

Keeping the Essentials In Place

**Lessons Learned from a Qualitative Study of
DREAMS in Northern Uganda**

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BACKGROUND

- 2017 qualitative study to learn about perspectives of AGYW participating in the DREAMS initiative in northern Uganda:
 - What differences has participation made in their lives?
 - What are lessons learned to support future initiatives?
- DREAMS – a public-private partnership launched in 2014 by PEPFAR to ensure at-risk HIV-negative AGYW (ages 15-24) remain negative.
 - Over 2 billion USD spent in 15 countries (sub-Saharan Africa + Haiti) ¹
 - **Multi-sectoral evidence-based interventions simultaneously address behavioral, biomedical, and structural drivers of HIV** - including transforming gender norms and reducing GBV.

¹DREAMS NextGen website

BACKGROUND

- In 2016, five implementers funded to launch DREAMS in N. Uganda.
- Additional public-private partners for commodities and health services.
- USAID/Uganda mandated the Stepping Stones training manual/curriculum,¹ as the **core mechanism** for delivery to out-of-school AGYW.



¹Jewkes, R.; Nduna, M.; Jama, N. Stepping Stones: A Training Manual for Sexual and Reproductive Health, Communication and Relationship Skills, 3rd ed.; Medical Research Council: Pretoria, South Africa, 2010.

DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

Peer facilitators **shifting attitudes and practices** around **HIV testing, condom use, and FP use**, and acting as role models

Not all peer facilitators shifted their **beliefs about the roles of women** that support gender inequality and drive GBV.

Scaling or adaptation requires fidelity to the original design and adaptation that is responsive to a new context

Sufficient training, mentorship, monitoring and support of facilitators is critical to success

METHODS

Qualitative Approach

- Semi-structured 1-hour interviews
- Appreciative approach:
 - “What are you proud of that has changed as a result of your participation?”
 - What do you wish was different that would have allowed you to achieve more from your participation?
- Collaborative data analysis

Purposive Sample (n=56)

- 9 peer groups in 2 (of 4) districts;
 - Selected based on highest levels of exposure to interventions + geographic balance.
 - For each group: 1 peer facilitator and 6 or 7 participants

Participant Demographics

Total N	56
Ages	Median = 20 years (15-25 years)
Given birth	30 (60%) 14 of these by age 18 3 of these by age 15
Marital/ partner status	18 (32%) currently partnered • 9 married, 9 cohabitating + 13% “divorced” or “separated”
Education	Highest level of education ranged from Primary 3 (N=1) to Secondary 6 (N=2).



By: Galina Pilina

LIVES BEFORE DREAMS

- In talking about their lives before DREAMS participants discussed:
 - Limited knowledge on SRH & family planning;
 - Lack of access to condoms & other FP methods;
 - Not knowing their HIV status, and not testing because of lack of awareness, fear, stigma & lack of access to testing,
 - Challenging lives.
- Without asking about GBV, almost 40% (22) talked about GBV as part of their life stories

WHAT HAS CHANGED?

Can you tell me about something that you are particularly proud of that has changed in your life as a result of your participation in DREAMS? What are the things you have most appreciated about DREAMS?

Most common themes:

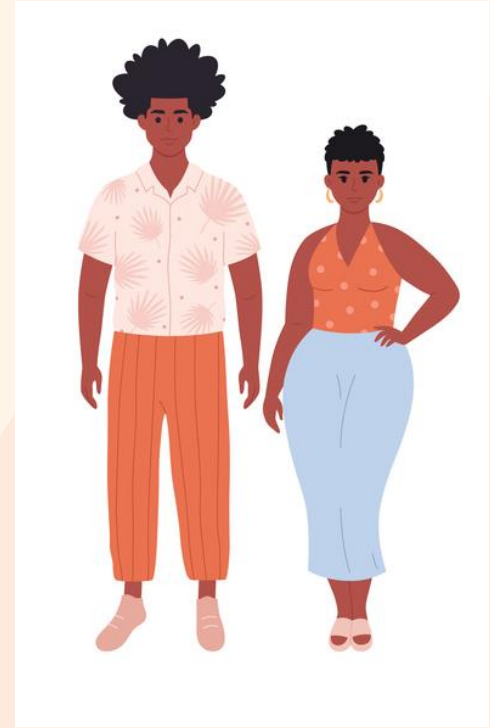
- Regular HIV testing and knowing their status
- Knowledge and an increased use of family planning, including benefits and risks of contraceptive choices and how to use male and female condoms correctly
- Knowing how to respond to GBV



By: Jelena Lapina

GBV PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

- DREAMS increased awareness and knowledge about GBV and response services.
- Stepping Stones was credited for:
 - Improved communication skills - an expected outcome
 - Learning how to be better partners (by some) – NOT an expected outcome



By: Alina Kotliar

Peer facilitator:

And you as a woman, you should respect your husband in every way, when the man comes back home show him love, bring food, and put it on the table, welcome him in all ways. This will make it that even when you ask for anything from the man, he will accept, there will not be violence but love only.

Participant:

They taught us how we can welcome our husbands when they come back. ... they taught us that when our husbands come back, we should receive them, get their bags, give them a chair, greet, and serve food and water for bathing and also, they told us that we can learn to play with our husbands too to show love. That is what Stepping Stones taught us with.

PEER FACILITATORS PERSPECTIVES

- **Proud** of their roles, what they had learned, their own new behaviors, and opportunities to be role models.
- And, **most noted challenges:**
 - Training was not sufficient for all: “...*they did not go deep into this Stepping Stones—they just give guidelines and if you don’t have knowledge you will not transfer it to fellow girls...*” .
 - Navigating complex community relationships and peer jealousies.
 - The Stepping Stones manual and reporting is in English.



By: JDawnInk

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

- Target populations for the 5 implementers did not all overlap – a key premise of DREAMS
- No cash assets/subsidies for out-of-school AGYW (to reduce poverty/support education) – a premise of DREAMS
- No opportunity to pilot interventions. Directives were to scale to all hotspots in all districts.

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

- Implementation of Stepping Stones differed from manual recommendations.

Stepping Stones Manual	DREAMS N. Uganda
Facilitator training should be 3 weeks	Training was one week
Maximum size of peer groups = 20	Minimum size of peer groups = 20
Peer groups should be formed for various segments of the community, that meet in parallel and occasionally together.	Peer groups were primarily AGYW with a few for adolescent boys and young men.

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DISCUSSION



By: Alonzo Design

- Facilitators or **change-agents** are central in **norms-shifting** and social behavioral change interventions such as DREAMS.
- As change agents, **peer facilitators must internalize the changes they seek to effect** in others.
- Implementation challenges were tied to the **short timelines** for results required by funders.
- Findings resonate with **findings of others**.

THANKS!

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