

Innovation and collaboration through sport: Adaptation and contextualization of two evidence-based HIV and violence prevention programmes for boys in Zimbabwe

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BACKGROUND

- Almost half of girls and women in Africa have experienced sexual violence, with devastating consequences, including increased HIV incidence, early pregnancy, increased school dropout, and emotional and psychological morbidity.
- Sexual violence is rooted in gender-based discrimination, harmful social norms, and gender stereotypes.
- The engagement of boys and men in programming to change harmful gender norms and prevent sexual and gender-based violence is essential, as interventions cannot only be limited to women and girls.
- No Means No Worldwide (NMNW) and Grassroot Soccer (GRS), partnered to co-design and implement the 'SKILLZ No Means No' program for boys and young men aged 9-17 in Tsholotsho and Nkayi Districts.



PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

- NMNW and GRS adapted the existing NMNW Boys & Young Men curriculum in February 2022, expanding it from 10 to 12 hours to include content on substance abuse, peer pressure, and HIV/STI prevention.
- GRS soccer-based activities from the 'SKILLZ' curriculum were adapted to make content more appealing and engaging.
- NMNW, GRS, and local implementing partner Bantwana Zimbabwe trained 32 near-peer young adult instructors in a two-week training in August 2022.
- To assess program feasibility and relevance, and compare SKILLZ NMN with the standard NMN Boys and Young Men curriculum, the following data collection methods were used:
 - **Pre/post surveys** were administered to participants (n=1623) in early 2023
 - **Focus group discussions** were held with instructors (n=1 group) and youth (n=3 groups) in late 2022
 - **Interviews** were held with implementing partner staff (n=2) in late 2022

LESSONS

- Compared to the standard NMN Boys & Young men curriculum, participants in SKILLZ No Means No demonstrated nearly twice the percentage change in knowledge and three times the percentage change in attitudes over the course of the program:

Table 1: Pre/post comparison

Implementing partner	Curriculum	Knowledge			Attitudes		
		Pre	Post	% Change	Pre	Post	% Change
Bantwana Zimbabwe (n=1623)	SKILLZ No Means No	33%	75%	129%	41%	76%	84%
Family AIDS Care Trust (FACT) Zimbabwe (N=567)	No Means No Boys & Young Men (COVID-Safe)	26%	45%	75%	49%	63%	30%

Table 2: Select SKILLZ No Means No Pre/Post Items

Statement	Pre	Post	% Change	Question Type
1.1 Boys and men do not need to go to others for help	24%	55%	135%	Attitude
1.2 I believe that men should not show emotions like care, love, weakness, fear, or sadness	22%	50%	124%	Attitude
1.4 I feel courageous enough to stand up for what I believe in and the people I care about	75%	83%	10%	Attitude
1.8 Rape survivors may question what they said or did but this does not make them responsible for an attack	37%	84%	129%	Attitude
1.9 The most effective way to avoid getting HIV is to abstain from sex	65%	82%	26%	Knowledge
2.2 What is the most important thing to consider in an intervention?	21%	72%	248%	Knowledge
2.4 When is an attack the victim's fault?	35%	72%	104%	Knowledge
2.5 Which of these is an approach you can use for safe and effective bystander intervention?	19%	77%	303%	Knowledge
2.6 What are some of the risks of alcohol and drug use?	40%	87%	117%	Knowledge

- While instructors faced minor challenges (negotiating program time with schools, coordinating travel time), they reported that the curriculum was overall feasible to implement.
- In 2022, 100% of participants were retained and 'graduated' from the program, higher than the standard NMN Boys and Young Men rate of 82%.
- Boys and instructors reported applying skills they learned in the program, such as bystander intervention, avoiding violence in their daily lives, and reporting witnessed incidents of assault: **"I saw two boys fighting. I pretended to be running away from a dog and I distracted them."**
- Youth also reported changes in their attitudes and behaviors: **"I used to disrespect girls but now I treat them equally and it is my responsibility to protect them."**
- Boys found the soccer-based format to be fun and engaging, and improved their understanding of program content. Information on HIV/STIs and substance abuse were reported to be highly relevant to participants' lives and communities.

