

**THE
HUNGER
PROJECT
MALAWI**

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HIV/AIDS AND GENDER EQUALITY MANUAL

HIV/AIDS & GENDER INEQUALITY WORKSHOP MANUAL IN ENGLISH

GREETINGS

Welcome those who are taking part in the workshop and let them know that at this workshop you will discuss one very important thing that causes life and death in this country – AIDS

Tell them that the time to hide things is over. The rate at which this disease has spread, needs us to have straight talks and to say the truth about the AIDS and what we can do to protect ourselves from this disease.

PART 1: THE TRUTH ABOUT AIDS

Lets us look at 10 questions concerning AIDS.

1. What is AIDS? And what is HIV?

AIDS is a combination of diseases in a person's body which arise because the immunity in the body has been weakend by a virus called HIV. AIDS makes it difficult for the body to fight some diseases such as body pains and diarrhoea.

Anybody can contract HIV. AIDS does not start because of poverty (although it is spreading because of it). AIDS is not a punishment from God. AIDS is dangerous.

HIV is a virus that starts AIDS

2. Can AIDS be cured?

There is no cure for AIDS. Traditional healers and western medicine all do not have the cure for AIDS. Sleeping with a virgin does not cure AIDS. All rumours concerning the cure for AIDS are not true.

3. How does AIDS start?

AIDS is caused by a virus called Human Immune Deficiency Virus(HIV) which stays in the blood and fluids of a person who is infected. You cannot see HIV with the bare eye unless you have hospital equipment.

4. Where did AIDS come from?

Nobody knows where AIDS came from. Sometimes people point fingers at other people or other animals as being the origin of AIDS. These stories are however not true!.

5. How is HIV contracted?

HIV is spread in several ways.

i. HIV is spread by having unprotected sex – this means having sex without using a condom with a man or woman who has HIV. Every 9 in 10 people who have HIV, have contracted it through having unprotected sex.

ii. HIV can spread through the blood of an infected person.

Examples:

Being cut by a knife or a sharp object that cut an HIV infected person.

a. Through customs that cut any part of a body organ and causes blood to come out and then using that same knife for other people. Examples of such practices include **making incisions and circumcision**.

Facilitator: If the facilitator is flexible, they should say in an uncompromising way the dangers of practices such as female initiation ceremonies such as nsondo. Using the same tool on several girls without sterilising it can spread HIV. The damage to a female's body parts leads further to their vulnerability of spreading and contracting HIV when having sex.

b. Being injected by an injection that was used by an HIV infected person. Borrowing needles is one way that people who use harmful drugs contract HIV.

c. Touching blood from a wound of an infected person.

Since some people such as hospital personnel touch patients' wounds, they should wear rubber gloves so that they should not be in contact with blood. One can have a wound in the hand without them knowing it.

d. AIDS can also be spread by receiving blood from an infected person. This is a rare way of contracting HIV because blood that has to be transfused is always tested to see if it is clean before they can give it to a person.

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Facilitator: People who have sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis and herpes are more susceptible to contracting HIV because of indications such as wounds through which the virus can easily pass through.

2. ii. HIV can be transmitted from mother to child when the mother is pregnant, when she is giving birth or during breast feeding if the mother is HIV positive.

If a woman has HIV at the time she is giving birth or when she is breastfeeding a child can or cannot contract the virus. (25% to 40% of children born to HIV positive mothers contract the virus.)

6. HIV does not spread through the following ways:

By drinking in same cup and eating in the same plate with someone who has HIV/AIDS.
By sitting near somebody who has HIV/AIDS or by sleeping in the same place with them.
By using the same toilet and bathroom with someone with HIV/AIDS.
In tears or saliva of someone with HIV/AIDS. As such AIDS cannot spread if someone with the virus coughs or cries near a person does not.
By shaking hands with someone who has HIV/AIDS.
By kissing or hugging someone who is HIV positive.
Through the sweat of someone who has HIV/AIDS. This means that working together with someone or playing sports with someone who has HIV/AIDS is not dangerous.
By being bitten by mosquitos.

