

Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA)



Type of intervention



Classroom



Games



Groupwork



Mentoring



Public Education

Target group/s, level/s of prevention and sub-group/s:

Primary Prevention

Children and Young
People (Victims)

Young People/Young adults (14-20 years) | Female | Education | Classroom Setting | Swahili

Target population

The programme targets in-school and out-of-school adolescent girls aged between 14 and 20. Given the difficulties of verifying ages in the African setting and the demand for club activities arising from other girls, some girls outside the 14-20 age range also attend the clubs in practice. The programme is designed to empower adolescent girls against both health and economic challenges through the simultaneous provision of life skills to build knowledge, enable girls make informed choices about sex, reproduction and marriage, and reduce risky behaviour; and vocational training enabling girls to establish small-scale income generating activities.

Delivery organisation

The Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) programme is designed to improve the cognitive and non-cognitive skills of adolescent girls. The programme was started in mid-2008 and is implemented by Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Uganda. The BRAC is a non-governmental organization rooted in Bangladesh.

Mode and context of delivery

The programme covers all the regions in Uganda. The ELA programme operates through 'adolescent development clubs', a fixed meeting place within each community. These clubs are often housed in a single dedicated room, which is either donated by the community or rented by BRAC.

Level/Nature of staff expertise required

Club activities are led by a female mentor. The mentor is selected by programme staff from within the community, tends to be slightly older than the target population of adolescent girls, and is prepared for her supervisory role during a week-long initiation programme, as well as bi-monthly refresher courses. Mentors obtain a small lump-sum payment for their work. Club participation is voluntary and unrelated to engagement with other BRAC activities.

Intensity/extent of engagement with target group(s)

The club is open five afternoons per week and timed so that girls enrolled full-time in school can attend. Girls not enrolled in school can also attend. Attendance is voluntary.

Description of intervention

The programme is designed to empower adolescent girls against both health and economic challenges through the simultaneous provision of life skills to build knowledge, enable girls make informed choices about sex, reproduction and marriage, and reduce risky behaviour; and vocational training enabling girls to establish small-scale income generating activities. The two forms of skills training provided in the ELA programme are life skills training, and vocational skills training, both of which take place within the clubs. In addition, the clubs also host popular recreational activities such as reading, staging dramas, singing, dancing and playing games. The clubs, therefore, serve as a local space in which adolescent girls can meet, socialize, privately further discuss issues of concern and to continue to develop their non-cognitive skills.

A major success factor of the ELA is its integrated interventions that provide life skills and vocational training. The findings show that women's economic and social empowerment can be jump-started through the combined provision of vocational and life skills training, and is not necessarily held back by insurmountable constraints arising from binding social norms. This means that combined interventions are more effective among adolescent girls than single pronged interventions aiming to change risky behavior solely through related education programmes, or to improve labour market outcomes purely through vocational training. The twin-pronged approach is also novel in that it is not classroom based and so targets both girls in school and those who have dropped out of school, who are often thought to be most vulnerable. It also offers a low cost and scalable intervention that enables adolescent girls to improve their life outcomes. Based on its success, BRAC has started a similar programme in Tanzania, South Africa and Sierra Leone. Other non-governmental organizations are also replicating the model in other countries within Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. To enhance sustainability, the BRAC framework may need to have a strong inbuilt mechanism for promoting participation of government, private sector and beneficiary communities in the programme.

Evaluation

The programme has started 1,200 clubs in Uganda and these have reached 50,000 girls. A randomized control trials involving 4,888 adolescents revealed that 84.7 per cent of the adolescent girls in the treatment group participated in life skills training, 52.7 per cent in vocational skills training and 50.9 per cent participated in both forms of training. The

intervention raised the likelihood of girls being engaged in income generating activities by 35 per cent. In terms of economic empowerment, intention-to-treat estimates show that adolescent girls in treated communities are 7 percentage points more likely to engage in income generating activities relative to adolescent girls in control communities. This corresponds to a 72 per cent increase in engagement in such activities over the baseline. This was almost entirely driven by additional engagement in self-employment activities. These labour market changes were also accompanied by a 41 per cent increase in monthly consumption expenditure, and reduction in self-reported anxieties about finding a good job in adulthood. The programme also facilitated increase in the earning of the beneficiaries by US\$26.7, which more than offsets the per girl programme cost of US\$ 17.9. Also, girls who had previously dropped out of school were found to be 8 per cent more likely to want to re-enrol in school. There was also a 26 per cent reduction in rates of early childbearing, 58 per cent reduction in rates of marriage/cohabitation, and a 28 per cent increase in self-reported condom usage over the baseline.

References

ILO (2015). “Women’s Economic Empowerment in Action: Evidence from a Randomized Control Trial in Africa”, Employment Working Paper No. 187, Geneva: Employment Policy Department

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