CONCLUSIONS

Given the high acceptability and relevance of the program to participants in Zimbabwe, NMNW and GRS recommend continued implementation and data collection. Future training will include additional curriculum contextualization for younger boys in rural areas, and more content on conflict resolution. Expanding program reach to engage family and community stakeholders could help broaden the impact.



SKILLZ No Means No: Findings from a Pilot Implementation of a Sexual Violence Prevention Program for Boys in Zimbabwe

Executive Summary

Key Findings

Feasibility of SKILLZ No Means No

- Instructors found it feasible to implement SKILLZ No Means No in their community
- Instructors faced minor challenges around keeping boys' attention immediately after a soccer-related activity, though this can be addressed by adjusting the order of activities
- Logistical challenges faced, not related to SKILLZ No Means No specifically, include negotiating time with schools, heavy rains, traveling long distances to schools, and prioritizing SKILLZ No Means No in districts with concurrent programming
- Portions of the curriculum could be further adapted to fit the rural context

Effectiveness and Relevance of SKILLZ No Means No

- Bantwana Zimbabwe saw a 100% participant retention rate through the course of the intervention, which could be due to youth engagement in the curriculum or implementation with youth in schools
- Boys learnt and applied skills around bystander intervention, avoiding violence in their daily lives, reporting instances of assault they witness, and how to challenge gender norms in their community, though some requested additional support around gender-based violence and how to intervene in an assault
- Topics around HIV/STIs and substance abuse proved to be highly relevant to the lives of boys participating and to preventing sexual violence in the community
- The soccer-based format was fun and engaging for boys and improved learning of topics (ex. understanding the risk of HIV to not just an individual, but to the community)

Added value of SKILLZ No Means No

- SKILLZ No Means No had a higher participant retention rate through the course of the curriculum compared to NMNW's standard No Means No Boys & Young Men (COVID-Safe) curriculum, 100% and 82% respectively, possibly due to youth engagement in the SKILLZ No Means No curriculum or implementation with youth in schools
- Additional content in SKILLZ No Means No on HIV/STIs and substance abuse are relevant to prevent sexual violence in Zimbabwe

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- The soccer-based delivery makes the curriculum more engaging for boys, as soccer is popular in Zimbabwe and an effective tool to engage boys in learning important concepts

Recommendations

- Continue to implement the SKILLZ No Means No curriculum and to monitor the results
- Investigate the factors and challenges around the small pre-post sample and brainstorm solutions to capture short-term outcomes of the program
- Strengthen modules on sexual and gender-based violence and skills to intervene in an assault as some participants requested additional support in these areas
- Further adapt and contextualize the curriculum to accommodate skills relevant to a rural setting and translate the curriculum into the local language
- Restructure the curriculum so that serious or heavy topics are not immediately following engaging soccer-based activities
- Provide instructors with additional support and sensitization on creating a safe space for boys to disclose experiences of sexual violence
- Integrate age-specific adaptations for younger participants when discussing heavy topics such as rape and violence
- Expand the target reach to boys aged 18-24, as they are in need of the curriculum and often engage with younger girls in the community
- Brainstorm ways to broaden the impact of the program by engaging with community leaders, family and key stakeholders to increase buy in
- Identify factors that contributed to Bantwana Zimbabwe's 100% graduation rate so that learnings can be applied to other NMNW programs
- Consider adding more engaging, sports-based content into the standard No Means No Boys & Young Men curriculum
- Consider rolling out the SKILLZ No Means No program in Zimbabwe due to the added value, relevance and higher youth engagement



Background and Methodology

Background

It is estimated that 35% of women worldwide experience some form of sexual violence. In Africa that percentage increases to 45%¹. High rates of violence have devastating public health consequences, including increased HIV incidence, child/teen pregnancy, increased school dropout, and widespread emotional and psychological morbidity. Sexual violence is rooted in gender-based discrimination, harmful social norms, and gender stereotypes. As the main perpetrators of sexual violence, “it is increasingly understood that men’s use of violence is generally a learned behavior, rooted in the ways that boys and men are socialized.”² According to USAID’s Gender-Based Violence Working Group, “programs cannot be limited to women only; men and boys must be actively involved in order to end gender violence.”