7. Is it possible to know whether me or somebody has HIV?

There is no way of knowing whether somebody has HIV just by looking at them. People who have HIV look healthy for some time before they start getting 'sick'. Even if somebody looks or feels healthy, this doesn't mean that they do not have HIV. The only way to know if someone is HIV positive is to have a blood test.

After some time, when someone who has HIV starts getting 'sick' they show the following symptoms:

Loss of weight, Stomach and body aches and frequent coughing.

Remember AIDS disables the body from fighting against diseases that healthy people can normally fight off. Therefore a person with HIV has the common symptoms of a person suffering from that particular ailment. However, HIV positive people are frequently ill and it takes time for them get better.

Many people in Africa are dieing of AIDS more than other diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis (TB) and diarrhoea.

Many people in our country especially young people go to other countries in Africa in search of employment and if they do not protect themselves there, they can contract HIV.

8. HIV/AIDS statistics for us as a country

AIDS kills many people especially those between ages 20 – 45. People of the age group 20 – 45 are at the peak of their lives. This is the time a person assists in bringing income, cultivation of food crops, taking care of children and the elderly and continuing the tradition of their tribe, history, songs and customs. The death of this age group is affecting the economy of every village and the whole country.

Families, villages and the country are affected by any other person who has died because of AIDS.

There is less food production and the income is also low.
Children become orphans and relatives have the responsibility of looking after them.

Old people lose young people whom they were expecting to take care of them in future.

When other people are suffering from AIDS, other healthy people have to take care of them. In that way, healthy people fail to work for an income, to produce much food or to take part in cultural activities as their custom may require.

9. **Can AIDS be prevented?**

Yes! It is possible to prevent AIDS. There are three ways of preventing the contraction of HIV:

1. Abstaining from sex is the only way of completely preventing yourself from contracting HIV..
2. Correctly using of a condom (a rubber one) everytime you have sex is another reliable way of protecting yourself and your partner.
3. Being faithful in marriage

The only way of knowing whether someone has HIV is to have a blood test.

Facilitator: Explain the importance of knowing whether you have HIV or not, where a person can get counselling before and after getting tested and the charges they have to pay. It is important to know whether you have HIV or not so that you can not pass it on to other people and children. People living with HIV can be encouraged to have a long healthy life with healthy food and proper health care.

10. **Are men and women affected in the same way by AIDS?**

In Africa, many women have HIV/AIDS than men. 55% of the population of people with HIV/AIDS are women. Women are the ones who can contract HIV by having sex once without protection unlike men. Because of the biological makeup of women's reproductive organs, women easily contract HIV when they have sex with a man who is HIV positive.

Among the youth, girls contract HIV more frequently than boys of the same age.

This is so because most of the times girls get married or have sex with older men who have already had sex with a lot more other people before; and they can have HIV.

In many countries, for every boy that has HIV, there are more than five girls who have the virus.

Because men have a lot of sexual partners than women, attracting ten men with multiple sexual partners to protect themselves is more reliable than attracting loads of women to protect themselves. Therefore it is important to teach men about the danger of AIDS by giving them easy access to condoms and making sure that they know how to protect themselves.

PART 2: ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Male condom (instructions and demonstrations)

The objectives of our discussion on condoms are as follows:

1. To try the correct way of using condoms
2. To find out the mistakes people do when using a condom.
3. To demonstrate knowledge of condom use.

Tools and preparation

Tools needed for demonstrating condom use:

A rode or banana (or any other thing that looks like a man's penis) One is needed for every two participants.

One condom for every participant.

Eight papers with one instruction on each paper. (see instructions on the next page)

For people who do not know how to read and write, make use of pictures only and read the eight instructions below:

When you start the activities:

1. In the training room hang the instructional poster showing instructions on the care and use of a condom on a well displayed place on the wall.
2. If the participants know how to read and write, distribute the papers where there is one instruction for each paper.

These are eight steps on how to take of and wear a condom.

Facilitator: Emphasise to everyone at the workshop that the steps must be adhered to everytime they want to have sex, and there shouldn't be any contact of sexual organs before the man wears the condom. You should also emphasise that women should help the man wear a condom when they want to have sex.

