

## ENGAGING ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAM CONTENT *PARTICIPATORY PROTECTIVE ASSET MAPPING*



In Tanzania, HIV prevalence rates of adolescent girls and young women age 15-24 are twice as high as those of adolescent boys and young men<sup>1</sup>. Gender-based violence, social isolation, poverty, discriminatory cultural norms, early sexual debut, lack of comprehensive knowledge about sexuality, and high secondary school dropout rates all contribute to girls' heightened vulnerability to HIV.

Addressing these core factors that push girls out of school and increase their risk to HIV requires evidence-based, tailored program content. Applying a human centered design approach, WEI/Bantwana actively involved adolescent girls and their mothers/caregivers in creating relevant and meaningful content for the Protect Our Youth Clubs.

Using the Population Council's Building Assets Toolkit<sup>2</sup>, WEI/Bantwana conducted a participatory asset mapping exercise whereby adolescent girls and their mothers/caregivers identified the priority protective assets girls need to survive and thrive in school. A protective asset is related to what a person knows, can do or be, or has. Instead of looking at girls through one particular lens or by defining them by their 'needs,' the protective asset building tool is a strength-based approach that considers assets across multiple sectors, how they affect girls' lives, and how they interact with each other.

The Building Asset Toolkit contains 100 cards, and each card lists one protective asset. WEI/Bantwana translated the cards into Kiswahili to ensure full participation of the adolescent girls and their mothers/caregivers. WEI/Bantwana grouped the girls into small groups by class (groups of Form I and Form III girls separately). Each small group of girls was given a set of the 100 translated cards to discuss and

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prioritize in terms of how important the different assets were in keeping them safe, healthy, and attending school regularly. The girls were also given blank cards and were instructed to write on the blank cards if they felt there is anything missing from the existing cards. Girls were encouraged to express their ideas and opinions freely. The girls prioritized the cards into the categories of “very important,” “less important” and “not important” based on their own daily experiences.

WEI/Bantwana conducted this exercise with several groups of girls, as well as with their mothers/caregivers. Adolescent girls and their mothers/caregivers took part in separate discussion groups so that the adolescent girls were able to speak freely among their peers without parental involvement. A total of 121 adolescent girls in secondary school and 121 mothers/caregivers participated in the exercise.

What resulted from these highly active small group discussions and mapping was a series of lists of the protective assets that the girls ranked as most important. These lists were used to inform the selection of evidence based materials that were included in the Protect Our Youth Club manuals for Form I and Form III respectively. WEI/Bantwana created an inventory of existing evidence-based curricula and manuals that met the following criteria: use participatory methodologies; be youth-friendly; be age appropriate; already piloted or tested and demonstrated effective; and they had to contain content related to the following themes: adolescent reproductive health, rights, gender-based-violence, managing relationships, communication skills, or gender<sup>3</sup>. This inventory of existing manuals was then reviewed and cross-referenced with the “very important” priority lists generated by the adolescent girls and their mothers/caregivers. In this way, the sessions ultimately included in the Protect Our Youth Manuals were contextually anchored and reflective of the issues and concerns that are most pressing to adolescent girls. Although there were broad similarities between the priorities of the adolescent girls in Form I and Form III, there were also some clear differences as reflected in the list of sessions on the back cover. The adapted content was then translated into Kiswahili for use in the POY Clubs.



Note cards of protective assets participants listed as “muhimu sana” or “very important.”

An overview of Protect Our Youth Clubs is on the following page and the table of contents from the manuals developed using the protective asset mapping can be found on the back cover.

## WHAT IS A PROTECTIVE ASSET?

A protective asset is a store of value related to what a person know, can do or be, or has. Protective assets fall into four broad categories described below:

**Human/Health Assets:** Things that help protect girls’ lives and the lives of those around them. Examples include: knowledge about sexual and reproductive health (including sexually transmitted infections), finding a health clinic, signs of danger during pregnancy and labor, how to treat a young child with diarrhea (for girls who care for younger children).

**Social Assets:** The networks that girls can access to help take advantage of opportunities. Examples include: girl-only safe spaces, social support, having at least three non-family friends, access to mentoring, developing life skills (decision making, negotiating, building rapport with others).

**Economic Assets:** Specific skills that help girls plan for the future. Examples include: knowing how to create a simple budget, having a small savings account, and knowledge of vocational-training opportunities.

**Cognitive Assets:** Competencies often nurtured in school (and ideally beyond). Examples include: numeracy, literacy, confidence and clear self-expression, critical analysis, communication, and problem-solving skills.