Since launching No Means No activity for girls in Zimbabwe in early 2021, No Means No Worldwide (NMNW) implementing partners have been requesting activities aimed at boys and young men. To respond to this local demand, in February 2022 NMNW launched collaboration with Grassroot Soccer (GRS), an adolescent health organization that uses the power of soccer to educate, inspire, and mobilize young people to live healthier lives and be agents for change in their communities. GRS brings more than 20 years of localized experience working in Zimbabwe, and together we co-designed the “SKILLZ No Means No” curriculum and training methodology for boys and young men in Zimbabwe.

NMNW and GRS worked collaboratively to adapt NMNW’s standard No Means No Boys & Young Men (COVID-Safe) curriculum from a 10-hour curriculum to a 12-hour curriculum to include additional modules around substance abuse, standing up to peer pressure and HIV/STI prevention, which are topics known to be relevant for preventing sexual violence in Zimbabwe. Some examples of this include an activity called “pressure limbo” to teach boys practical strategies to avoid falling to peer pressure, and an activity called “risk field” to teach practices around safe sex by understanding how HIV and STIs are spread and how individual actions can impact the whole community. The curriculum also includes soccer-based activities to make learning more fun and engaging for boys to increase understanding of important concepts. An example of this is an activity called the “cycle of force” that was adapted to help boys learn the continuing impacts of violence by playing a game where a foul leads to more penalties eventually resulting in a red card.

¹ WHO, LSHTM, SAMRC, Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of IPV and non-IPV, 2013.

² Ricardo, C, Eads, M, and Barker, G. Engaging Boys and Young Men in the Prevention of Sexual Violence: A Systematic and Global Review of Evaluated Interventions. Sexual Violence Research Initiative, Pretoria; 2012

Bantwana Zimbabwe was chosen to train a cohort of SKILLZ No Means No instructors to implement this new curriculum. NMNW, GRS and Bantwana Zimbabwe facilitated a live 2-week instructor training in August 2022 in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe and certified 32 male instructors to teach SKILLZ No Means No. Once this training was complete, Bantwana Zimbabwe began to implement the program with boys aged 9-17 in Matabeleland North in two rural districts, Tsholotsho and Nkayi.

Objectives

This evaluation was designed to measure results against four main objectives:

1. Assess the feasibility of SKILLZ No Means No curriculum for instructors and youth
2. Assess the effectiveness of SKILLZ No Means No curriculum and boys' self-efficacy around communication and seeking support
3. Assess the relevance of SKILLZ No Means No curriculum to youth
4. Compare SKILLZ No Means No to NMNW's standard No Means No Boys & Young Men (COVID-Safe) curriculum in Zimbabwe

Additional details on program objectives, outputs, and methods can be found in Table 1 below.

Methodology

To determine the results of each objective, participant attendance registers, pre-post questionnaires, a quarterly reporting form, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and key informant interviews were designed. Data from all tools aside from the pre-post questionnaires were used to analyze the objectives.

Objective	Objective Questions	Outputs	Methods
1. Assess the feasibility of SKILLZ No Means No curriculum for IPs and instructors	Do project stakeholders (Instructors and Implementing Partners) find the program easy to teach and implement?	Qualitative data on if instructors are comfortable teaching the curriculum (delivery and content) and challenges IPs face around implementation.	FGD with SKILLZ No Means No instructors Key Informant Interview with SKILLZ No Means No implementing staff
2. Assess the effectiveness of SKILLZ No Means No curriculum and boys' self-efficacy around communication	Are boys receiving the SKILLZ No Means No program increasing their knowledge and attitudes on sexual violence prevention?	Graduation rates Percent change in knowledge and attitudes Qualitative data on attitudes and knowledge retention	SKILLZ No Means No Attendance Register SKILLZ No Means No Pre/Post Questionnaire FGDs with SKILLZ No Means No youth



