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3 April 2009 / G. Setswe.

ROLE OF PARENTS IN SUPPORTING YOUTH WHO PARTICIPATE IN ABSTINENCE AND BE FAITHFUL (AB) INTERVENTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Goal

The goal of this study was to determine the attitudes and roles of parents and religious leaders in supporting youth who participate in abstinence and faithfulness interventions in South Africa

Methods

Nine (9) focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with adults and/or religious leaders who are involved in the ABY project in 5 cities - Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg, Mthatha and Port Elizabeth - where the ABY interventions are implemented in South Africa.

Table 1: Cities, sites and target groups in which ABY FGDs were conducted

City	Sites	Target group
Cape Town	Nkazimlo Primary School	Parents at schools
	Site C Clinic	25 years and general population
Durban	Wiggins Secondary School	Parents at schools
	Cato Manor	25 years and general population
Johannesburg	AME Church, Soweto	FBO adults
	Zola Clinic	25 years and general population
Mthatha	Hope Worldwide, Mthatha	FBO adults
Port Elizabeth	St Raphael and St John's Anglican Churches	FBO adults
	Umkhumbane Community Health Centre	25 years and general population

HSRC RESEARCH OUTPUTS

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- There should be an open debate with parents on the role of the social grant in encouraging young people to have sex and to have children supported from the grant.
- There should also be open debates with parents on what children's rights are protected by the constitution and the laws of the country.
- Using religion as a deterrent to premarital sex by parents sharing their religious faith and encouraging teens to be involved in organized religion, especially with a youth group.
- The ABY project should be advertised a lot more aggressively with positive messages on what parents can do to support their children, in case they choose abstinence and faithfulness as a preventive measure against infection with HIV, STI and unplanned pregnancies.
- Encouraging teens to set goals and plan for the future by discussing how the negative consequences of premarital sex may hinder those plans.
- Setting reasonable rules and restrictions for teen dating by encouraging group dating and early curfews for younger adolescents and discouraging dating prior to age 16.
- Helping children to deal with negative peer pressure and discussing integrity with teen children.

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availability of the social grant, poor parenting skills and failure of parents to be good role models.

Some parents thought the project assisted young people to have self-esteem and personal responsibility. Some young people acquired leadership skills by participating in the project, they educate their peers. One parent said the drop in teenage pregnancy was because youth were taking personal responsibility.

Most parents said that the abstinence and faithfulness workshops were helpful in encouraging parents/adults to teach or support young people on these issues. These workshops have helped them to be bold to talk to their children, they also know how to talk to their children and their knowledge gap has been reduced. Some parents said they no longer felt embarrassed to talk to their children about sex matters and had learned to create a conducive environment for children to talk to them.

Majority of parents said participation in Community Action Teams (CAT's) has helped them to increase their understanding of the value of abstinence and faithfulness in communities. Some parents who are uneducated felt the CATs were helpful in explaining simple terms and have increased their knowledge and understanding of the value of abstinence and faithfulness.

Recommendations

Several strategies are recommended to assist parents and adults to encourage abstinence and faithfulness among teenagers. It is recommended that:

- The ABY programme should be extended to many more parents who are likely to support their children who want to use abstinence and/or faithfulness as an HIV prevention option.
- Parents should be involved in the implementation of the ABY intervention from the stage of conception. They should not just be involved as an after-thought.

Findings and Discussion

Overall, the ABY intervention has been successful in helping parents to understand their role if they wished to support their teen children who considered adopting abstinence and faithfulness as HIV prevention strategies.

When asked whether the ABY project promoted abstinence as primary prevention for HIV, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and pregnancy in young people, parents had mixed views. Those who had positive views attributed them to health education messages. Parents who had negative views attributed them to poor socio-economic status of families, health workers who support condom promotion above abstinence and peer pressure.

Parents had conflicting views on whether abstinence helped young people to change their risky sexual behaviour. Most parents who are linked to FBOs expressed positive views that abstinence was effective in helping young people to change their risky sexual behaviours. However, there were other parents who were forthright in their criticism of the effectiveness of abstinence. Most of these were mainly parents of young people who were interviewed at schools or other community facilities excluding churches.

Most parents had positive views that the ABY project assisted and provided support for young people in identifying solutions towards challenges they face in choosing safer and practical sexual behaviours. However, some parents had advices to improve the performance of the ABY project. They suggested that there should be enough follow-ups after referrals and the project should always involve parents in activities.

When parents were asked if they think it was easy for youth to be faithful to one partner, most parents said it was not easy. The most commonly cited reasons were peer pressure and pressure from partners to have sex, loss of morals, easy