Male Youth on the Block in Saint Vincent Caribbean: Risk for HIV and Condom Use Determinants

Authors: B. Nieto-Andrade, J. Joseph, K. Singh, P. Faura, A. Rampersad
Population Services International

BACKGROUND
UNGASS 2008 reports that St Vincent and the Grenadines HIV prevalence rate is 0.4% and is considered to be a generalized epidemic since there is little to no data on sub populations. Current UNGASS reporting further indicates that there is a HIV infection male to female ratio of 1.6:1 and, that young, poor men gathering on the streets are considered most-at-risk.

DESCRIPTION
With support from KFW and PANCAP, PSI Caribbean implemented a social marketing program in St Vincent and the Grenadines. This program aimed to increase informed demand for condoms among 16 to 24 year old males living in difficult circumstances i.e. ‘male youth on the block’. Using peer led behaviour change communication strategies, the program emphasizes condom use during every sex act, increased personal risk perception and improved condom negotiation skills. Currently this approach has reached a total of 1,875 male youth on the block. These strategies were accompanied by a mass media initiative that used television, radio and print channels.

METHODS
- A survey was carried out in 2008 among sexually active male youth on the block between 16-24 years old (n:281). It collected information about number of partners, risk behaviors, determinants of condom use and exposure to PSI’s program. Sampling involved multi-stage cluster sampling, where clusters were defined as youth venues (parks, street, shops, kiosks). Participants were also instructed to demonstrate the correct way to put on a condom using a wooden dildo.
- The level for some indicators are reported in percentages and comparisons between exposure to IPC and non-exposure are carried out through UNIANOVA analysis to check for associations between IPC participation and higher levels in the indicators. Logistic regression was also carried out to identify determinants of consistent condom use with occasional partners.

RESULTS
- Average age for sexual debut was 13 years.
- Average number of sexual partners in the last month was 2.8: 1.7 casual partners, & 1.1 regular partners.
- Of those reporting sex with casual partners, 81% of male youth on the block reported condom use at last sex and 70% reported consistent condom use in the last six (6) months.
- Despite their reported sexual activity and condom use, only 9% of male youth on the block could put a condom on a dildo properly.
- Major problems on correct condom demonstration are shown below:

Graph 1:

CONCLUSIONS
• These results call for strategies that combine HIV-prevention communication with skills building for correct condom use. Such strategies should include activities that allow participants to actively practice putting on a condom. So far, a higher percentage of youth exposed to IPC checked for expiration date during a condom demonstration, compared to non-exposed youth. A follow up survey should be conducted to better analyze the effect of IPC activities over time, but current data suggests that the PSI program is starting to change knowledge and skills.
• The findings also reinforce the importance of social support among friends and self-efficacy to increase condom use. In response to that, PSI developed strategies using peer educators to affect youth sexual behavior and radio spots positioning using a “rubber” as a way to “be intelligent and show respect for one’s lover.”

Graph 2:

Determinants of Condom Use with occasional partners in the last six months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Exposure to IPC</th>
<th>Non-exposure to IPC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social support from friends</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive attitude towards condom use</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity to negotiate condom use</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gaps in Correct Condom Demonstration (%)

- Not checking expiration date: 54.5%
- Not using condom while sleeping and in a pouch: 36.5%
- Not looking for opening instructions on package: 64.0%

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

The initial funding for this project has been provided by KFW and PANCAP. Contact: Benjamin Andrade Nieto (bandrade@pasmo-ca.org)
For a copy of this poster, please go to www.psi.org/iac2010