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and seeking support	Are boys receiving the SKILLZ No Means No program increasing their self-efficacy around communication and seeking support?	Qualitative data on boys' self-efficacy around communicating using gender-sensitive language and ability to seek and utilize support services	participants
3. Assess the relevance of SKILLZ No Means No curriculum to youth	Is the SKILLZ No Means No program fun and engaging for boys?	Qualitative data on how relevant SKILLZ No Means No is to context (youth, instructors, and IP) Qualitative data on how fun/engaging it is to youth	FGDs with SKILLZ No Means No youth participants FGD with SKILLZ No Means No instructors Key Informant Interview with SKILLZ No Means No implementing staff
4. Compare SKILLZ No Means No to NMNW's standard No Means No Boys & Young Men (COVID-Safe) Programming in Zimbabwe	How does SKILLZ No Means No compare to NMNW's standard No Means No Boys & Young Men (COVID-Safe) programming in Zimbabwe?	Comparative analysis of graduation rates with IP implementing NMNW's standard No Means No Boys & Young Men (COVID-Safe) curriculum Comparative analysis of percent change in knowledge and attitudes (pre/post) with IP implementing NMNW's standard No Means No Boys & Young Men (COVID-Safe) curriculum Comparative qualitative analysis of experiences implementing SKILLZ No Means No versus NMNW's standard No Means No Boys & Young Men (COVID-Safe) curriculum	SKILLZ No Means No Attendance Register NMNW's standard No Means No Boys & Young Men (COVID-Safe) curriculum Attendance Register SKILLZ No Means No Pre/Post Questionnaire NMNW's standard No Means No Boys & Young Men (COVID-Safe) Pre/Post Questionnaire Key Informant Interview with staff implementing SKILLZ No Means No Key Informant Interview with staff implementing NMNW's standard No Means No Boys & Young Men (COVID-Safe)

Table 1: Mapping of evaluation objective questions to program outputs and methods.

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Bantwana Zimbabwe aimed to administer the pre-post questionnaire to 50% of the youth receiving the program, with an expected sample of 455 pre and post-tests, but were only able to attain approximately 11%, 107 pre-tests and 102 post-tests, (Table 2). This was primarily due to challenges around participants refusing to take the questionnaire in large numbers and low literacy rates in the community resulting in questionnaires with inconclusive results. Due to these reasons, we do not have much confidence in the reliability of the pre-post questionnaire results to measure participant learning and have decided to exclude them from our analysis. The results presented in this paper are, therefore, primarily observed in qualitative data and there is limited quantitative data to enhance the findings.

District	# participants	# pre	# post
Nkayi	30	24	22
Tsholotsho	879	83	80
Total	909	107	102

Table 2: Boys reached and pre-post questionnaires administered by District for Bantwana Zimbabwe from October to December 2022

Bantwana Zimbabwe, along with GRS, led 4 FGDs: 3 with youth participants and 1 with SKILLZ No Means No instructors. These discussions took place with SKILLZ No Means No instructors and youth aged 9-17 (2 groups with boys aged 9-14 and one group with boys aged 14-17) from Tsholotsho and Nkayi districts and included 10-12 participants per FGD (Table 3). An additional key informant interview with five Bantwana Zimbabwe staff members was conducted virtually to get further insight into the experiences of implementation and how the program was received in the community. To compare the SKILLZ No Means No curriculum to NMNW's standard No Means No Boys & Young Men (COVID-Safe) curriculum and determine the added value, NMNW also received attendance data from boys receiving NMNW's standard No Means No Boys & Young Men (COVID-Safe) curriculum and conducted a virtual key informant interview with four staff members from another Implementing Partner working in Zimbabwe in rural and peri-urban districts, Family AIDS Caring Trust (FACT) Zimbabwe.

District	# participating
FGD with youth (Nkayi)	12
FGD with Youth (Tsholotsho)	10
FGD with Youth (Tsholotsho)	11
FGD with Instructors	12
Total	45

Table 3: Focus Group Discussions by District for Bantwana Zimbabwe from October to December 2022

Focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed, then reviewed by GRS and NMNW team members. A codebook was drafted based on the focus group discussion guide and evaluation objectives and revised accordingly through the analysis process. A collaborative approach was used, utilizing Google Jamboard to categorize key transcript excerpts. Once all transcripts were analyzed, each category was synthesized to identify key themes, and report sections were drafted.

