



The AIDS Support Organization, TASO (U) LTD



Peer Support Groups for HIV+ Adolescents: A key Strategy to Address Vertical Transmission A Case of TASO, Uganda

Presentation at the :

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Community Action, Symposium, 20th -21st July 2012, Washington D.C*

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Ugandan Picture

- Population 32 million (*UBOS 2010*)
- HIV Prevalence 7.3% (*Uganda AIS, 2011*)
- 2010 New infections 130,000 (*UAIS, 2011*)
- MTCT contributes 10% (*Uganda 2011 PMTCT Report*)
- Children born with HIV annually 24,142
(*Uganda NSP Midterm Review Report, 2010*)
- 4% young adults 15-24 years living with HIV

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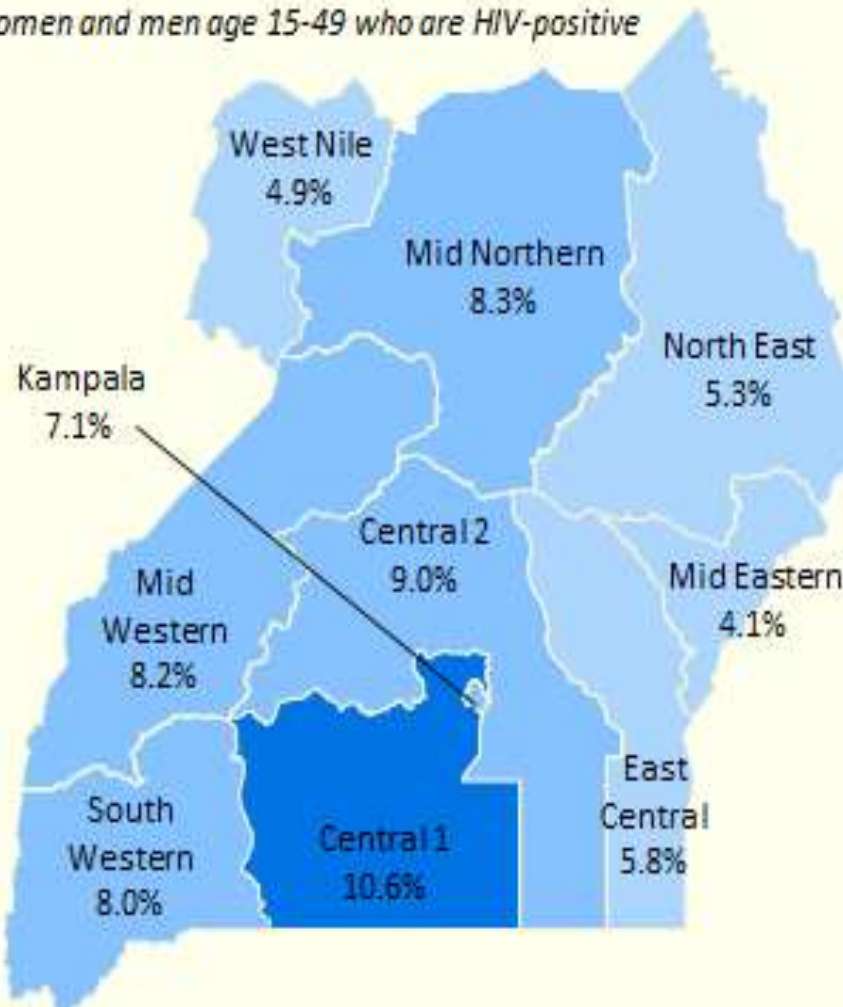
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HIV Prevalence by Region

Percent HIV-positive women and men age 15-49 who are HIV-positive

Uganda
7.3%



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Uganda NSP 2008-2012

Aim: Universal Access

- 4 Goals
 1. Prevention
 2. Care & Treatment
 3. Social Support
 4. System strengthening

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TASO Background

1. Begun 1987
2. Mission: preventing HIV infection, restoring hope and improving the quality of life of PLHIV, their families and communities
3. Has 11 centers in 4 regions



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TASO's Core Activities

- HIV Counseling: Facility and Home based
- ART & other Medical services
- Social support
- Capacity building
- Community initiatives
- Advocacy and Networking

