

Gender Responsiveness of HIV/AIDS Awareness Program in Addis Ababa

Demessew Alemu Woldetsadik¹ and Mutendwahothe Walter Lumadi²

¹Addis Ababa Ministry of Agriculture

E-mail: dalemu12@yahoo.com

²University of South Africa, College of Education

E-mail: Lumadmw@unisa.ac.za

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ABSTRACT A qualitative research method was employed to ascertain gender responsiveness of HIV/AIDS awareness education program by three Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Addis Ababa, Arada sub-city administration. The NGOs include the Save Your Generation Ethiopia (SYGE), Welfare for the Street Mothers and Children Organization (WeSMCO) and Integrated Service for AIDS Prevention and Support Organization (ISAPSO). Data were gathered from key informants and other experts in each NGO. The researchers transcribed, coded and interpreted the interview transcript to analyze the data. The research questions set formed the basis for describing and interpreting the views, experiences and knowledge of the key informants on each question. Eventually, it was concluded that the HIV/AIDS awareness education program that the selected NGOs conducted under the above captioned sub-city administration was not gender responsive due to several reasons that include; time constraints as participants did not have enough time for the awareness education program that each of the selected NGO implemented; the selection of trainers was not based on fair gender selection; time suitability for implementing awareness education programs, selecting learning materials and using teaching methods did not consider the learning needs of both sexes; the selected NGOs were applying gender analysis method prior to the implementation of the awareness education program. Recommendations were also formulated.

INTRODUCTION

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, better known as AIDS, is caused by infection with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). It was first observed, in 1981 among homosexual American men (Routh et al. 2014). However, later investigations informed that it was transmitted mainly through heterosexual practices. At present, there is no single nation in the world whose population is not affected by this epidemic. The degree of infection, in fact, varies from nation to nation depending on various factors such as level of economic development, social and cultural conditions.

Nowadays, the epidemic has not become a health problem only but it also causes a development challenge to nations all over the world. It has become a treat to realizing the millennium development goals. Education has become one of the instruments that can decrease the problem and its consequences (UNAIDS 2014). However, the epidemic has brought more effect on females than on males. Some of the reasons can be attributed to cultural, social, economic, legal and biological factors. All these combined effects have consequently made females more

vulnerable to the epidemic than males. Nowadays, HIV/AIDS is becoming increasingly feminized (World Bank 2004).

In sub-Saharan Africa, the region most affected by the epidemic, females represented 58% of those infected with the virus. Lower socio-economic and political status, unequal access to education and employment and experience of violence hassled women to greater vulnerability to the epidemic (UNAIDS 2014). Although current reports on the problem have shown declining prevalence of the infection rates in Ethiopia, the gender dimension gap still exists (HAPCO 2014). As it may be observed, women have shouldered a disproportionate share of the burden of HIV/AIDS challenges, both as infected persons and by being responsible for the household activities. They face unfair traditional inequalities with men and have less access to health care services. They already have a high rate of deaths and illnesses associated with childbirth and suffer a higher prevalence of HIV/AIDS than men (FAO 2003; UNAIDS 2014).

In relation to these HIV/AIDS challenges, prevention is accepted as the most appropriate strategy to control the epidemic (FAO 2003). If the gender inequalities that underlie the epidemic

are addressed clearly, such an intervention can contribute to a sustainable response to the problem. Thus, recognizing the gender-based inequalities and risks is imperative to alleviate the stroke of hard luck on women (World Bank 2004).

The researchers believed that such a research study helps those local and international NGOs which provide HIV/AIDS education to reflect upon their approaches. They also believe that the study helps the various governmental and non-governmental organizations to carry out integrated work in fighting HIV/AIDS. They further think that this study encourages people living with HIV/AIDS to contribute more in raising social awareness of the community, help schoolteachers to rethink how to provide lessons on HIV/AIDS and also to lay a base for other research activities to take place.