Findings

Objective 1: Feasibility of SKILLZ No Means No curriculum for instructors and youth

Overall, reactions around feasibility of implementation of the program were positive. Topics and activities that instructors found useful during implementation include giving praise to participants who did well, module one, and the role play under module five (sources of strength) which helped participants learn how to protect themselves. Instructors highlighted important skills they developed from teaching the SKILLZ No Means No program including being able to communicate more effectively with youth, being able to step in as a guardian figure for youth when needed, and the importance of community and how this impacts issues highlighted in the program. Instructors overall had enough time to teach the material when able to negotiate enough time from schools and did not feel uncomfortable teaching any of the topics.

Instructors faced some logistical challenges during implementation, though these challenges are seen across all programs and are not unique to the SKILLZ No Means No program, including challenges negotiating sufficient time given by schools, heavy rains and water shortages, and school feeding schemes that caused distractions among youth. “Due to the rural setting, Instructors traveled long distances to reach hard-to-reach districts, often had to cycle to schools, and were left fatigued during implementation”, described one staff member involved in implementing SKILLZ No Means No. Another challenge that was mentioned was difficulty prioritizing the SKILLZ No Means No program in school districts with concurrent programming.

Staff implementing SKILLZ No Means No brought up challenges keeping boys’ attention in discussing serious topics immediately after a soccer activity. However, there was an overall positive outcome in youth engagement with the soccer-based format, and a simple restructuring of activities would solve this issue. It was also mentioned by an instructor that the “*culture of learning is quite low in [the] community*”, which also likely contributed to the challenges around maintaining the attention of boys.

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Instructors mentioned that the curriculum could be further adapted to a rural context as certain activities, such as the 5Ds of bystander intervention (direct, distract, delegate, document, delay), are not always relevant or feasible. An example of this is described below:

“It will be hard for these participants to document [instances of violence] because they do not have phones and the distances are also long for them to report violence, by the time they get to the police station that person might be already dead. So, we have to work on ways on how to put it for a rural community where phones are not that many and distances are long for reporting” SKILLZ No Means No Instructor

Instructors also mentioned that having the curriculum in the local language, smaller groups sizes of participants, and being mindful of content around sexual and gender-based violence that may be too heavy for younger participants, would improve the feasibility of content delivery. To achieve a greater impact in the community, instructors suggested community dialogues and further engagement with community leaders, parents, and family members.

Objective 2 & 3: Effectiveness and Relevance of SKILLZ No Means No curriculum and boys’ self-efficacy around communication and seeking support

During the first quarter of implementation, Bantwana Zimbabwe enrolled and graduated a total of 909 boys. The 100 percent graduation rate of participants speaks well to youth retention despite some of the logistical challenges faced during implementation mentioned in the previous section.

Learning and Application of Skills

The youth focus group discussions revealed that boys had learned important skills from the curriculum, including bystander intervention, gender equality and consent, how to avoid resorting to violence, and managing emotions effectively. Topics that participants found useful and relevant to their lives include the cycle of force, rape, gender equality, violence against women, and exceeding societal norms. Some examples mentioned include using assertive language with peers who are fighting, being able to say no to drugs when offered by an older peer, being able to manage anger better when bullied, being able to stop fights by using a distraction on the aggressor and confiding in instructors when facing bullying. One participant in Nkayi district mentioned that *“being assertive [is a useful skill]. Having that ability to know that ‘No’ means ‘No’, if someone does something to you, you have the right to say ‘No’ if you do not want”*.



Youth even reported a change in their perspectives and behaviors after the course of the intervention around violence, peer pressure, and gender equality as seen in the following examples:

“My brother invited me to smoke dagga with him but I was assertive. I managed to say ‘No’ and I also told him about the effects of smoking.” Youth Participant, Nkayi

“I was a violent person towards my sibling. Whenever they said something I would shout at them and threaten to beat them but now I am calm and more understanding to them” Youth Participant, Tsholotsho

“I used to disrespect girls but now I treat them equally and it is my responsibility to protect them. Like even if we are walking in a place which has privacy I am not supposed to touch her” Youth Participant, Tsholotsho