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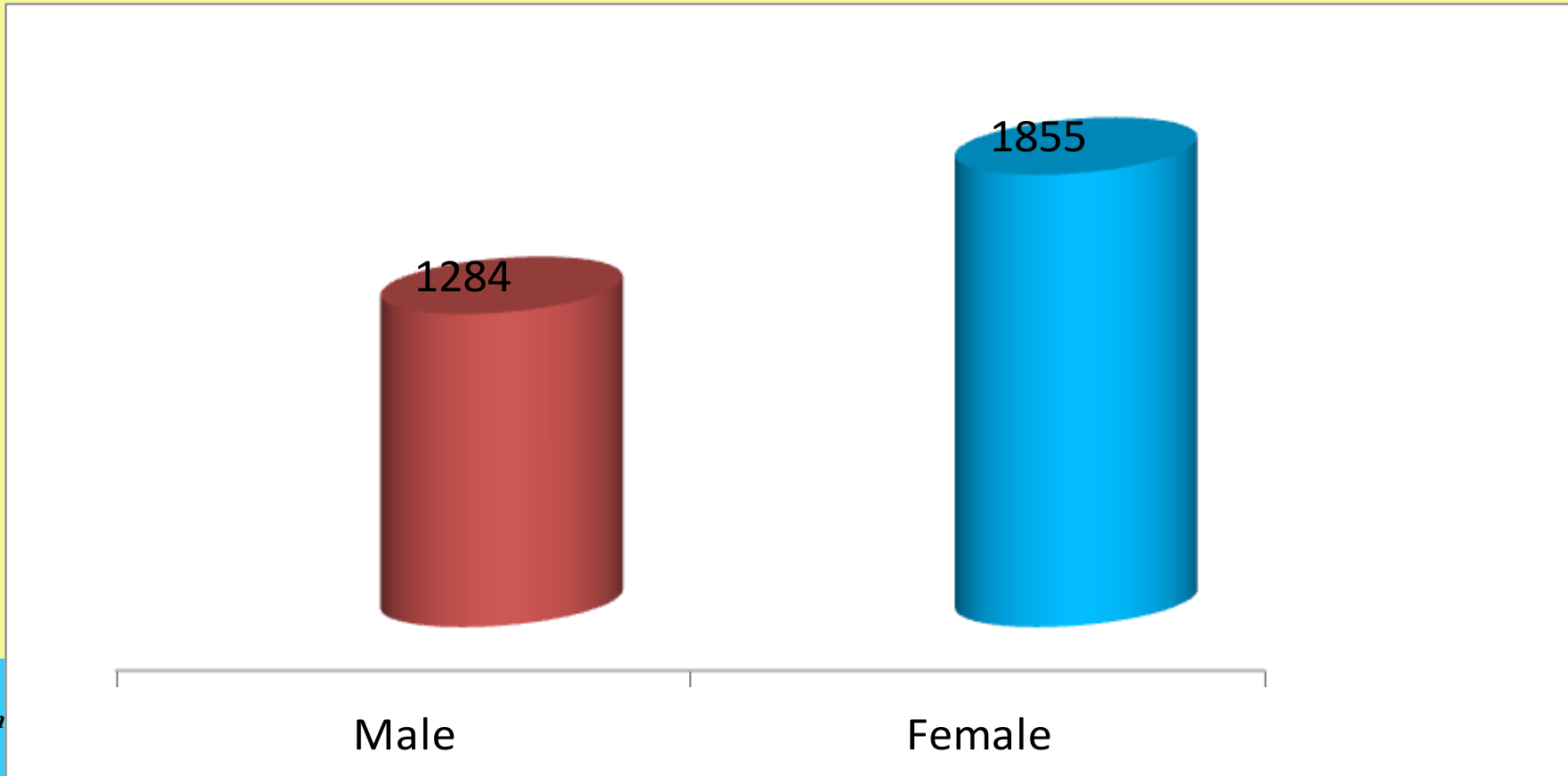


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Adolescents(10-19 years) in care

- Over 4,000 registered
- 3,139 active in the last 6 months



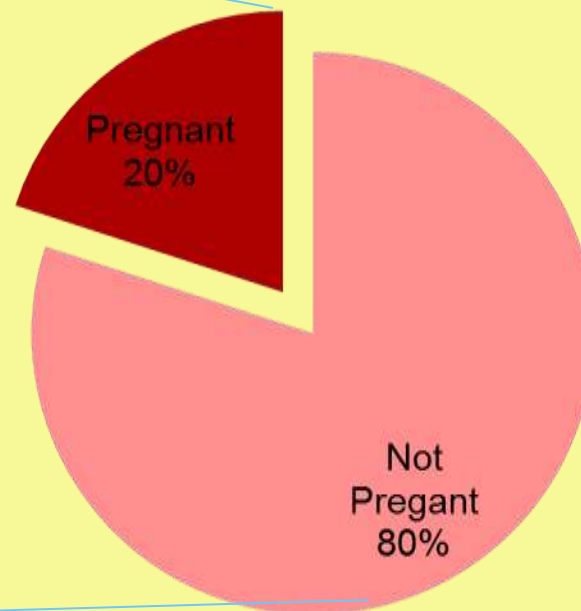
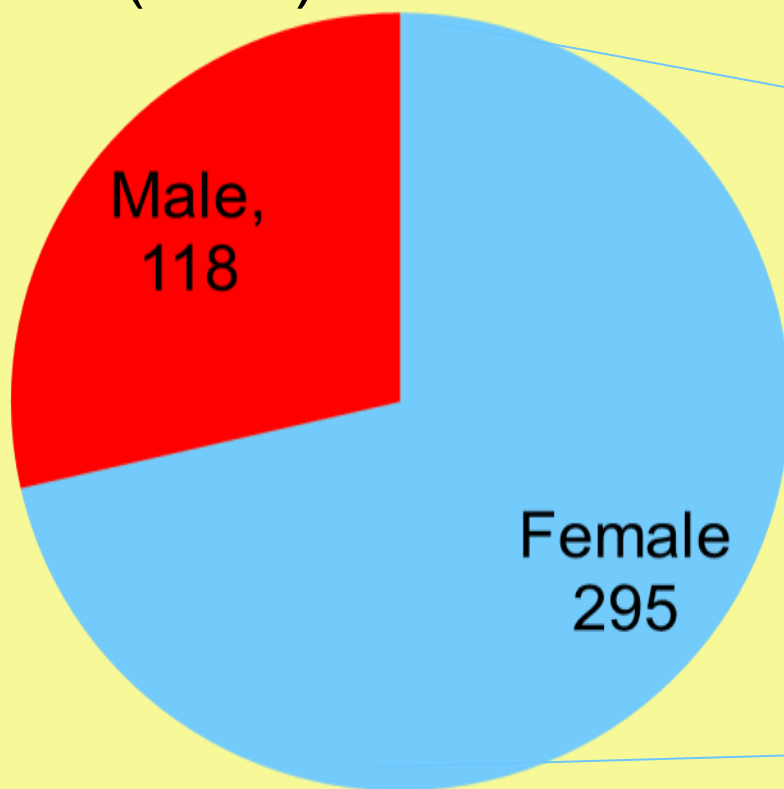


