

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

Akanegbu C¹, Lee D², Miller S², Ivagba O¹, 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. The 2015 Nigeria Men and Gender Equality Survey also revealed widespread agreement with restrictive gender roles and acceptance of violence against women. Addressing these issues with adolescent boys is critical in preventing HIV, improving gender equality, and reducing violence 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 use soccer language, metaphors, and activities to address key concepts, and are facilitated by male ‘Coaches’ trained as youth facilitators, 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.



SKILLZ Guyz participants take part in a session activity

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 results were previously presented].

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.

LESSONS LEARNED

Qualitative findings supported results from the quantitative survey, showing significant increases in multiple knowledge and attitudinal domains among participants. Encouraging trends were seen on gender equitable attitudes of participants. Coaches also reported that their training and facilitation of SKILLZ Guyz had positive effects on their own behaviour, and that the use of soccer was critical in creating a safe space for discussion of sensitive topics.

Table 1: Qualitative Findings

Insight	Illustrative Quote
Coaches observed and reported positive behaviour and attitudinal changes in their participants	A parent called me some months ago and asked if I was his son’s coach; I said yes and he said that this is not their son that they knew because they have noticed a significant positive change in his behaviour. The parent further explained that their son now controls his anger to a very great extent. (SKILLZ Guyz Coach) There was a case of a participant in Cement Iyana-Ipaja, who disclosed that he was into substance abuse but now wish to change after he had gone through the programme. (SKILLZ Guyz Coach)
SKILLZ Guyz provides information not offered elsewhere to participants	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)
Coaches reported more gender-equitable sexual behaviours and attitudes as a result of training and facilitation	Before I became a coach, I hardly seek consent from my girlfriend because I believed that as a man I do not have to seek for her consent; but since I joined the programme right from the pilot phase, I got to realise how important it was to seek consent from my girlfriend. (SKILLZ Guyz Coach) Before I joined to become a SKILLZ Guyz Coach I did not believe in the use of condoms despite I was aware of the risks involved in having unprotected sex but now I use condoms since this is what I preach to young boys in my community. (SKILLZ Guyz Coach)
Coaches change their behaviour because they wanted to be good role models for participants	Before I became a SKILLZ Guys coach I was used to going out with my friends and abuse alcohol but now I do not do that anymore because I preach against alcohol abuse to my participants and I would not want them to see me drinking because I am like the book they read. (SKILLZ Guyz Coach) During our last Coaches’ Refresher Training (CRT), some coaches approached me and disclosed that the programme has affected them in ways such as they were able to stop taking alcohol because they want to live an exemplary life for their participants. (SKILLZ Guyz Master Coach)

CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

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 are effective in shaping ABYM knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours. Coaches reported positive behaviour change in participants, as well as positive effects on their own attitudes and behaviours as a result of their training and facilitation of SKILLZ Guyz.

GRS is currently implementing SKILLZ Guyz in Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, with partners conducting the programme in eight other African countries. YEDI has scaled the SKILLZ Guyz into sites with higher prevalence of HIV among ABYM and plans to scale into more locations in 2020.

