

Project Summary for COMDIS

Title of Case Study/ Research Success:		HIV Prevention and Young Women in Africa
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1. Title of Research Project		Increasing the effectiveness of Straight Talk Foundation (STF) Uganda HIV prevention programmes through qualitative research in relation to young women aged 15-19 years.
2. Conclusion of project <i>[250 words]</i>	What are the key take home messages? <i>[250 words]</i>	Developing HIV prevention in relation to young people must take into account gender inequality; but this can only be achieved within a more gendered approach which is inclusive of girls and young women, as well as boys, and addresses power relations (in relationships, schools, families, etc.). A gendered approach means that interventions are developed recognising the different needs and circumstances of young men and women and providing different interventions accordingly
3. “Killer” fact	This needs to be very brief, if you had to summarise the findings of this project in approximately 35 words what would you say?	Young women are disempowered in a number of ways which increases their risk of HIV infection and this is not sufficiently addressed by current HIV prevention practice.
4. Country/ies		Uganda

<p>5. Description of the project and main findings</p> <p>[250 words]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What was known on the topic before you did the project - What has your research added to the topic - What research method did you use - What are the results <p>[250 words]</p>	<p>This innovative study was carried out with a small group of young women aged 15-19 years in Jinja district Eastern Uganda from July 2006 to August 2007. The study was conducted with Straight Talk Foundation (STF), a Ugandan NGO that uses radio, print and face-to-face work to help adolescents re-script their lives. STF's goal is to contribute to improved sexual and reproductive health and development of adolescents (10-19) in Uganda. STF identified the need to adopt a more gendered approach to their work and with COMDIS conducted the study using a participatory method involving storytelling, drama, and pictures.</p> <p>While this project was not about developing strategies for gender sensitive HIV prevention (that is the next stage) it did aim to find suitable ways for girls and young women to talk about their lives and experiences. In a group situation such as in school with mixed boys and girls - girls rarely speak and certainly not about difficult subjects.</p> <p>HIV prevention with young people across Africa has mainly taken the form of a mixed gender, schools based approach using ABC messages and life skills; the latter to manage peer pressure and improve communication and negotiation skills¹. However, these approaches are considered to be insufficiently gendered (Karim et al 2009 – see below). Young women are disempowered in an environment of gender inequality in a number of ways and this increases the risk that they will become infected with HIV/AIDs. There is increasing recognition that HIV prevention efforts need to address gender inequality and empowerment if they are to make further gains. Yet there are relatively few strategies available</p>
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¹ Karim, Q. A., A. Meyer-Weitz, et al. (2009). *Interventions with youth in high-prevalence areas. HIV Prevention: a comprehensive approach.* K. H. Mayer and

6.		to take this forward. A COMDIS study explored the possibilities for accessing young women's experiences and opinions with a view to them contributing to a more gendered HIV prevention approach (different strategies for young men and young women).
7. Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Who has benefited from your research already and how? <p><i>[100 words]</i></p>	<p>Tell us about the different groups of people who have benefited from your research so far.</p> <p><i>[100 words]</i></p>	(See below)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the actual or potential impact of the research? <p><i>[100 words]</i></p>	<p>Who could potentially benefit from your research in the future, e.g. from scale up?</p> <p><i>[100 words]</i></p>	<p>Young women, and young people more generally, targeted by STF and other agencies working in HIV prevention in Uganda; and there are lessons to be learned across Africa.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How is your research novel? <p><i>[100 words]</i></p>	<p>For example,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has no research been done on this topic before? - Have you worked with a group of people whose views/experiences have not previously been researched before? - Was your research done alongside the National Programme? <p><i>[100 words]</i></p>	<p>Limited research has been undertaken in this area because it relates to power and gender inequality which are not typically addressed in HIV related research.</p>

<p>▪ What lessons have you learned for the future?</p> <p><i>[100 words]</i></p>	<p>Tell us about any novel challenges or significant successes you experienced related to carrying out the project.</p> <p><i>[100 words]</i></p>	<p>The study demonstrated that young women, if given an opportunity, have much to contribute in terms of their viewpoints and experiences. However, accessing young women's voices may be difficult using conventional methods of research or programming. Policy makers and practitioners need to adopt a broad inequalities and empowerment approach to HIV prevention with young people. This will require changes to attitudes, programmes, and institutions. There is a need to be more gender sensitive, responding to different needs (for example, providing different strategies for young men and young women); being responsive to different ways of 'speaking'; creating mechanisms to 'hear' disempowered young women and respond to their situation; and mechanisms which acknowledge and address power relations in HIV prevention in relationships, schools, families, and communities.</p>
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<p>8. Human interest</p> <p><i>[250 words]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you have any quotes from the qualitative aspects of your research? - Perhaps a story about a family or individual. - Anecdotes that you can tell us about the research. <p><i>[250 words]</i></p>	<p>The story below, written by one of the participants, describes the difficulties a young woman faces in being able to attend school. Not attending school may put young women at greater risk of HIV. One aspect of this is that any HIV prevention messages and strategies are channelled through schools and therefore if young women are excluded from school they are less likely to be included in these strategies. This story shows that advocacy with parents and the wider community on the issue of female school attendance is an important and ongoing need.</p> <p>‘I am writing about my friend.</p> <p>One day I went to my friend’s home to visit her. She was happy and her mother but after giving me tea she told me her problems. She told me that her father stopped paying for her school fees. That he is paying for boy only. I asked her that your father is around she told me that no. I told her that I will come back another day. After sometime I went back. The good thing her father he was there. I told her father to come where I was sitting. I told her (him) that you stop giving only boys school fees because even girls they can get jobs. After that her father told her to go (to) school. She was in S6. She sat for her exams and she passed. Now she is a teacher. So let parents give both girls and boys school fees.’</p>
<p>9. Names and countries of the Research Institute(s) and Organisations (s) involved</p>		<p>Nuffield Centre for International Health and Development, LIHS, Leeds, UK. Straight Talk Foundation (STF), Uganda.</p>
<p>10. Lead Researchers Names and Organisations</p>		<p>Cath Conn, Nuffield, Leeds, UK and Dr Lou Waite, Geography, Leeds., UK. Cathy Watson, Patrick Walugembe, and Evelyn Namubiru Straight Talk Foundation (STF) Uganda.</p>

11. DFID involvement		DFID funding via COMDIS.
▪ Actual Start and End Dates		2006-9
▪ Total financial spend to date		15,000 pounds sterling
▪ Any future financial commitment		None.
▪ Is a follow-on project planned or a possibility?		None.
12. Photographs	If you do have any photographs, please make sure, where possible, that you ask the subject for their permission to use the picture.	See below.
13. Which of the COMDIS objectives does your project address?		Objectives 2 and 3. Access as well as quality of health promotion programmes.
14. Current products	Please list (and send us a copy) of the current products from this project	The research contributes to strategy development within Straight Talk Foundation (STF).
15. Planned products	Please tell us about any future products you intend to produce from the project	
16. Communication	Please list (as bullet points) the key communication activities you did related to the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshop with STF staff exploring participatory and qualitative research methods working with young women. - One to one and group meetings with parents and daughters to be included in the research – these took place before and after the research activity. - Published papers due in 2009.

PHOTO: Young women planning a drama based on life themes they chose.