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Sexually active in the last six months



N=413 (13%)



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A study showed gaps in adolescents' care

- SRH Needs not well addressed hence unplanned pregnancies
- Balancing sexuality needs & HIV prevention
- Paradigm shift necessitating modifying counseling focus



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TASO Adolescent Care Programme



Approaches

- ⑩ Needs assessment among adolescents
- ⑩ Developed interventions
 - Capacity building of TASO care providers
 - Peer support groups
 - Adolescent clinics at TASO service centers
 - Selection and training of peer leaders
 - Training care givers
- ⑩ Focus: Pillar 2 and 3 of PMTCT

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Formation of the groups



Focus Groups Discussion

- Needs & concerns
 - Health, social issues, sex and sexuality, challenges faced at home, school and community
- Developing adolescent friendly clinics
- Peer leaders & counselors

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Adolescents Voices-1

“Some service providers misunderstand us, they judge us, do not accept us and when we are wrong, for example, when you have impregnated ones child or you have become pregnant”. (M, 17yrs)

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Adolescents Voices-2

“We want Income generating activities that can support us live independent in case we loose our caretakers or have not help”. (F, 17yrs)

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Adolescents Voices-3

“How can one enjoy sex without getting pregnant?”. (F, 16yrs)

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Peer support groups- Objectives



1. Address psychosocial needs of adolescents
2. Forum for sharing openly about sexuality and fertility desires
3. Support adolescents balance rights and responsibilities
4. Empower them make informed decision on Family planning and SRH issues

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Peer support groups

1. On-site groups HIV prevention counseling and education
2. Peer guidance and support
3. Multi-session individual and group skills learning
4. Timing: Monthly, Holidays
5. Focus on out and in school adolescents

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Package shared

Understanding HIV and AIDS Positive Living	Growing up/ Adolescence	Healthy relationships	Love and infatuation	Positive Prevention
Disclosure	Stigma	Sexual and reproductive health	Teenage Pregnancy	Safer sex
Unsafe Abortion	Family planning for Adolescents	PMTCT	Behavioral risk reduction	Death & Bereavement
STI screening	HIV Prevention	Adherence	Sexual & Gender based violence	Happy Times
Life skills	Managing emotions	Alcohol and substance Abuse	Career Goals and Development	



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Content of Psychosocial Assessment

- Home
- Education/Eating/Exercise
- Activities
- Drugs/Depression
- Sexuality
- Suicidal risk/Safety

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Parent/Guardian/Teachers

- 10 Open discussions about HIV, sexual health and risk behaviours.
- 10 Caregivers supported to directly provide information to adolescents
- 10 Teachers trained on Adolescent sexuality counseling

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Lessons learnt-1

1. Adolescents have hidden concerns and needs
2. Adolescents easily open up in groups
3. Service providers need appropriate skills to identify and support adolescent need
4. Providing information has addressed myth on growth & development

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Lessons learnt-2

- ⑩ Adolescents themselves need clear and direct information from counsellors about sex.
- ⑩ Increased uptake of FP (condoms, depo, ECP)
- ⑩ Increased disclosure of status to sexual partner
 - Needs continuous counseling & support
- ⑩ Training of peer counselors, care giver and teachers has improved support systems

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Challenges

- ⑩ Disclosure is a key challenge
- ⑩ Limited funding to continue social support e.g. nutrition, IGAs
- ⑩ Poor attitudes of some service providers
 - Judgment
 - FP Vs religion
 - Transference and counter transference

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Conclusion

- 10 Peer support groups for adolescents have so far worked!
 - HIV Prevention:
 - safer sex
 - FP uptake
 - Care & Treatment: Adherence support
 - Improved support system
 - Counseling focused on adolescent needs
 - Caregiver communication skills



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- Co-authors

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