

Addressing adolescent boys' unique sexual and reproductive health needs in Nigeria: Baseline findings from a sport-based programme evaluation

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BACKGROUND

In Nigeria, and globally, a gap exists in addressing the unique SRH needs of adolescent boys and young men (ABYM). Government-run school curricula in Nigeria include an HIV education component, but it has limited sexual health information and fails to reach out-of-school youth. Findings from the 2015 Nigeria Men and Gender Equality Survey (NiMAGES) indicate widespread agreement with restrictive norms regarding gender roles and acceptance of violence against women.

Youth Empowerment & Development Initiative (YEDI) and Grassroot Soccer (GRS) created SKILLZ Guyz, a boys-only, soccer-based intervention in order to respond to the needs of ABYM in Nigeria. Using the 3As approach, SKILLZ Guyz aims to build their **assets** - HIV & SRH knowledge, anger management techniques, and conflict resolution skills; improve **access** to high-quality 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, particularly around perpetration and experience of violence. Sessions are facilitated by male 'Coaches' trained in youth facilitation 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. NIMR 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 program among in-school and out-of-school youth
- c) Identify critical components to implementation fidelity and delivery

Quantitative pre-tests were administered to in-school and out-of-school participants aged 13-19 (n=258, mean age=14.8 years), including measures of SRH knowledge, gender equitable attitudes, and health-seeking behaviours. Qualitative data was collected from February-April 2018 and included Focus Group Discussions (FGDs; n=2) with trained 'Coaches' who facilitate the program, and in-depth interviews (IDIs) with program staff (n=8). Descriptive statistics were calculated and qualitative data were reviewed for emergent themes, then merged for triangulation. Endline quantitative analysis is still in progress.

RESULTS

Table 1: Baseline participant characteristics		
	In-school youth (n=140)	Out-of-school (n=118)
Age		
Mean (years)	14.68	16.06
12-14	53.6%	27.4%
15 or older	46.4%	72.2%
Lives with:		
Both parents	79.3%	31.7%
Father	1.4%	7.1%
Mother	12.1%	8.8%
Neither parent	7.1%	44.0%

RESULTS (cont.)

Table 2. Quantitative Pre-Test: Select Survey Outcomes (n=258)	
	Baseline value
Ever had sexual intercourse	29% (n =76)
Of sexually active youth, used a condom at last sex	31% (23)
Correctly identified HIV prevention techniques	34% (87)
Ever insulted a female partner/deliberately made her feel bad about herself	48% (118)
Ever threatened or hurt a female partner	38% (95)
Ever used alcohol	33% (81)

In post-intervention FGDs, Coaches stated:

- They observed positive behaviour and attitude changes in participants, even among those who had previously engaged in unhealthy behaviours, such as bullying and substance use.
- Participation in the program caused Coaches themselves to reflect on and change their own negative SRH behaviours and gender attitudes, making them better role models.
- Participants reported using intervention techniques to improve anger management and reduce use of physical violence against peers.

"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

Low levels of HIV and SRH knowledge amongst adolescent boys demonstrate a gap in provision of accurate HIV and SRH information and life skills building. High levels of history of violence perpetration against girls, as well as sexual activity and low condom use indicate the opportunity to intervene early and engage boys before sexual debut, in a critical period for shaping gender equitable norms. Continued advocacy around access to accurate SRH information in forms appropriate for and appealing to adolescent boys is necessary. Qualitative findings demonstrate initial positive program effects on both participants and facilitators, indicating the promise of this intervention in addressing the SRH needs of adolescent boys.

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