Focus on male youths in addressing alcohol and drug abuse risk in the context of HIV prevention among young people

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Focus on male youths in addressing alcohol and drug abuse risk in the context of HIV prevention among young people

Key Finding: Older male out-of-school youths in Kibera are more vulnerable to alcohol and drug abuse than any other group of young people

Introduction
Research evidence shows that people who abuse alcohol are more likely to engage in behaviour that puts them at risk of HIV infection, including having unprotected sex. Addressing alcohol and drug abuse is therefore imperative and should be a key priority in HIV prevention and management.

In 2010, APHIA II Operations Research Project collaborated with Support for Addictions Prevention and Treatment in Africa (SAPTA) Centre on research to identify factors associated with alcohol and drug use among out-of-school youth in Kibera, and to identify specific factors contributing to HIV risk, and to assess the impact of an intervention to link youths with an alcohol and drug abuse problem to counselling and rehabilitation services.

The Intervention
SAPTA used participatory educational theatre and Prevention Awareness Groups (PAGs) to disseminate alcohol and drug abuse reduction messages, and to encourage uptake of HIV counselling and testing. Youths found to be alcohol- and drug-dependent were offered enrolment in SAPTA’s Outpatient Treatment Program.

Key findings

Alcohol use:
- Results show that male youth are more than twice as likely to report alcohol use and abuse as girls.
  - Thirty-one per cent of the 15 to 19 year old males reported ever having used alcohol, compared to 14% of the girls.
  - Fifty-one percent of the older males (20 to 24 years) had ever used alcohol compared to 21% girls in the same age group. However, recent drinking was not commonly reported among all groups of youths.
- Ten per cent of the older male youths were found to be risky or hazardous drinkers (8-14 drinks at one sitting) when the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) was applied.

Drug use:
- Among older males (20-24 years), 23% and 19% reported using ‘miraa’/khat at baseline and endline respectively. Almost 15% reported using bhang/marijuana in the past month.
- Among 15-19 year old males, 14% and 16% reported having used ‘miraa’/khat in the previous month at baseline and endline respectively. Use of marijuana was reported by 7% and
13% at baseline and endline respectively.

- Use of either ‘miraa’/khat or marijuana by the female youths was negligible.
- Using the Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST-10), about 8% of the 15-19 year old males and 5% of the older males could be classified as moderate drug users.

**Sexual behaviour:**

- Early marriage among girls is quite common, and nearly half of all girls aged 15-19 years and about 75% of girls 20 to 24 years in the survey had ever been married, compared to less than a quarter of the older males. None of the boys in the younger age-group had ever been married.
- Sexual activity is more common among girls: 64% of girls aged 15 to 19 years had sexual intercourse in the previous 12 months at both baseline and endline, compared to 27% and 40% of the boys in the same age group. Older female youth were also more likely to have had recent sex (86%) than male youth in the same age group (70%).
- Majority of the female youth had sex with regular partners. A small proportion of males in both age groups reported sex with non-regular partners.
- Reported condom use with last regular partner was highest among male youth, ranging from 59% in the 20-24 year old group, to 67% among 15-19 year olds at endline. The highest proportion reporting condom use with last regular partner among girls was 28% among the 15-19 year olds at baseline.
- Condom use with a non-regular partner was high among the older males and females (20-24 years), at 75% among males and 58% among females at endline.

**Recommendations**

- In addressing alcohol and drug abuse among youths, programs need to focus on older male youths (20 + years old), who were found to be the most vulnerable to alcohol and drug abuse.
- Interventions are also need to address alcohol and drug use by younger boys, whose use of marijuana and miraa/khat was found to be more common than alcohol.
- Youth-focused programs should consider integrating alcohol and drug education into their activities to mitigate their negative effects on risk behaviors as the youth grow older.


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