Ability to Intervene in an Assault

During the curriculum, boys learnt practical skills on how to intervene if they are witnessing an assault. They learnt how to assess safety, utilize distractions, and seek support from instructors or other trusted adults. One instructor noted how they have seen a change in boys’ perceived responsibility to intervene or report an incident of assault:

“The boys are now coming to tell us if anyone amongst them violates a girl like pulling up her uniform and touching her private parts on their way home after school. They make sure they tell us on the next session. If they can get people at home who can buttress more on that it will definitely stick in. The Grade 7s asked for my number after our sessions to show that they want to report and always keep in touch. I think it’s something that they will grow up with.” SKILLZ No Means No Instructor

Boys have also used these skills to prevent other forms of violence in their community. For example, one boy in Tsholotsho used a distraction to prevent two boys from fighting, *“I saw two boys fighting. I pretended to be running away from a dog and I distracted them”*.

Though many of the skills taught are feasible for boys to use, participants did mention that intervening is a challenge when dealing with older and bigger individuals. In these cases, boys learnt skills such as *“document[ing] the situation first and report[ing] to someone else, maybe my school teacher, or instructor, that is if I cannot resolve the matter on my own”*, according to one participant in Nkayi.

Engaging Content

Activities and aspects of the curriculum that participants enjoyed the most were gender box, playing soccer, pressure limbo, and learning while having fun.

“The activity of Gender Box. I really enjoyed it because we played football but some were inside the box with the cones and they were not allowed to move out of that area. We changed and it was always fun to be the one playing but it was not fun being inside the box. I enjoyed the fact that we were learning about gender equality” Youth Participant, Nkayi

The engaging nature of the soccer-based activities was an added benefit in learning as these types of activities were shown to improve the understanding of certain concepts more than traditional learning methods, with one youth participant from Nkayi sharing that *“playing football and dribbling past four cones was tricky. It made us understand that at times you can get HIV individually and end up affecting the whole community”*.

Self-Efficacy Around Communication and Seeking Support

After taking part in the program, boys reported improved self-efficacy around communicating with their peers and seeking support. Boys found it useful to lean on trusted elders, such as instructors and their peers for support; one youth participant from Tsholotsho noted that instructors have *“[shown] that they are trustworthy and they can keep our confidential information”*. Instructors mentioned developing important skills to relate to boys and earn their trust throughout the course of the curriculum. One youth participant in Tsholotsho shared that *“[The program is] the best. It taught me to trust my friends and share information with them”*, indicating that youth are able to lean on their friends and communicate more openly with them. As described above, Instructors have seen increased levels of self-efficacy in boys sharing that boys are coming to them without hesitation to report incidents of their peers sexually harassing girls in school, with some youth even asking for Instructors’ contact information to keep in touch with them to report and seek support for sexual violence. Instructors reported that boys felt comfortable disclosing experiences of bullying, child abuse, including physical violence and emotional neglect, and substance abuse in the home; however, boys did not disclose any experiences of sexual violence throughout the pilot implementation period.

Relevance of Curriculum Content for Youth and Community Acceptance

Participants also considered the cultural context and community norms around the topics discussed in the curriculum, revealing that concepts around gender equality are not well respected. They mentioned that gender-based violence, which includes sexual violence, is highly prevalent in the community as violence in general is normalized. Rigid gender roles are often enforced and any pushback on these roles are not well received. This indicates a need for the curriculum since these issues are highly common in the context.

“You find people actually supporting the fight. Saying beat him, beat him. Violence is something that is normal here.” Youth Participant, Tsholotsho

“There will be discrimination in the community. They will discriminate [against] you saying that you are not worth being a boy because you are talking about gender roles and expectations. Like if you’re a boy and you are washing dishes or you want to be a nurse. They will look down upon you.” Youth Participant, Tsholotsho

However, there are barriers faced when challenging community norms and these challenges are heightened because younger individuals feel they are not always listened to and have limited influence on their elders in the community. Another challenge mentioned by the boys is that they hesitate to speak up about their experiences with violence because they perceive that their confidentiality is not well respected by community elders. The instructors thought integrating community engagement and community dialogues where possible would likely help towards addressing this gap.