Theoretical Framework

There seems to be little doubt that there is 'female discrimination' in the economic, social and political spheres of life. We can attribute this view to the various social, biological, cultural and other factors that prevail in most of the societies. Atendency, such as this, leads to unsuccessfully implementing plans, programs, projects and so forth. Thus, researchers take measures to correct gender relation problems. This lead to a method known as 'gender analysis' or as sometimes called 'gender relation analysis', can be employed to alleviate such a problem. Gender relation analysis, as the name implies, refers to analyzing the relationship, the power, and the inequalities between males and females in a society. It is a systematic means of assessing the effect of policies, programs, projects, and laws on men and women. It also enables defining and understanding how culture or societal life defines the rights, responsibilities, and duties of men and women about one another (Leach 2003).

The prime aim of the gender analysis is to see closely the gender relations to determine what changes are required, if more equitable relationships are to come, and ultimately to promote a more equal society. This analysis is conducted to determine the relationship of the two sexes in all walks of life at both national and international levels. It basically answers the following questions: Who does what? How often? Who owns what? Who makes decisions? And,

why it is like this? (Leach 2003). Gender differentiated data is crucial when doing a gender analysis, since it answers the basic questions that are related with gender. Unless data are gathered on access and control over the resources and power for decisions and so forth, it is difficult to perform gender analysis. Gender analysis is an important means of collecting data on the general conditions of females and males in a given society (Tezera 2003).

The purpose of the analysis determines the type of questions to be raised and the kind of the gender differentiated data that could be collected from participants. To expand the application of gender analysis to HIV/AIDS, one needs an analytical framework. There are different analytical frameworks that represent different theoretical positions. Some of the most popular analytical tools are briefly introduced below.

a. The Harvard Analytical Framework

The focus of this framework is on examining access to and controlling resources. It pays attention to the importance of economic considerations in working towards gender equality. The model enables those who apply it to map the various activities engaged in men and women, to assess their respective access and control of the resources needed for these activities, and to identify influencing factors. The framework can be applied to the gender analysis of structures and practices within the educational organizations (Leach 2003).

b. Moser's Gender Planning Framework

This framework bases itself on the concepts of gender roles, gender needs and policy approaches to gender and development planning. Accordingly, there are different policy approaches that we can identify. Each approach is categorized in terms of the roles of women on which it focuses and the practical and strategic needs it meets (March et al. 2005).

c. Women's Empowerment Framework

This framework is intended to help planners, policy makers, managers and evaluators to assess the extent to which a policy, organization, or program is committed to women's empowerment. It looks at equal participation of both sex-

es in controlling the development process and its benefits by women and men. It is based on the views of the different levels of equality (Leach 2003).

d. Social Relations Framework

This framework is intended to serve as a method of analyzing the gender inequalities within the institutionalized relations that affect the distribution of resources, responsibilities and power. It can also serve as an aid for designing policies and programs that support women as agents of their own development. Social relations framework is a powerful vehicle for examining and explaining the institutional construction and maintenance of gender relations (March et al. 2005).

The framework concentrates on the relationships between people and their relationship to resources and activities and the way in which these are re-worked through institutions. It can be applied narrowly to analyze how gender inequality is formed and reproduced within a single institution. Alternatively, this framework can be applied broadly to reveal how gender and other inequalities are interlinked through interaction between different institutions (Leach 2003). Generally, men and women face diverse vulnerabilities and different competencies because of their 'gendered' function. At times, these roles are very different and flexible. In both cases, failure to identify gender roles and to formulate HIV/AIDS policies, plans and programs can result in an inequitable delivery of assistance. This can also result in inadequate attention to the final outcomes of interventions (HAPCO and UNDP 2005). Gender analysis is applied to analyze the disparities between men and women, as cultural status and roles pre-determine in society. Within the context of HIV/AIDS, it clearly shows how socio-cultural factors affect women's and men's susceptibility to infection, access to prevention, treatment and care. Gender analysis analyses the norms, values and attitudes of the society. It also clarifies all the underlying factors that outline the vulnerabilities between both sexes (HAPCO and UNDP 2005).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary focus of the present study is examining the gender responsiveness of the

HIV/AIDS awareness education program that the three selected NGOs implemented in Arada Sub-city Administration. Due to this reason, the researchers developed interview format to seek the gender responsiveness of the awareness education program. Thus, they conducted the qualitative interview sessions with key informants, mainly the program officers, and other experts working in each NGO. Interview questions were presented to each interviewee in Amharic to avoid confusion and secure detailed information to each question. The researchers provided the topics and questions to the key informants/ interviewees two days before starting with the session. This allowed the key informants/interviewees the opportunity to explore the questions and issues ahead of time and plan their responses.

