COMMUNITY BASED PREVENTION INITIATIVES: SWAGAA GIRL’S EMPOWERMENT CLUBS

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ZAMBIA
Swaziland has been classified as a lower middle income country. According to the VAC 2007, 69% of the population is living in poverty—majority are women.

Acute patriarchy and gender inequality

By 2007, 26% of people aged 15-49 yrs were living with HIV.

ANC data (2008) showing 42% of pregnant women are HIV positive from 39.2%
NSF on HIV and AIDS identifies Early sexual debut and Intergenerational sex as major drivers.

- Higher prevalence rate among females (31.1%) compared to males (19.7%)
- Peak among 15-24 year old bracket
- Early marriages
- Under-reporting by children
Every day media reports cases of GBV & CSA
For the first time survey provided population based estimates (UNICEF 2008)
High prevalence
Ages 13 – 24 years
Approx 1 in 3 females experienced some form of sexual violence as a child
Only in less than 1 in 7 incidents did females seek help
 Majority were not even aware that they had been abused
Largest proportion of SGBV cases- girl child
adapted from The Girl Child Network (GCN) in Zimbabwe
Founded by Betty Makoni, a Zimbabwean teacher – a survivor of abuse
Partnerships were formed with GCN through Canadian Crossroads International (CCI)
Adaptation of manuals for the program to address key issues affecting Swazi girls
GEC PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- To provide a safe space for girls to openly engage and learn about a variety of issues affecting young girls—allowing children to express their thoughts and feelings freely.

- To create an enabling environment for confidence building, empowerment for SGBV and HIV prevention and response among girls.

- Promote emotional wellness, belonging, and self-esteem.

- To create linkages for provision of comprehensive support to child survivors of SGBV.
The GEC program was piloted in 6 schools, 3 Primary schools and 3 High schools, in February 2008.

To date, 8 clubs have been successfully established and launched.

School selection initially based on proximity to SWAGAA counseling sites and target communities

Now mostly on demand- request by head teachers
GIRLS IN SCHOOL (AGED 7-14 AND 14-21)

4 PRIMARY SCHOOLS
4 HIGH SCHOOLS
SCHOOLS IN RURAL, URBAN AND PERI-URBAN AREAS

EACH CLUB COMPRISSES 40 MEMBERS.

TEACHERS AS CLUB COORDINATORS/SUPPORTERS
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GEC

- Introductory meeting with school administration
- Presentation to school children during assembly
- Voluntary membership into club
- (limited involvement of parents)
- Election of a focal teacher, Club President and committee
- Training of club Presidents and teachers using GEC training manuals
Establishment of the GEC

- Initial baseline assessment conducted using standard questionnaire: SRH, SGBV, CSA, HIV, self awareness etc among girls
  - Knowledge level assessment is conducted
  - Assessment of values, attitudes and behavioural patterns
  - Measurement against behavioural and knowledge indicators
Trained club coordinators use club manuals for all meetings
IEC materials produced and disseminated
Records of meetings and participant registers kept
All girls participate in club activities
To create a sense of unity and belonging, all girls recite a GEC pledge at the start of every meeting.

Use of journals by all girls as an outlet.

SWAGAA Club coordinator and assistant assess journals periodically to identify possible cases of SGBV - immediate case management by SWAGAA (10 in 2010).
KEY COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAMME

- Use of a variety of age appropriate approaches used, such as: poetry, life story book, music and dance, drama
- Incorporation of CSA, SGBV, children’s rights, sexual reproductive health, including HIV prevention,
- Peer to Peer engagement
- Participation of girls in SWAGAA and national events
- Increased sense of social responsibility amongst girls
MENTORSHIP AND MONITORING

- SWAGAA Club Coordinator conducts weekly visits to each club
- Clubs meet on a weekly basis (minimum) depending on school schedule
- Refresher trainings for club presidents and coordinators conducted
Following a 9 month piloting period- clubs evaluated for effectiveness

- Independent clubs are launched through an event organised jointly by SWAGAA and the girls

A mid term evaluation of the programme has been conducted by an independent officer from CCI:

- Assessment of impact of the piloted programme and need for scale up
- Assessment of change in behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, and confidence levels
- Assessment of ability for each to continue to operate independently of SWAGAA staff
IMPACT/OUTCOME OF THE GEC PROGRAMME

- Increased understanding and challenging of gender stereotypes
- Increased confidence and self awareness
- Improved communication and public speaking skills
- Increased consciousness about human rights and legal literacy
- Improved academic performance
- Reduction in teacher-student relationships
Referral of cases to SWAGAA comprehensive support
Reported abstinence from sexual activity among most girls
Promotes information sharing and the correction of misconceptions around gender, HIV, SRH, Human trafficking etc
Broadened view on career aspirations
Support system provided for OVC in schools
  Socialization
  Access to information
The program was awarded for ‘Best Practice’ at The Gender Summit Awards held in South Africa in 2010.

The girls have received national recognition through showcasing their work in public forums and national events.

The girls have begun to raise funds to assist community members in need e.g. the elderly
CHALLENGES

- High demand - Limited resources have led to limited coverage
- High staff attrition within SWAGAA
- Transfer of club coordinators to other schools affects progress of the clubs
- Enrolment in clubs is difficult to manage – high demand
- Poor linkages to community support structures
- Limited engagement with the girls on completion of school
Lack of comprehensive legislation on SGBV and CSA

Reporting of SGBV cases require a parent or guardian

Limited time for engagement with girls during school hours
LESSONS LEARNT

- Importance of support structure at home and community
- Importance of Assessment of what components of the programme are working
- Engagement of boys critical for SGBV and HIV Prevention complementing GECs
- Min Ed buy in critical- engagement for incorporation into curriculum
- Involvement of care givers in GEC to support girls beyond the club
NEXT STEPS

- Facilitate more club exchange visits for experience sharing and learning
- To incorporate basic skills on entrepreneurship – establishment of income generating projects
- To compile the girls ‘Most Significant Change Stories as an evaluation mechanism for the programme
- Establish Boys Re-Socialization clubs
Levels of Psychosocial support to child survivors and OVC
To establish a linkage with SWAGAA broader Lihlombe Lekukhalela (LL)- Child Protection Committee Programme at community level for PSS provision to girls and expanded prevention initiatives

Strengthen LL linkage to OVC in school

Expand programme on strengthening community systems for SGBV prevention and response – linking community social actors to service providers

Collaborate with Population Council for comparative analysis of the programme> GEC+ Initiative
Areas for Technical Assistance

- Technical support for documentation of what has worked and approach for expansion of programme
- Development of manuals for comprehensive approach - family, community
- TA for development of resource mobilization strategy
- Strengthening of M&E and research component
- Human resource for expansion of programme