Additional Skills Required and Areas for Improvement

Areas of further support that were mentioned by youth include more content on conflict resolution, walking away from a conflict situation, gender-based violence, being assertive, using body language in peer pressure situations, the cycle of force, and gender equality. Though boys typically mentioned that they felt prepared to intervene, one boy from Tsholotsho expressed some concerns over intervening when witnessing gender-based violence at their neighbor’s house, stating *“I need to learn more about gender-based violence and how to stop [it]. Like if I hear my neighbor beating up his wife, what exactly can I do”*, indicating additional guidance needed in this area.

Further contextualization was mentioned by instructors and staff members to include adaptations of common skills to a rural context (mentioned above) and to accommodate younger age groups. It was also suggested by staff members implementing SKILLZ No Means No to expand the age group to target 18 to 24-year-old boys who have the most need for the curriculum since they are often out of school, struggling with employment, inclined to interact with younger girls in school and engage in violence and substance abuse.

Objective 4: Added value of SKILLZ No Means No to NMNW’s standard No Means No Boys & Young Men (COVID-Safe) Programming in Zimbabwe

When comparing the experiences of implementation from Bantwana Zimbabwe (SKILLZ No Means No curriculum) to those of FACT Zimbabwe (NMNW’s standard No Means No Boys &

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Young Men (COVID-Safe) curriculum), partner staff reported via key informant interviews that the adapted curriculum was more engaging, relevant, and effective. Both partners shared that boys preferred sporting activities and had increased attention when these types of activities are incorporated. FACT Zimbabwe staff even mentioned that their instructors would use their own resources to procure soccer balls to mobilize and engage youth as there is a vibrant culture around sports in the community. The only challenges mentioned with this delivery format were around youth getting overly excited and not being able to pay attention to serious topics immediately after a soccer activity, though this can be addressed by re-structuring the classes to keep the soccer activities at the end.

Implementing Partner	# participants	# graduates	graduation rate (%)
Bantwana Zimbabwe	909	909	100%
FACT Zimbabwe	1897	1562	82%

Table 3: Participant graduation rate from Bantwana Zimbabwe and FACT Zimbabwe.

When looking at graduation rates for each program, Bantwana Zimbabwe reported a 100% graduation rate, while FACT Zimbabwe reported an 82% graduation rate (Table 3), which could indicate higher youth engagement levels for the SKILLZ No Means No curriculum as one of the reasons; though FACT Zimbabwe did implement some interventions outside of school which can cause some challenges around retention.

Regarding substance abuse, staff from both partners mentioned significant challenges in the community around substance abuse among boys that is often fueled by peer pressure and social media, and exacerbated by high school dropout rates and economic challenges in the family that boys feel responsible for. Boys are also experimenting and imitating what they see in the media without understanding the repercussions of their actions. Boys who participated in the SKILLZ No Means No curriculum shared anecdotal examples of increased understanding of gender roles and how their actions can impact their lives and the lives of those in their community through soccer activities versus more traditional methods of learning, as mentioned in examples above. The added content on HIV/STIs also proved to be very useful for boys as it was mentioned that boys are at times vulnerable to sexual abuse from older women and this can increase their risk of sexually transmitted diseases. Staff mentioned that it is important to emphasize safe sex in addition to abstinence as young boys are prone to experimenting sexually without understanding the risks they are taking.



Discussion & Recommendations

The program was overall feasible and easy for instructors to implement. Bantwana Zimbabwe reported a 100 percent participant retention rate, and it is recommended to learn more about the reasons behind this to inform strategies and best practices to improve other programming at NMNW. The main challenges instructors faced were around contextualization of the curriculum in rural communities and some topics being too heavy for younger learners, sometimes aged 9 or 10 years old. These challenges can be addressed by further contextualization of the curriculum to fit the needs of the community. Staff members also mentioned challenges around holding boys' attention when discussing heavier topics immediately after a soccer activity, which can be addressed by restructuring the order of activities.

