

# “But what about the boys?”

## Community perceptions of girl-centered HIV programming in Nairobi informal settlements: Experiences from DREAMS implementation

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### 1.BACKGROUND

- Disproportionate risk of HIV infection among adolescent girls & young women (AGYW; 15-24yrs), compared to male peers, has led to a focus on targeted interventions.
- In Kenya, the DREAMS Partnership targets AGYW with evidence-based HIV prevention interventions and, to a lesser extent, adolescent boys and young men (ABYM).
- We describe community perceptions of the focus on AGYW and involvement of ABYM in DREAMS in Korogocho and Viwandani, two slum settlements in Nairobi.

### 2.STUDY SETTING



Aerial view of a section of Korogocho slums - Photo courtesy of APHRC

### 3.METHODS

- We conducted 20 in-depth interviews (IDIs) with ABYM who had knowledge of or ever participated in DREAMS programs; 2 IDIs with DREAMS implementing partners; 2 focus group discussions (FGDs) with parents/guardians of AGYW; and 4 FGDs with DREAMS mentors of AGYW.
- An inductive approach guided thematic analysis of the transcripts.

### 4.DREAMS ‘Core Package’ of Interventions

- 1 Empower Girls and Young Women**  
Interventions for this population to empower girls and to reduce their risk for HIV and violence.  For AGYW
- 2 Reduce Risk of Sex Partners**  
This activity aims to characterize "typical" sexual partners of adolescent girls and young women in order to target highly effective HIV interventions.  For males
- 3 Strengthen Families**  
Interventions for this population aim to strengthen the family economically, as well as in their ability to parent positively.  For AGYW & families
- 4 Mobilize Communities for Change**  
These interventions aim to educate girls, young women, and young men, as well as mobilize communities.  For the community

Source: <https://www.pepfar.gov/documents/organization/269309.pdf>

### 5.RESULTS

#### Perceived benefits to ABYM

##### ABYM

- Participation in life skills strengthening interventions for adolescents (10-19 years)
- Participation in community-level social norms and gender-based violence prevention activities
- DREAMS Implementers and Parents**
- ABYM and AGYW can equally access text books provided in schools as part of education subsidies for AGYW
- Improved access to HIV testing services (HTS) and condom provision

#### Perceived disadvantages to ABYM

##### ABYM

- Exclusion from other interventions on social protection
- DREAMS Implementers and Parents**
- ABYM ineligible for social protection interventions like cash transfers and education subsidies
- DREAM Mentors**
- ABYM not getting sufficient information on HIV prevention

#### Perceived solutions

##### ABYM

- Access to interventions targeting social protection
- DREAMS Mentors**
- Greater involvement of ABYM to promote their empowerment like AGYW
- DREAMS Implementers and Parents**
- Equal access to interventions available to AGYW to balance support so that ABYM don't feel neglected. They are equally vulnerable in social and economic contexts.

*“We target the boys with community interventions to get their views on issues of violence against women and HIV, we offer HTS and condom distribution, and try as much as possible to integrate boys together with the DREAMS girls in school based interventions.”*  
(IDI-Implementing Partner)

*“It is okay to help the girls but what about the boys? They don't have enough information about condom use and HIV/AIDS, they take it lightly, it would help if they are also educated”*  
(Mentors- Korogocho)

*“I suggest that they extend the same help they have offered the girls to the boys because boys are also vulnerable and they have opted to do drugs, robbery and alcohol, my plea is that the boys be included in the system so as to balance the support...”*  
(FDD:Parents-Viwandani)

### 6.CONCLUSION

HIV prevention is increasingly 'targeted', e.g., with a girl-centered focus. However, greater inclusivity of adolescent boys and young men is encouraged by community members and implementers of girl-centered programs in urban Nairobi slums in order to address early male vulnerability and enhance outcomes for AGYW.



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