

Findings from a sport-based programme evaluation

Akanegbu C¹, Lee D², Miller S ², Ivagba O¹, Clowes A², Coakley C²

¹ Youth Empowerment Development Initiative (YEDI); ² Grassroot Soccer, Inc.

BACKGROUND

In Nigeria, and globally, a gap exists in addressing the unique sexual reproductive health (SRH) needs of adolescent boys and young men (ABYM). Addressing these gaps is critical in preventing HIV, improving gender equality, and reducing violence among ABYM in Nigeria.

Grassroot Soccer (GRS) and Youth Empowerment & Development Initiative (YEDI) developed SKILLZ Guyz a boys-only, football-based intervention in order to respond to the unique SRH needs of ABYM in Nigeria. SKILLZ Guyz aims to build 3A’s for participants: their **assets** - HIV & SRH knowledge, anger management techniques, and conflict resolution skills; improve **access** to high-quality, youth-friendly health services; and increase **adherence** to positive, healthy behaviors and repeat uptake of services.

INTERVENTION OVERVIEW

Delivered once or twice weekly in 10, 90-minute sessions, plus a graduation activity for a total of 16.5 hours, SKILLZ Guyz aims to shift gender norms that have negative health impact for adolescents. Sessions are facilitated by male ‘Coaches’ trained as youth facilitators on the program content, who also act as positive role models for participants. SKILLZ Guyz was first pre-tested in Nigeria in 2016, and found to be acceptable and appropriate for in-school and out-of-school ABYM.

METHODS

The mixed methods evaluation took place from February-July 2018. Nigerian Institute of Medical Research provided technical guidance, especially in protocol development and data analysis. The following aims guided the evaluation:

- a) Assess participant knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs related to SRH, HIV, gender equity, and positive identity formation
- b) Assess and compare effectiveness of the programme among in-school and out-of-school adolescents

A quantitative survey was administered to participants (n=258, mean age 14.8 years; in-school n=140, out-of-school n=118) before and after the intervention, including measures of SRH and HIV knowledge, gender equitable attitudes, and health-seeking behaviours. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS: significance was assessed using t-tests and Cronbach’s Alpha was calculated for each attitudinal scale. Qualitative focus group discussions (n=2, 20 total participants) were conducted with SKILLZ Guyz Coaches, and interviews were conducted with YEDI programme staff (n=8). Recordings were transcribed, translated, and analyzed thematically.

RESULTS

At baseline, most participants had not had sex, but perpetration of violence against female partners was high. Statistically significant improvements were seen in the outcomes of HIV knowledge, pregnancy and contraceptive knowledge, self efficacy, self-esteem, and gender equitable attitudes.

Table 1: Baseline Behavioural Characteristics

	In-school	Out-of-school	Overall	N
Ever had sexual intercourse	23.6%	43.1%	32.6%	236
Consistently use condoms (of those sexually active)	27.6%	46.7%	39.2%	74
Ever perpetrated psychological violence against a female partner	68.2%	83.8%	75.2%	248
Ever perpetrated physical violence against a female partner	62.7%	75.0%	68.2%	248

**An error in wording of survey items led to considerable bias in the endline data on violence perpetration, so these results are not presented here.

RESULTS (cont.)

Table 2: Quantitative Survey Outcomes

Variable	Pre-to-post Percent Change		
	In-school	Out-of-school	Overall
HIV Knowledge (10 true/false statements)	13.30%	24.80%	17.5%*
Pregnancy and Contraceptive Knowledge (3 true/false statements)	8.60%	33.00%	18.2%*
Self Efficacy (6-item scale, 5-point Likert)	16.90%	30.60%	22.7%*
Self-Esteem (3-item scale)	4.50%	18.80%	9.8%*
Gender Equitable Attitudes (20-item scale)	14.40%	18.80%	16.7%*

* = statistically significant change between pre- and post-scores on p=.05

Key themes from FGDs with Coaches and interviews with YEDI staff include:

- Coaches reported positive behaviour and attitude changes in participants, as noted by participants themselves, parents, and teachers
- Participation in the programme caused Coaches themselves to reflect on and change their own negative SRH behaviours and gender attitudes, making them better role models.
- The use of soccer was critical in creating a safe space and comfortable environment for participants to share their experiences and learn together.

"Most of our participants do not get the opportunity to be advised on life skills at home or in schools, so it is great that we coach them on life skills such as how to build self-esteem and how to communicate effectively in order to guide their path." – SKILLZ Guyz Coach



Figure 1: SKILLZ Guyz participants do an energizer during a session

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation findings demonstrate the promise of SKILLZ Guyz in engaging ABYM in critical discussions and providing important health information. The use of soccer as an entry point and near-peer facilitators appear to be effective in shaping ABYM knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours. Significant positive changes in both in-school and out-of-school participants’ HIV knowledge, gender equitable attitudes, and self-efficacy indicate the effectiveness of SKILLZ Guyz.

Coaches also reported positive effects on their own attitudes and behaviours as a result of their training and facilitation of SKILLZ Guyz. Further evaluation in other geographies will aid GRS in improving and expanding the programme to further reach ABYM throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