The in-depth interview questions, which were the same in content for all subsequent key informants, were presented to: We SMC O HIV/AIDS program officer, Skill Teaching Scheme and Youth Support's program coordinator, SYGE's program officer, University Capacity Building Project and Adolescent Reproductive Health's project officer, ISAPSO's program officer, Prevention of Violence against Female Students' project officer and Urban Gardening Project's officer. In the data analysis, researchers considered the interview transcript from each NGO. During the process, the data obtained from each interviewee have been transcribed word by word and sent back to each interviewee to comment or correct mistakes that might have occurred during recording.

While organizing and analyzing the data, the researchers applied the following three successive stages (Punch 2005); namely, coding (built by taking the themes), summarizing the codes (using summary tables that have implications for the research problems) and lastly interpreting the data. The interpretation was made by making description on issues that have gender implications. Thus, during the segmenting process, the researchers have read the interview text of each interviewee from each NGO by raising questions like: Does the text have relevance to the research questions? Is this text different from the one that comes before and after it? Where does this segment start and end? etc. During the coding process, the interview text of each interviewee was assigned descriptive words or category names. Later, the researchers

developed issues that represent the content of the segments of the data. They also collected all the codes that appear in each key informant interview text to prepare a master list of codes. Lastly, they interpreted elements such as the views, experiences and knowledge of the key informants on the issues. The report was finally prepared based on the responses of all the participants of the study with the aim of presenting a rich and holistic description (Johnson and Christensen 2004; Yin 2011) of the case.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data gathered, the researchers discovered the following major findings:

The HIV/AIDS Awareness Education Program in the Selected NGOs did not Consider Suitable Time for the Participants of Both Sexes

Not all the programs at the HIV/AIDS training centers were implemented as planned due to lack of time. Key informants reported that they had difficulties to implement their programs in these areas. The difficulties have aroused, as claimed by the key informants of these organizations, since the regular programs in these environments were regimented. Besides, schools and higher institutions leaders were not cooperative. Due to this reason, key informants planned to use students' spare time and it was not easy for some participants to take part in such programs.

The Selection of Trainers Was Not Based on Fair Gender Representation

Concerning the employment of trainers/presenters in the programs, the selected NGOs had gone through diverse experiences. Some had the experience of employing its own gender and HIV/AIDS experts and other staff members. At times, when it felt necessary, they used to hire trainers from other partner NGOs. However, all the key informants confirmed that they did not employ trainers who could hold separate HIV/AIDS awareness education programs for males and females.

The Selection of Learning Materials and Using Teaching Methods did not Consider the Needs of Both Sexes

Research participants have confirmed that they apply training materials of various types.

Thus, some have used materials prepared by themselves or by other organizations. Not the same materials were used, in fact, by all the selected NGOs and none of them also considered the needs of both sexes. In addition, they have reported that the method applied in the awareness education program was mainly participatory/interactive. However, they described this method in its narrow sense since they equate it with group discussion method.

The Selected NGOs were Not Applying the Gender Analysis Method Prior to Implementing the Awareness Education Program

The selected NGOs have shown failure to apply gender analysis. As disclosed by all key informants, gender analysis was not applied in the areas where the NGOs were working. This was not due to lack of familiarity with the concept but the less emphasis they have placed on its application. The research participants identified lack of time for HIV/AIDS awareness education programs as the main problem in implementing the program. Due to this reason, all programs were not implemented according to the plan. These informants encountered difficulties since the selected learning environments didn't give chance for the awareness program to progress. Efforts to use participants' spare time were not convenient for both sexes to arrange a learning program. Obviously, education and training can't be perceived without paying due consideration to time. This is due to the fact that training or teaching can't be done in the absence of time. Both activities are time bounded. On the other hand, the implementation of HIV/AIDS awareness education program may seem unthinkable without using resource materials. Research participants have indicated that they were using various training materials prepared on their own. Besides, these informants were also using materials other partners prepared in their own NGOs. They have used of all these materials without considering the learning needs of both sexes of the participants. But, instructional strategies, or teaching/training methods, depend on a number of factors such as the developmental level of students/trainees, goals, intent, and objectives of the teacher, content, and environment including time, physical setting, and resources (Petrina 2014).