## PROTECT OUR YOUTH (POY) CLUBS

**What:** POY Clubs support change at the level of the adolescent—empowering them with information, skills, and support networks so that they can better navigate the variety of risks they face and build protective assets to reduce vulnerabilities. POY Clubs were designed to meet the needs of vulnerable adolescent girls; however adolescent boys are welcomed as club members. Engaging boys enlists them as allies in combatting gender discrimination and violence in schools. POY Clubs also help adolescents build soft skills (such as goal setting, time management, communication skills, and decision making) to help support their academic success and encourage their ability to pursue their education.

**How:** Using a rights-based approach and delivered in a safe space through peer-to-peer methodologies, POY Clubs enable adolescents to work collaboratively and speak out and take action against inequality, social injustice, and abuse. POY Clubs are an inclusive and participatory platform for girls and boys to examine unequal power dynamics and challenge gender norms that discriminate against girls and perpetuate gender-based violence.

**Who:** Adolescent girls and boys in secondary school in Form I and Form III. Over the life of the project a total of 1,858 students were enrolled in POY clubs, of which 1,189 (64%) were adolescent girls.

**Where:** As a part of the DREAMS Innovation Challenge, WEI/Bantwana supports 48 POY clubs in 6 schools in Temeke District in Dar es Salaam.

**Expected Outcomes:** Increased protective assets of adolescent girls; adolescent girls and boys working together as agents of change; improved knowledge and attitudes about child rights, GBV, and gender equality; reduced school-related GBV; increased reporting of school-related GBV; improved knowledge of adolescent reproductive health.

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Girls and their mothers and caregivers participated in the Protective Asset Mapping



### POY CLUB PARTICIPANTS

**1,858** & **64%**

In 48 Clubs  
in Temeke  
District

Of members  
are adolescent  
girls



*The Bantwana Initiative of World Education Inc., is currently implementing DREAMS programming in three countries: Swaziland, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. Across all four countries, DREAMS is layered onto existing programming for orphans and vulnerable children and focuses on strengthening comprehensive services for adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) to reduce their risk of HIV.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS FROM THE POY MANUALS

### Protect Our Youth Club – Form I

#### TERM I

1. Introduction to the club
2. Getting to know each other
3. Self-esteem
4. Setting goals: What will your future be?
5. Steps to achieving a goal
6. Overcoming obstacles to achieving your goal
7. Basic communication skills
8. Assertive communication
9. Practising assertive communication
10. Saying no
11. Time management
12. Friendships: What makes a good friend?
13. Peer pressure

#### TERM II

1. Decision making
2. Child rights
3. Sexual Reproductive Health
4. Gender
5. Gender roles
6. Types of violence
7. Gender Based Violence
8. Harmful practices - early marriage, FGM
9. School Related Violence
10. Consequences of violence
11. Responding to violence
12. How to report violence

### Protect Our Youth Club – Form III

#### TERM I

1. Introduction to the club
2. Supporting each other
3. Self-confidence
4. Setting goals: What will your future be?
5. Steps to achieving a goal
6. Overcoming obstacles to achieving your goal
7. Time management and study habits
8. Basic communication skills
9. Assertive communication
10. Practising assertive communication
11. Talking with parents
12. Talking with peers
13. Friendships, boyfriends, and girlfriends

#### TERM II

1. Sexual Reproductive Health
2. Sexual relationships: risks and decisions
3. Financial goals
4. Budgeting and saving
5. Rights and responsibilities
6. Gender and work
7. Gender Based Violence
8. School Related Gender Based Violence
9. Responding to violence
10. Social networking
11. Peer pressure
12. Decision making
13. Entrepreneurship

#### Endnotes

- 1 Tanzania HIV Impact Survey (THIS) 2016-2017.
- 2 <http://www.popcouncil.org/research/building-assets-toolkit-developing-positive-benchmarks-for-adolescent-girls>
- 3 This includes: Protecting Ourselves and Each Other/Child Protection Booklet, WEI/Bantwana Tanzania 2013; Doorways, USAID Office of Women and Development, 2009; Go Girls! Community Based Life Skills for Girls, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School for Public Health/Center for Communications Program, 2011; School Related Gender Based Violence, UNESCO and UN Women, 2016; Protect Our Youth Clubs, WEI/Bantwana Swaziland, 2012.

*This article was funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of State as part of the DREAMS Innovation Challenge, managed by JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. (JSI). The opinions, findings, and conclusions stated here are those of the author[s] and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of State or JSI.*

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