1. Keep in a cool and dry place. Do not keep in a pocket or under sunlight.
2. Check on the cover for the expiry date for the condom for you to make sure that it hasn't expired. If the expiry date has elapsed, the condom is no longer effective and it will not be helpful. All expired condoms must be destroyed.

Faciliator: Sometimes it is only the manufacturing date that is shown on the cover of the condom. An oilbased unopened condom can be effective for three years. An unopened

condom which is not oilbased can be effective for five years. Even if the time is right, when you open a condom always make sure you check whether the condom is okay, it is not torn and it has enough lubricant. For those who do not know how to read there are ways of preventing this problem apart from asking a trusted vendor selling the condoms. That is to make sure that the condom is well lubricated and also to see whether the condom is coming from a trusted source.

3. Open the cover of the condom and carefully remove the condom – do not open with your teeth or scissors because it can be torn.
4. Put the condom on the penis (erect one) (if the condom has been put on the penis inside (it will not roll) do not turn the condom; rather throw it away and take a new one)
5. Remove the air in the condom by holding the tip of the condom (leave a space of 1-2cm) at the end. If there is air inside, the condom can burst.
6. Roll down the condom to the base of the penis while holding the penis leaving 1-2 cms at the end. Do not smear vaseline, lotion or baby oil or cold cream on a condom because this can reduce the effectiveness of the condom.
7. When you have ejaculated, hold the condom at the base of the penis with the penis still erect.
8. Remove the penis from the vagina, remove the condom, tie up the mouth of the condom so that the semen does not spill out. Throw the condom in a toilet or else bury it in a place where children cannot find it and play with it.

Activity 2: Female condom – explanation and demonstration

Facilitator: If there are female condoms available in the area discuss issues concerning these condoms and bring them so that people see what they look like.

Where there are female condoms, this is another way for assisting women protect themselves and their sexual partner from HIV, getting an unplanned pregnancy and other sexually transmitted infections.

Facilitator: Show the female condom.
What is a female condom?

A female condom is placed inside the vagina before having sex and it protects one from HIV, unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.

The round thing in a female condom is used to make sure that the condom stays in place. It goes behind the vulva bone inside the woman's vagina.

The ring outside the condom is soft and it is left outside the vagina when having sex. This protects the area around the opening of the vagina.

The female condom ensures that the penis and the vagina are not in contact.

The importance of a female condom

The female condom is a way of empowering a woman to protect herself from HIV, an unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

It is stronger and more durable than a male condom
It is not removed the same moment a man ejaculates
A female condom does not have side effects

PART 3: GENDER AND HIV/AIDS

(Or else the relationship between differences between males and females and HIV/AIDS)

A: Biological risk factors of men and women

Even though people know the dangers of AIDS, there are people who still do not protect themselves. Why is this the case?

Facilitator: Why do people have unprotected sex? Make sure that all answers are accepted and understood. However, emphasize on the following answers and if some of them were not mentioned, discuss them.

Maybe people have not heard about AIDS

People do not believe AIDS is real.

People do not know how to protect themselves

People do not have tools such as condoms to protect themselves

People especially females are afraid of refusing to have sex without protection.

Some customs and beliefs (making incisions, and female initiation ceremonies) can spread HIV

People believe that 'it can never happen to me'

Many people especially women do not have the courage to discuss protected sex let alone to use a condom.

Many people especially women can put their lives at risk by having reckless sex because of hunger and poverty (prostitution)

RESULTS

In brief, people have unprotected sex because of one of the following four big reasons. They do this because:-

1. They do not know the consequences
2. They do not have ways of protecting themselves, for example access to condoms.
3. They do not have the courage (freedom) to choose a place, time, way of having sex and also who they can have sex with.
4. They don't care about the consequences of their behaviour.

If people know about how they can protect themselves and if there is access to condoms, the reason why HIV/AIDS is spreading frequently in the whole part of Africa then is that men and women do not discuss sex issues.

When many of us hear the word man or woman we think about or expect something of what they are expected to do, act and so on and so forth.

ACTIVITY 3: Gender roles and biological factors

Objectives

1. To understand the role of biology and the difference between biological factors and gender.
2. To explain gender roles of men and women in our communities.
3. To accept that men and women are expected to do certain activities by culture some of which are detrimental.
4. To understand that how we are viewed by people and what is expected from men and women is what makes people not protect themselves from HIV/AIDS.

