

## Literature Review of mixed vs. split-gender HIV/AIDS education

UNAIDS REPORT "Peer Education and HIV/AIDS: Concepts, uses, and challenges  
[http://www.unaids.org/en/media/unaids/contentassets/dataimport/publications/irc-pub01/jc291-peereduc\\_en.pdf](http://www.unaids.org/en/media/unaids/contentassets/dataimport/publications/irc-pub01/jc291-peereduc_en.pdf)

**This UNAIDS report stresses the importance of a "gender-based approach" to HIV/AIDS programming, and cites some examples of girls-only programs that were particularly successful.**

### **Argument for mixed sex program with some single-sex topics:**

- "A 'gender-based approach' to HIV/AIDS programming takes into account the ways in which gender norms influence vulnerability to HIV, the ability to adopt HIV-protective behaviour, and care of people living with HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS, 1998; Weiss & Gupta, 1998). The International Centre for Research on Women supported the development and evaluation of several peer education interventions in Brazil, Sri Lanka, and Thailand that incorporated a gender perspective. These studies highlighted the importance of addressing gender and sexuality and found that culturally defined gender roles affect peer education and participant recruitment, retention, and ability to communicate about sex with same-sex and opposite-sex peers (Weiss & Gupta, 1998)."
- "In Sri Lanka, young male and female peer educators facilitated discussions with their peer groups about virginity, sexual behaviour, and decision-making in both single-sex and mixed-sex group sessions. Findings showed that single-sex group sessions helped young women to develop a public voice and enabled them to participate actively in subsequent group discussions with males. Interestingly, the study also found that the recruitment and retention of participants in group sessions was greater for females than for males (Silva et al., cited in Weiss & Gupta, 1998)."

### **Argument for girls-only sessions:**

- "The study also found that young women were more able to 'express an opinion and ask questions in girls-only HIV/AIDS peer education groups as compared to mixed-gender groups,' a finding that highlights the importance of special learning environments and messages for women (Busayawong et al., 1996)."

WHO Report: Integrating Gender into HIV/AIDS Programming  
[http://www.who.int/gender/hiv\\_aids/en/Integrating\[258KB\].pdf](http://www.who.int/gender/hiv_aids/en/Integrating[258KB].pdf)

**The main goal of the WHO Report is to stress the importance of making gender a central theme to any HIV/AIDS programming. The report then goes on to explain the reasoning behind making a program gender-sensitive and determining when a session is appropriate for *only* girls or *only* boys, and why it is important to have mixed sessions as well. The WHO report also delineates between gender-sensitive programming and gender-transformative programming. Gender-transformative programming is seen as a step up**

because it includes both women *and* men in the programming. The report argues that gender-transformative programming can be effective, and cites studies that have shown a significant change in men when it comes to gender equity. The report concludes that gender & HIV/AIDS programming is absolutely necessary, but gender integration must be approached carefully due to the "realities of gender inequalities within the social and economic context of any given country".

**Argument for mixed program with single-sex sessions:**

- "Programming sometimes provides women and men the same interventions when their needs are different and/or provides women and men different interventions when their needs are the same. The most important lesson for doing no harm is that in order to be gender sensitive health programmes must offer different services for women as compared to men when their needs differ but must ensure that services do not treat women and men differently when their needs are the same."
- "Thus, providing women and men with different interventions and information when their needs and responsibilities are the same is just as deleterious as providing women and men with the same interventions when their needs and constraints are different."

**Gender-transformative programming is a step up from gender-sensitive programming:**

- "Programmes that seek to transform gender roles and create more gender-equitable relationships are more advanced than gender-sensitive approaches because they seek to change the underlying conditions that cause gender inequities. They also transform HIV/AIDS initiatives by reaching both women and men and recognizing both as critical players in ensuring the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS programming."

**Argument for the efficacy of boys-only gender-transformative programming:**

- "Programmes such as these have grown out of a belief that the dominant form of masculinity can be changed and replaced with more gender equitable models of malehood. Research conducted by Gary Barker (2000) in Brazil and by others was influential in establishing that alternative, more equitable masculinities do exist (Necchi and Schufer 1998; Yon, Jimenez et al. 1998). Each of these studies identified young men who showed some degree of gender equity in their intimate and sexual interactions with young women."

**Argument for gender integration (with warning for caution):**

- "The more instrumental efficiency approach maintains – and rightfully so – that gender integration maximizes the effectiveness of programmes by reaching more people and reducing constraints to accessing and using information, technologies and services for all. It yields more sustainable long-term results in terms of lowering the incidence of infection and mitigating the negative consequences of AIDS."

- "The incorporation of a comprehensive gender framework to address HIV/AIDS issues goes far beyond the standard or traditional set of HIV/AIDS interventions to include a wide range of social and economic interventions. The realities of gender inequalities within the social and economic context of any given country can prevent or negate even the best HIV/AIDS interventions."

Gender, Sexuality, and HIV/AIDS: The What, the Why, and the How - Geeta Rao Gupta  
[http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTAFRREGTOPGENDER/Resources/durban\\_speech.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTAFRREGTOPGENDER/Resources/durban_speech.pdf)

**Gupta argues that gender-sensitive programming is extremely important, but that a "multi pronged approach" to HIV/AIDS programming is ideal.**

- "In contrast, gender-sensitive programming that recognizes and responds to the differential needs and constraints of individuals based on their gender and sexuality is another step forward on the continuum of progress. The defining characteristic of such interventions is that they meet the different needs of women and men."
- "It is clear that the sensitive, transformative, and empowering approaches to gender and sexuality that I have just outlined are not mutually exclusive. They must occur simultaneously and efforts should be made to expand the portfolio of options within each category. In this, as in other AIDS programming, we need a multipronged approach. We must continue to address the differing needs and concerns of women and men, while we work on altering the status quo in gender relations, in minor and major ways."

The Impact of Sex and HIV Education Programs in Schools and Communities on Sexual Behaviors among Young Adults (by Douglas Kirby, PhD, B.A Laris, MPH, and Lori Roller, MSW, MPH ETR Associates)

<http://www.sidastudi.org/resources/inmagic-img/dd1054.pdf>

**This article examines a variety of sex education programs in a mix of developing and developed countries. It does not focus on the difference between single-sex and mixed-sex programs, but instead argues that HIV/sex education programs have a positive impact on behavior. About 15% of the programs examined are single-sex (about half for girls and half for boys), and the rest are mixed sex sessions. The findings showed that the programming was overall equally effective for both males and females. The article acknowledges that single-sex sessions can be helpful, but does not argue that it is absolutely necessary.**

- "Overall, these studies strongly indicate that these programs were far more likely to have a positive impact on behavior than a negative impact. Across all 83 studies, two-thirds (65 percent) had a significant positive impact on one or more of these sexual behaviors or outcomes, while only seven percent had a significant negative impact on one or more of these behaviors or outcomes."
- "Programs were also roughly equally effective with both males and females (Table

2). A possible exception is that programs appeared to be more effective at reducing sexual risk-taking among females than males; six of seven programs reduced sexual risk-taking among females, while only four of eight did so among males."

- "All of these findings indicate that these curriculum-based programs are quite robust; they can be effective in different countries, in different cultures, in different communities and with different types of young people. This does not mean that the same program can be effective with all these groups in all these countries; rather it means that different curriculum- and group-based programs appropriately designed for each group of youth in each community can be effective."
- "In addition to establishing ground rules, some programs tried to create a safe environment by separating the class into same-sex groups for certain topics, or occasionally limiting the entire course to only one sex."