sources of young people's knowledge
3. Videos – sex education as it is and as students desire it.
4. Agreeing the implications for education - The final dialogue with everyone



### What We Found

#### 1. THE YOUNG PEOPLE

##### The primary sources of knowledge for young people were

Adults' social worlds – bars, beer dens, discos	Their homes and their relatives	Their schools – teachers, lessons and clubs
Observing adults social worlds – adults having sex in public places, adults drunk	Their peers' sexual behaviour – parties and observations of sexual behaviour	Their community organisations – NGOs, village elders, mosques, churches
Informal sexuality and the media – pornography, TV and films, books	Social messages about HIV/AIDS – posters, banners and wall paintings	Health organisations – hospitals and Voluntary Counselling and Testing Centres.

Young people were highly sexually aware and wanted to break the silence between adults and children

#### What they have learned PHOTOVOICE - pictures taken by young people



#### From the streets What they see and experience in the communities. They have witnessed:

- Themselves or others having sex on the streets, sometimes group sex
- Themselves or others taking drugs and blacking out on the streets
- Hearing and speaking 'dirty' language that they would not normally speak at school
- Having sex and relationships for money
- Same sex relationships
- Sexual assault from peers. Especially from male youth who are drug addicts and have dropped out of school

#### From the school

##### They seem to have been given information

- Facts about what HIV/AIDS - definitions, symptoms, transmission, prevention, it has no cure, testing and stigma
- Facts about transmission - through breast milk, a cut or wound, deep kissing, mother to child, a razor, sex, a syringe or injection or needle, and sharing a toothbrush.
- Protection- abstinence, being faithful to one partner, and condoms. Using condoms is not advocated.
- Abstinence and avoid having sex with sugar daddies/mummies or to get into prostitution.
- Warned about the consequences of unwanted pregnancy and drug abuse

#### 2. THE TEACHERS

- Are aware of children's lives: sexual acts, drugs, and sexual abuse in the community
- Find it hard to use children's everyday knowledge
- Struggle with expectations of being an adult and being a teacher
- Cultural and religious beliefs play a key role and can cause dilemmas
- Fear of parents and getting close to children e.g. using slang, this was mainly in SA
- Not sure when it is age appropriate 'to bring up that topic' and
- Don't acknowledge children as sexual beings
- Find it difficult to engage in the classroom with the living examples of AIDS e.g. infected pupils

#### 3. THE STAKEHOLDERS

Their initial advice about sex education was

- Let children be children – don't bombard them with sex
- Want to warn about sex
- Think sex education might make things worse
- Not sure of the age to begin sex education
- Think the religious organisations play an important part in promoting abstinence
- Want to protect
- Have cognitive dissonance i.e. can't cope with contradictions herein

### Sexuality, HIV/AIDS Education And Children's Knowledges

#### School discourses of

- Care and support
- Health and treatment
- Information giving
- Abstinence, prohibition, being 18, marriage
- Safety, prevention and danger
- Silence and embarrassment

#### Street discourses of

- Curiosity? What if? How? Why?
- Depth?
- Relationships & learning about sexuality
- Discourses of love, desire and seduction
- Fear of getting pregnant
- Stigma and acceptance

### What the pupils had to say

'The teachers are careful with us because they think we are still young'

(SA pupil)

'Int: Would you try to experiment what you are told?'

All: No, who wants to experiment with AIDS?'

(SA pupil)

'Teachers will teach, they will not tell us everything but will teach on the surface. They are scared of telling children both good and bad things...'

(Kenyan pupil)

'We need to create an environment where teachers and students can talk together trust..'

(Kenyan pupil)

#### Children want

- Active and engaging learning methods
- Discussions, role plays, TV and pictures
- Language to talk about matters of sexuality and AIDS
- Deep questions and answers
- Teachers not storming out
- Honest dialogues with adults
- Specific times to talk about these matters in lessons

### The Final Dialogue

#### What the participants said about seeing the data.

'What we have seen is the trust because I have seen it in the neighbourhood and I have heard people talk about it and even seen them do these things. Otherwise these things are not myths, they are happening in most villages.' (Boy, 12).

'I have learned a lot about the pictures and I wish that

1. Parents watch and know that their children know a lot of information
2. Teachers to be aware that their children can do research and do better than them
3. These pictures to be used in educating others as they are real Pictures and real experiences.'

(Female Teacher)

'Nowadays our children know a lot about sex. What the children know is what they have learned from the community. What they have learned when they are left on their own. The children should be educating in depth without hiding at all or fearing that they are too young. They in turn will take it upon themselves to educate others in school and in the community.' (Female Chief)

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