Tools

Chart board papers or black board

Markers or chalk

Activity

We will do an activity where I will mention a word and then you will tell me another word that comes to mind.

What is the first word you think of when I mention the word: WOMAN.

Facilitator: Emphasise to the group that this is not an exam but they should just say a word that comes to their mind. Write the words. Write down the words that people have said under the name WOMAN on the board. Some of the words include: motherhood, service to others, drawing water, making an egg, cutting firewood, cooking, taking care of the kids, love, weak, idle, courage, beautiful, taking care of the sick, serving the church, strength, teacher, nurse, breastfeeding.

Now I will ask you to do the same with the word MAN. Please mention any word that you can think of.

Facilitator: Write down the words mentioned under the word MAN on the board.

Examples of these words include:

Leadership, judgement, education, stewardmanship, money, work, strength, manhood, intelligence, penis, chaos, sports, politics, thoughts on family issues, driving a car, leadership in the church, courage.

Now let us look at the words.

Facilitator: Choose some of the words and ask whether the words are a result of a biological factor for example penis, giving birth or else it is just what people expect. If its a cultural factor name the examples given by the participants, and ask whether these words concern men or women.

The definition of male and female reproductive organs.

Some things that were mentioned such as drawing water, etc (mention the examples that were discussed) are just cultural and not within our nature. And then some reproductive organs that we mentioned such as vagina and penis are biological things that show you were born either a male or a female.

Tell them that culture can be changed but something that is natural cannot be changed.

“Biological organs are natural ways of letting someone know they are male or female – such as male and female reproductive organs.”

The definition of “gender”

What made you put some jobs under “man” and some under “female”?

Is there anyone who has ideas of what the word gender means?

Facilitator: Help people to come up with a definition like this:

“Activities of person that are expected of them by culture because they are male or female.”

The difference with natural biological factors is that gender comes in because of culture– and how people want you to behave as a male or female.

As we have seen, every culture has expectations of being male and being female and how they are supposed to behave in certain things. These beliefs and expectations are learnt from culture, leaders, religions and traditions, schools, the media etc.

Because of the roles and culture we are brought up in, males and females can see a difference (such as in age, nationality, belief)

Men and women have agreed that those are gender roles.

The beliefs on how males and females share roles can contribute to the way we protect ourselves from HIV/AIDS.

Some dangerous beliefs and responsibilities which make provisions on how women and men should behave are as follows:

Women do not have the courage to voice out their opinions on having protected sex. Men do not care about the responsibility they have towards the consequences of their promiscuous behaviour. When these two problems are put together, they make the spread of AIDS very prominent in our village.

Now the question is why is it that women do not have the power to talk about sex (for example when they are ready to have sex, who they are going to have sex with, whether they will use a condom or not) Why do they not have power over their own bodies?

Here and also in many other countries, women are taught not to be independent or self-reliant. The father and the husband of the woman most of the times make decisions for the women. Women are taught not to refuse to have sex with their husbands even though they know that they might infect them with a disease. If a woman refuses to sleep with her husband or her boyfriend she is treated cruelly by him. But this is not the way it is supposed to be. Men should respect their partners and they have the responsibility to protect them. Women should also be allowed to talk freely.

Women depend on men economically and socially since they are the heads of the family and men have power over land, money and so on and so forth. This too is not supposed to be like that. Women most of times do not choose the man they want to marry. Someone chooses for them. Women most of the times do not choose the age at which they will marry, the elders are the ones that tell them the the time they can marry and most of the times they are made to marry while they are still young and the men are usually very old.

Because sex is considered as a taboo topic, women fail to find the correct information concerning the matter. Because of poverty, women are forced to engage in prostitution so that they find money, food, and so that may be considered in other ways.

How does the gender role of men put their lives at risk?

We need to understand why men do not care about their promiscuity. Why are men promiscuous?

