

Building Leadership in Rural Communities to Advance the Response to HIV/AIDS

The Stepping Stones Approach to grassroots
transformation through gendered inter-
generational communication and relationships
skills trainings around the world

Session Goals

- Become familiar with the principles, structure, process and achievements of the Stepping Stones community mobilisation methodology.
- Understand some of the main challenges in implementing Stepping Stones.

What is Stepping Stones?

- SS is a training package on HIV/AIDS, Communication and Relationship Skills, Gender Relations, and Community Mobilisation. Developed by Dr. Alice Welbourn and pre-tested in 1994 in Buwenda, Uganda, it has since been practiced in many other parts of the world and in over 4,000 organisations.
- It was designed to meet the communication needs of the voiceless, including young people, women, and people with disabilitiesg in the areas of sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and gender relations.

A number of significant changes have taken place in Buwenda and other places where Stepping Stones has been applied:

- Respect for the wishes and wills of those who have died
- Greater ability of women to discuss sexual matters with their children
- Reduction in alcohol consumption
- Large and sustained increase in condom use by members of all peer groups
- Improved relations with community members who had not participated in SS workshop
- Development of care and support for HIV positive people and their carers within the community

What is it about Stepping Stones that transforms communities?

- Peer group work and discussions
- Interactive exercises
- Discussions, role plays, and diagrams
- Being able to address people's most salient needs
- Ownership of the process by the community
- Involvement of all stakeholders
- Holistic response to HIV (linked with sexual and reproductive health and gender issues)
- Emphasis on gender relations

How is Stepping Stones Structured?

- Each workshop session has a theme, which is captured in the session title.
- Sessions A-D focus on exercises that develop group cooperation and help participants recognize their own perspectives of life.
- After 2 sessions on HIV and safer sex, the workshop moves on to several sessions that help participants analyse why we behave the ways we do; a variety of factors such as alcohol, traditions, need for money, social expectations, and our own personalities are considered in depth.

How is Stepping Stones Structured?

- The final sessions K-N help participants to think about and practice ways in which they can change their behavior in a manner which allows them both to be more assertive and take more personal, social, and community wide responsibility for their actions.
- The whole workshop aims to enable individuals and communities to change their behavior individually and together through the Stepping Stones methodology.

Strengths of Stepping Stones

- Opens up space for promoting dialogue on a variety of difficult subjects
- Provides entry point for human rights interventions and social inclusion at community level
- A tool for galvanizing community advocacy and support
- Promotes collaboration among stakeholders

Where has Stepping Stones been Introduced?

- Many countries in Africa, including Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Kenya and Zimbabwe
- Also in Asia, including Cambodia, India, Myanmar, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Vietnam
- Latin American countries
- Pacific Island nations: Fiji and Solomon Islands

Challenges for SS implementation

- Time: Community pace vs Project timeframe
- Community expectations may be hard to meet
- Knowing when the role of the implementing agency is finished
- Resources for responding to identified community needs and behavior change initiatives may not be readily available

Peer Group Exercises

- Form peer groups (3 minutes)
- Think about typical situations experienced by people like yourself engaging in risky sexual behavior and later regretting it (5 minutes)
- Create a 3 minute role play that enacts one of these situations and perform for your peer group. (5 minutes)
- Discuss why these characters had sex, and what your peer group character could have done differently to avoid risky sexual behavior in this situation. (5 minutes)

Peer Group Exercises

- Create a new 3 minute role play where your peer group character is more assertive in protecting him or herself. (eg, uses I statements, eye contact, body language, etc.) Perform this role play for your group. (5 minutes)
- Form large group, one peer group performs (7 minutes)
- Discuss the role of individuals and the community in enabling your peer group members to be better protected from situations where risky sexual behaviors are likely. (5 minutes)
- Questions and general discussion about SS

Quotes from Participants