

Understanding HIV risks among adolescent girls and young women in informal settlements of Nairobi, Kenya: Lessons for DREAMS

The high incidence of HIV infection among adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) has been attributed to the numerous and often layered vulnerabilities that they encounter including violence against women, unfavourable power relations that are worsened by age-disparate sexual relations, and limited access to sexual and reproductive health information and services.

- [Understanding HIV risks among adolescent girls and young women in informal settlements of Nairobi, Kenya: Lessons for DREAMS](#)

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Understanding HIV risks among adolescent girls and young women in informal settlements of Nairobi, Kenya: Lessons for DREAMS

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Abstract

Introduction

High incidence of HIV infection among adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) has been attributed to the numerous and often layered vulnerabilities that they encounter including violence against women, unfavourable power relations that are worsened by age-disparate sexual relations, and limited access to sexual and reproductive health information and services. For AGYW living in urban informal settlements (slums), these vulnerabilities are compounded by pervasive poverty, fragmented social networks, and limited access to social services including health and education. In this paper, we assess sexual risk behaviours and their correlates among AGYW in two slum settlements in Nairobi, Kenya, prior to the implementation of interventions under the Determined Resilient Empowered AIDS-free Mentored and Safe (DREAMS) Partnership.

Methods

We drew on secondary data from the Transition to Adulthood study, the most recent representative study on adolescent sexual behaviour in the two settlements. The study was nested within the Nairobi Urban Health and Demographic Surveillance System (NUHDSS). Data were collected in 2009 from 1,390 AGYW aged 12–23 years. We estimated the proportions of AGYW reporting ever tested for HIV, condom use, multiple sexual partners and age-disparate sex by socio-demographic characteristics. “High risk” sexual behaviour was defined as a composite of these four variables and age at first sex. Multivariable regression analyses were performed to identify factors associated with risk behaviours.

Results

Fifty-one percent of AGYW reported that they had ever tested for HIV and received results of their last test, with the proportion rising steeply by age (from 15% to 84% among those

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