

SAFE SPACES CREATION FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN COMMUNITIES; A STRATEGY IN PREVENTING HIV

The National AIDS Control Committee/Central Technical Group (CNLS/GTC) estimates that there are 141 new HIV infections per day in Cameroon, which means there are six newly infected persons each hour, every day¹. In local communities, the number of infected persons keeps increasing with adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) being very vulnerable to infection.

Supported by funds from the HerveiceFund, Vision in Action Cameroon organized a mobilization campaign on sensitizing AGYW on comprehensive sexuality education specifically HIV prevention and contraceptive use, as a strategy to

prevent HIV among AGYW. This strategy focused on creating safe spaces for AGYW in communities to discuss CSE, HIV prevention, and contraceptive use giving them the space to feel confident, safe, and heard without being judged when sharing their experiences, challenges, and opportunities. In other to create safe spaces in communities a participatory approach was used involving AGYW in the selection of a place with a suitable and acceptable environment, equipping the space with the necessary equipment as identified by the AGYW, and setting down ground rules together. In total 4 safe spaces in 4 local communities were created, conducting 2 sessions a month and reaching out to 50 AGYW in a month.

¹<https://www.foretiafoundation.org/hiv-aids-in-cameroon-an-update/>

Creating these spaces with AGYW was found to be very effective due to the number of AGYW that participate on the regular in the safe space sessions and the transformative stories they have been sharing during these sessions. You can view these stories on www.viacame.org

Lesson learned

When AGYW participates in identifying the space to be used for discussion it boosts the participation and mobilization of other AGYW in that community.



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