Men are taught that they have power of leadership. As a result they have no fear of whether there is AIDS or not. This behaviour puts men's lives at risk. Our culture allows men to have more than one girlfriend and allows them to have sex with different women. When they go to town they expect that they can sleep with other women. Men are expected to give advice on sex. Men view women as objects that will satisfy their lust instead of seeing them as people who have their own needs and desires. Our culture also expects men to be more skilled and knowledgeable about sex issues than women. Culture allows men to beat their wives or girlfriends if they do not obey them. All this puts men's lives at risk but also the lives of their partners.

What we need to all realise is that culture was put in place by people and we can change it and the time to change it has arrived. We are the people to change our culture.

Facilitator ask the group whether they ready to change this aspect of culture.

B : Results of gender equality in culture

From the discussion above, we can see that AIDS is an indication of the differences between men and women. We just discussed some of the risky cultural factors between men and women that contribute to the spread of AIDS. This means that when there is gender equality, we will defeat this disease.

When there are no differences between men and women it means that men and women will be considered in the same way and they will have the same opportunities in education, health and food, money, land, farming tools and taking part in the decision making of their everyday lives in the village, the district and their country.

Results of gender equality

When power between men and women is equal, the health of the people in a village is developed, you also have economic development, there are a lot of children in schools, food production is increased and there is good leadership. For example when a woman is very educated:-

She can monitor her reproductive health unlike those less educated
She has healthy children and her children live a long life
Chances of her children continuing their education are very high
Less people contract HIV.

This is because educated women know how to protect themselves, have access to necessary materials and they have the power to discuss protective sex, they have healthy bodies and their opportunities for income generation are increased.

Furthermore, when a woman is able to generate more income, she uses the money for the health and education of their children than men do and the family income and the quality of life is improved.

When a woman has land and enough farming tools, her family has sufficient food and her children are healthy and go to school. The food production in their community also increases.

PART 3: The definition of our new identity

We know that:

AIDS is dangerous, it has no cure, it can be prevented, it spreads by having unprotected sex, people have unprotected sex because women do not have the power to say no to having sex without a condom, but also because men do not care about the responsibility they have in protecting women when sleeping with them, women do not have the power because of gender inequalities and all these arise because of culture.

BUT TODAY IS A NEW DAY:

We are not supposed to be stuck in an archaic definition which defines us as men and women as we did in the past— we have seen today that it is better to deal with something before it gets out of hand.

The definition of being female: In the beginning, we saw that culture views a woman as obedient, quiet, dependent on her husband. Now we have seen that for a woman to protect herself from AIDS we need to see and accept that a woman is a person. She is strong, independent, self-reliant, educated, has rights and is able to give her opinions concerning important things.

The definition of being male: Similarly we have realised that men have a huge responsibility in stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS and they need to accept and view women

as equal partners, with human rights just like them. We men should stop seeing women as 'objects' to satisfy our lust. Do not just order your partner but rather provide an opportunity for them to give their opinions and to discuss with them.

We need to respect our equality with women by not having unprotected sex. In addition we need to be ready to share the household chores with the females in the household.

PART4. COMMITMENT AND ACTION

The time has arrived that we should commit ourselves fully and realise that it is our responsibility to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. Now I want all those who are committing themselves to stand up and all of us should all clap our hands for them

Now we want 5 men and 5 women to stand up and say for themselves in front of all of us here that they are committed to stop the spread of HIV.

Here are examples of expressions of commitment:

1. I vow to do something in stopping the spread of HIV/EDZI
2. I vow to oppose any way of having sex that is going to put my life at risk.
3. I vow to respect and encourage the rights of every woman and to take a woman as an equal independent partner.
4. I vow to change my beliefs and behaviour detrimental to men and women and also to me – those that put our lives at risk and brings us backward so that we cannot develop.

Facilitator lead the people to say the points loudly and in a committed manner.

Activity

Now that we have all committed ourselves, let us now make a plan of what we are going to do the forthcoming three months. Facilitator ask the participants to answer the following questions:

- i. What do we think we should do concerning our commitment?
- ii. How can women in our community protect themselves from the violence they face concerning sex?
- iii. How can men show that they realise their responsibility in the fight against this disease?
- iii. What will the men do to teach others about this responsibility?
- iv. How will we form men and women's groups that teach others our responsibility in fight against this disease? How many groups can we make in the following months?