Regarding the teaching method, the selected NGOs were applying one aspect of the participatory approach, especially the group discussion method. Such a trend may inhibit the application of the various participatory methods and leaves out the trainer to adhere to one aspect of the participatory method. This will in turn have an effect on the learning objectives set. The application of a variety of participatory methods and techniques increases the interest of the learners and ensures the effectiveness of the program. However, criteria should be set when selecting the active methods of instruction. The active teaching methods focuses primarily on learners playing the active and major role in acquiring information and developing concepts and skills while interacting with their social and physical environment. The role of the teacher becomes one of facilitator and supporter, rather than instructor (Westwood 2014).

Concerning the employment of trainers, the selected NGOs have gone through diverse experiences. At times, when they felt necessary, they hired trainers from other partner NGOs. However, all the key informants have confirmed that they did not employ trainers who could hold separate HIV/AIDS awareness education programs for males and females. Basically, teaching/training duty requires teachers/trainers to have the knowledge of the students/trainees. This kind of approach enables them to design training that would be tailored to their needs (Petrina 2014). The same is true for HIV/AIDS training programs that require the analysis of the needs of both sexes (World Bank 2005).

Equally important is the value to be attached to the application of gender analysis. Obviously, applying gender analysis requires considering multitude of factors. Failure to apply it may cause a problem on the fight against HIV/AIDS. Gender analysis clearly shows how the socio-cultural factors affect women and men susceptibility to infection, access to prevention, treatment and care. It considers the norms, values and attitudes of the society. It also clarifies all the underlying factors that outline the vulnerabilities between both sexes. When applied in HIV/AIDS programs, it considers the social and cultural factors in the society (HAPCO and UNDP 2005).

CONCLUSION

The researchers applied in-depth interview-stogather data from key informants of the se-

lected NGOs' program officers and other experts. It was concluded that the trainers participating in the awareness education program have been recruited both from the selected NGOs themselves and from partners. External trainers, though female trainers were not assigned to handle the special problems of females who are supposed to have rich experience in the topics to be presented during the teaching programs. However, internal trainers were the staffs of the selected NGOs themselves who have not undergone any training on how to handle such programs. It may be easy for the selected NGO to run the awareness education programs by employing such kinds of people. However, such an attempt may have its own effect on the learning interest of the participants since the right people were not selected.

Time was viewed as a serious factor in the selected NGOs awareness education program. This was due to the fact that there was no room to integrate the awareness education programs in these institutions. Thus, the awareness education programs did not take place in the way the NGOs intended. Consequently, it was hard to say that the awareness education program of the NGOs has entertained the educational needs of both sexes in these institutions. The learning places did not satisfy the needs of both sexes since they were mainly built for offices than for classrooms. Although the setting was different, all the selected NGOs lacked coordination in the awareness education program of the participants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The current study has shown lack of gender responsiveness of HIV/AIDS awareness education programs in the various settings of the selected NGOs. Effectively, combating of the epidemic requires behavioral change on the part of all citizens in the society. To facilitate such behavioral change, all organizations and citizens of Ethiopia must exert their efforts. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were proposed.

Gender Analysis and Prevention Strategies

NGO should apply the method of gender analysis prior to implementing HIV/AIDS awareness programs. Both governmental and non-governmental organizations working on HIV/

AIDS should involve participants in designing, implementing and evaluating prevention strategies by addressing their distinct prevention needs. NGOs and leaders of other organizations should discuss how to implement the programs that can affect all people in their areas of influence.

Awareness Programs

HIV/AIDS awareness education programs should be linked with the adult literacy program.

It is desirable for the NGOs to be networked. This initiative can be taken either by Addis Ababa HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office (AA HAPCO), or the NGOs umbrella organization called the Christian Relief and Development Association.

Training

Trainers of the HIV/AIDS education who lack teaching experience on how to handle adult learning programs should get training by having contact with the Ministry of Education or with other organizations working in the same field. Research should be conducted on how to raise the participation of both sexes in the awareness education programs. Besides, the gender responsiveness of the teaching materials that the NGOs use should also be evaluated.

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