



Achieving Her DREAMS in Uganda: A Foreign Assistance Success Story

DELIVERING RESULTS

PEPFAR has invested nearly one billion dollars through DREAMS, reaching millions of girls and their communities. As of December 2020, all countries implementing DREAMS programming have reduced new HIV diagnoses in adolescent girls and young women. Nearly all (96%) reduced new diagnoses by 25% and nearly two-thirds (62%) reduced new diagnoses by greater than 40%.¹ The initiative has also pushed partner governments to renew their commitments to gender equality and adolescent health, driving a greater global focus on the health and wellbeing of adolescent girls and young women.

Introduction

Globally, new HIV infections are on the decline—however, adolescent girls and young women continue to be disproportionately impacted. In sub-Saharan Africa, 67 percent (an estimated 280,000) of annual new HIV infections in young people occur in girls and young women.¹ In response, the DREAMS (Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe) Initiative was launched in December 2014 as a public-private partnership between the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and private sector partners, like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Johnson & Johnson.

A Holistic Approach

The DREAMS public-private partnership is one of the best examples of integrated programming in US foreign assistance. It employs a multi-sectoral, holistic approach to addressing the risks that adolescents face to maintaining good health. The objectives of this approach are to transform social norms and practices; reduce the risk of early pregnancy, HIV, and gender-based violence, including child marriage; and to support girls to stay in school through a package of holistic programs that address their vulnerabilities. Importantly, DREAMS meaningfully engages adolescent girls in the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs, empowering them to be leaders in response efforts. DREAMS is currently implemented across 15 countries by trusted partner organizations, like World Vision.¹

DREAMS: In Action

Donor: PEPFAR DREAMS Initiative

Project Name: Strengthening School Community Accountability for Girls Education (SAGE)

Timeline: Oct 2016 – March 2019

Location: Uganda

In Uganda, only one out of every four girls make it past the tenth grade. World Vision's baseline survey with 45,000 adolescent girls (ages 13 to 19) in Uganda sadly revealed that 70% had experienced school-related sexual and gender-based violence within the previous six months.² The SAGE project aimed to reduce secondary school dropout among these girls in 151 schools in 10 districts.

- » Adolescent girls were equipped to lead an Early Warning System that used evidence-based monitoring to identify critical vulnerabilities and risk factors such as attendance patterns, academic performance, financial difficulties, incidences of sexual abuse, and other behavior indicators.
- » Faith leaders were trained on how to advocate for girls' rights, increase school retention, and teach girls to prevent HIV infection.
- » Stay in School Committees combined peers, parents, community leaders, and educators to utilize the Early Warning System and find solutions with families to keep their girls in school. Of over 40,000 participants, 99.7% retained their attendance in school.
- » Health monitoring (such as HIV testing) and health training (such as teaching girls how to use sanitary pads) helped increase school attendance rates.

SARAH'S STORY

Adolescent girls drop out of school for a variety of reasons, but lack of funds for school fees tops the list. In her second year of senior school, Sarah, 17, was sent home for being unable to pay her fees. She thought her only option was to quit school—until a visit from the local Stay in School Committee, who promised to help negotiate with the school. Sarah's classmates rallied around her, raising funds to support her return to school. Now, Sarah exudes confidence. She was selected to serve on the Stay in School Committee with her peers, teachers, and World Vision facilitator. The committee monitors their classmates to see if they exhibit signs that they might leave school—looking at attendance, behavior, and confidence (the ABC method). If a classmate skips school, the committee makes a home visit to see the girl and her parents, problem-solving to help her return to school. "I'm happy that I'm doing something great," Sarah says of her work on the committee. She's gone from a girl who nearly quit school to someone who now wants to be a lawyer: "to fight for the freedom of my fellows."



References

- ¹<https://www.state.gov/pepfar-dreams-partnership/>
- ²<https://www.worldvision.org/dreams>

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. ADV12081_0618 © 2018 World Vision, Inc.