

**CONDOMS AND SEX WORKERS:
AVIELE, OLUKU AND UGBAGUE COMMUNITIES
IN EDO STATE, NIGERIA.**

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Girls power initiative- Nigeria

Youth Coalition.

Introduction

- In Nigeria, Edo State has the highest number of females who are trafficked abroad for prostitution. Sex work at home is a lucrative business in the state.
- Realising that sex workers could play a major role in promoting or reducing the spread of HIV and AIDS, Society for family Health (SFH) along with its partners Action Aid international Nigeria, Lift Above Poverty Organization(LAPO) and Justice Development and Peace Commission(JDPC) in 2002 initiated the formation of its programme, 'Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health and Combating HIV and AIDS(PSRHH)
- The programme is also known as 'Make we Talk' to raise awareness on the prevalence of the virus and capacity building for female sex workers to be able to negotiate safer sex with customers.
- Aviele, Oluku and Ugbague communities were identified amongst other communities as intervention sites.
- This paper will present SFH's efforts in these communities in bringing the epidemic to a halt, present activities by sex workers , successes and challenges recorded by the team.

The 3 communities,

AVIELE COMMUNITY

- A junction community and a major pathway to the north with over 200 female sex workers who are either resident in brothels or hang around in the evening waiting for potential customers
- Make We Talk team started its intervention in this locale first by identifying different brothels in the area and then working with the managers of these brothels to mobilise female sex workers (FSWs) followed by a discourse with the sex workers on Facts on HIV/AIDS and negotiation skills on safer sex

OLUKU COMMUNITY

- Oluku is a junction for those coming and going to the southern part of Nigeria. This community has popularity in sex trade
- In conjunction with its partner, Lift Above Poverty Organization(LAPO), a micro credit organization, SFH started an information centre in Oluku to answer questions and provide support for the FSWs

UGBAGUE COMMUNITY

- Ugbague is another popular community for sex trade and is located in the centre of Benin the capital city of Edo
- Studies reveal that FSWs in this area didn't have accurate information on modes of transmission of the HIV/AIDS virus but subsequent upon their rapport with Make We Talk team, most of the FSWs agree that they are better equipped with the right information on modes of transmission and spread of the virus and how to negotiate safer sex with customers.

Gains;

Aviele Community Action Committee on AIDS(ACACA)

Make We talk facilitated the formation of ACACA. With the formation of this committee, a concerted attempt has been made in addressing the issue of HIV/AIDS and responsible for coordinating interventions focusing on HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Infections(STIs). Make We talk team are females, youths, female sex workers, transport workers and other artisans in the community.

Oluku Community Action Committee on AIDS(OCACA)

Similarly, Oluku presently has an action committee on AIDS that coordinates intervention activities on HIV/AIDS and STIs. will provide mentoring , technical and financial support for ACACA for a period of one year. ACACA has 20 members, 40% of whom are females.

No Condom, No sex Policy launched in 8 Brothels in Benin City.

This policy was launched in 8 brothels clustered in Ugbague in Benin City to complement the FSWs condom use and negotiation skills built by Make We Talk team to promote healthy living among the over 160 FSWs resident in the locality. On observation, it is discovered that demand for condoms and lubricant from the patent medicine stores(PMS) have increased by over 60%. In Ugbague and Aviele, Customers must pay for condoms for every act of sex and used condoms must be shown after every act of sex.

Gains (Contd);

Character Changing Ladies (CCL)

6 FSWs from various brothels in Benin jointly formed a group called “**character changing ladies**” to promote best practices and healthy behaviors of FSWs in the area.

This group holds regular meetings at the SFH office in Benin and reports back to the SFH office until it assumes an independent status as a CBO. Presently, SFH provides support through mentoring, finance and technical supports to the group.

FORESTRY OKADA RIDERS AGAINST AIDS(FORAA)

These community based organizations are charged with the responsibility of continuing and supporting efforts to maintain the impact of the project on community members as the implementing partners gradually pull out.

The end