The SKILLZ No Means No program has shown to be effective in teaching boys valuable skills around bystander intervention, gender equality and consent, and how to avoid resorting to violence and managing emotions effectively. Boys even shared many examples of how they intervened to stop violence, stood up to peer pressure, increased open communication with peers and held them accountable, and confided in instructors for support. Youth showed increased levels of understanding of topics, such as the impacts of gender roles and the consequences of individual actions on the community through soccer-based activities, versus more traditional methods of learning. One participant did mention a need for additional support on intervening when witnessing gender-based violence, so reinforcement of these skills is recommended. Though the qualitative data provided important insight into the knowledge and application of skills that youth have learned, it would be beneficial to assess effectiveness with stronger quantitative data to get a fuller picture of participant learning through the course of the curriculum. It is recommended to investigate and brainstorm solutions to the challenges in implementing the pre-post questionnaire to further evaluate the effectiveness of the SKILLZ No Means No program.

There was an overall positive trend in boys' self-efficacy around communication and seeking support. Boys reported trusting and confiding in instructors when witnessing violence in their community. Boys also disclosed experiences of abuse to instructors including alcohol abuse in the home, emotional neglect, bullying and physical abuse; however, there were no cases of sexual violence reported. We do not know the exact reasons for this, but it is recommended that instructors receive additional sensitization and support to ensure that they are creating a safe space for boys to disclose experiences of sexual violence.

Youth, instructors, and staff all reported that the program was highly relevant to boys' lives and preventing sexual violence in Zimbabwe as there is a culture of violence, risk of contracting HIV and other STIs, and peer pressure around substance abuse. In the community at large, there are high rates of gender-based violence and rigid gender norms that are often enforced by elders in

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the community. Boys also face economic pressures that contribute to the risk of violence, substance abuse, and HIV/STIs. These pressures only intensify after boys graduate from school, so it was recommended by staff to expand the target age group to young men aged 18-24 as they are more vulnerable to substance abuse and facing and perpetuating violence due to school dropout rates, unemployment, and economic stress.

When compared to NMNW's standard No Means No Boys & Young Men (COVID-Safe) curriculum, the additional content and soccer-based delivery format was observed to be more effective, engaging, and relevant to boys in Zimbabwe by implementing partner staff. The participant retention rate for the SKILLZ No Means No program was 18% higher than the retention rate for the standard boys program, possibly pointing to positive engagement and interest in the program. Another possible explanation for the higher graduation rate is that SKILLZ No Means No was implemented during the school day, as opposed to an after-school program. Staff members from both implementing partners mentioned high rates of substance abuse and peer pressure among boys in Zimbabwe and risk of HIV/STIs due to boys partaking in sexual experimentation and in some cases being the victim of abuse by older women in their communities, indicating increased relevance of the SKILLZ No Means No content in preventing sexual violence in Zimbabwe. Boys also resonated with the soccer-based format, with staff from FACT Zimbabwe mentioning that instructors used their own resources to supply soccer balls to get boys excited about the curriculum. The initial findings from the qualitative results indicate increased relevance of additional topics, and higher levels of engagement in the SKILLZ No Means No curriculum, and it is recommended to further support this with quantitative results to prove the added value of the SKILLZ No Means No curriculum.

Recommendations

- Continue to implement the SKILLZ No Means No curriculum and to monitor the results
- Investigate the factors and challenges around the small pre-post sample and brainstorm solutions to capture short-term outcomes of the program
- Strengthen modules on sexual and gender-based violence and skills to intervene in an assault as some participants requested additional support in these areas
- Further adapt and contextualize the curriculum to accommodate skills relevant to a rural setting and translate the curriculum into the local language
- Restructure the curriculum so that serious or heavy topics are not immediately following engaging soccer-based activities
- Provide instructors with additional support and sensitization on creating a safe space for boys to disclose experiences of sexual violence
- Integrate age-specific adaptations for younger participants when discussing heavy topics such as rape and violence
- Expand the target reach to boys aged 18-24, as they are in need of the curriculum and often engage with younger girls in the community



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- Brainstorm ways to broaden the impact of the program by engaging with community leaders, family and key stakeholders to increase buy in
- Identify factors that contributed to Bantwana Zimbabwe's 100% graduation rate so that learnings can be applied to other NMNW programs
- Consider adding more engaging, sports-based content into the standard No Means No Boys & Young Men curriculum
- Consider rolling out the SKILLZ No Means No program in Zimbabwe due to the added value, relevance and higher youth engagement