

# **Community consultation report**

**MSM Voices on issues their children face,  
support from local groups  
and what they need to make their children  
lives better**

**Nairobi – Kenya**

**Led by: Health Options for young men on HIV  
AIDs/STIs**

# **Guidelines for the interviews, which were presented to participants:**

**The consultations were informed by guiding questions including;**

- What issues are your children facing?**
- Are your children receiving any benefits and supports from local groups?**
- What do you need to help make your children's lives better?**

# Results

- **The consultations indicate that children of key populations face diverse issues in their day to day lives but with limited opportunities from the local key population led groups.**

**Furthermore, the participants were clear on the kind of support they require to improve the lives of their children.**

# **Issues faced by children of MSM,**

**A relatively long list of issues children of this Key population subgroup face can range from**

- Poor or weak relationship with parents**
- Stigma and discrimination**
- Child abuse and neglect**
- Low school enrolment.**
- Psychosocial problems**
- Lack of permanent shelter**

# Relationship with their parents

The consultations revealed that children of, MSM are confronted with accepting or hating their parents because of their sexuality. The reaction from children also differs based on the gender of the children one has. Boys are unlikely to support their parents compared to girls.

➤ MSM8:I used to love my son so much , But when my wife discovered that I was in a relationship with other men , she disclosed to my son , My son disliked me since then. They left me , later I realized she had settled in one of the coastal cities and was engaging in sex work. A few years later I received news that she died of HIV and my son was in the streets . I gathered courage to go fetch him and when he saw me he insulted me calling all sorts of name..

# Stigma and Discrimination

- Same sex sexual relationships are highly associated with immorality in different communities, It even gets worse when it comes to those living with HIV/AIDs, in most cases their children are even discriminated by fellow family members because they are believed to be a cursed generation.
- MSM4: “ I just decided to get a woman to conceal my sexuality and to please my family. I ended up having a baby boy.....so afterwards my wife discovered that I sleep with other men. She told my parents .. My son was rejected and my parents refused to educate him ...because he is a son of a gay father...they chased him away when he finished primary school .. I am not sure where he lives

# Child neglect and abuse

- In many cases children of MSM are unlikely to live with their parents. They either live in the village with their grand parents or relatives thus receiving inadequate attention from their parents. This leaves the older children to perform parental responsibilities to their younger siblings
- MSM6: “I am a MSM living with HIV, I have two kids, a boy and a girl, the boy stays with my parents in the village, ...Sometimes I am forced to take my young girl to stay with a lady friend who is a sex work also when I go for sex work in other towns in the country. When I return back I find that sometimes my daughter has fallen sick... I suspect she might be HIV positive, or maybe she has not she been eating well, me most of the times am stressed.

# Psychological Problems

- Children of MSM face psychological issues because of the way they are treated by the society. They are stressed and disturbed when they realize their parents are in same sex relationships and when they hear their neighbors talk about them

➤ **MSM3:** “My neighbors hate me because they saw on the TV demonstrating with LGBTI community ....., ask questions like where is the mother of my kids, why every time I am bringing men to my house , they end up chasing me away with my Kids. I have changed my kids school for over six times ... I got tired my kids were called

“ . . . . . ”

# Low school enrollment

- Children of MSM require quality education to have a better future just like any other kid in society. However, their problems are absolutely compounded by the difficulty they experience in accessing better education opportunities due of social and economic challenges that their parents face.
- MSM6: “For example I have only one daughter , I have changed her school like every year, sometimes midyear... just because my neighbors , landlords can’t accept me living near them ,they say my sexuality is bad influence to their young ones, so wherever I rent a house within one or two months I get an eviction notice , that time my daughter has enrolled in a new school , she has developed no interest in school nowadays , I have to plan how to tackle this....She may end up dropping out

**What Kind of benefit and support  
do their children receive from local  
groups**

# Support from MSM organizations

- Participants stated that no single MSM /Sex work led organization that support their children. The reason is that most groups are focused on addressing the issues faced by members themselves.
- MSM1: “No but there are several organizations that take care of those who are HIV positive by providing food and other donations like clothes ...in most cases you say that you are MSM or a Sex work , you and your kids will be discriminated because in Kenya and many places in Africa people don’t believe we can have kids and we are responsible parents.. .”

**What do MSM need to make their kids life better?**

# Need for Alternative and Stable Source of Income

- Majority of MSM find themselves marginalized socially and economically . The vast majority of income earned is spent on medical bills and proper nutrition especially for those living with HIV
- MSM6: “You see like at hoymas we learn how to save money and start small business to supplement our income, there are others who are been supported to go back to college to learn technical skills. I think it is helping MSM workers a lot, I have seen some of them employed at hoymas and other organization and their lives have changed for better now they can support their kids”

# Support in Educating Children

- MSM just like any other parents also wish to give their children quality, However, they admit its un affordable for the majority
- MSM 7: “My son finished class eight , he passed very well I didn’t have money to take him to high school...I approached government office that offer bursaries to disadvantaged children ...weeeeh I was asked for my documents including supporting letters for what I do for a living .. Now I couldn’t I say I hassle as SW and I am a man...was told to produce many documents that I could hardly find to support the bursary processing ...simply I realized my son could not qualify for the bursary, I gave up Now he is working as in small scale farms in the village ...I pity him, Sometimes I get stressed when I remember his missed opportunity for high school education.

# Recognition and acceptance of other sexual Minorities

- In the African context, men who engage in same sex practices are extremely marginalized . The society treats MSM with serious discrimination and stigma. Nowadays they are seen as bad people and as HIV carriers.
- **MSM5: “Mmmmm... our society will take time to accept us and our kids...there is a lot of stigma and discrimination, it’s even worse for ....homosexuals .... The society hates us a lot...they can even organize to get us killed with our kids....the society should be sensitized that we exist for them to change the way they see us.....I know it’s hard... but it’s good to inform them..”**

# Better housing protection—to support better education for MSM children

Due to constant eviction by neighbors, Landlords, local authority or even relatives, their education is disrupted and in many cases they develop low interest in attending school and eventually they end up dropping out.

➤ MSM 9 “I have three children, all in primary school, I was staying with them in Nairobi, my neighbors discovered that I have sex with other men, they told my landlord and I was chased away, had to look for another school for my kids..my first born refused to live with me since he knew my lifestyle.. now he is a dropout”

# Need for better support from NGOs and key populations groups

Respondents strongly indicated that there was existence of a huge gap especially within organizations that are implementing HIV and Human rights work. These organization focus more on issues facing the community and forget issues affecting their helpless kids.

➤ **MSM5: “I have no idea of any organization that takes care of MSM needs in Kenya, all work focusses on the community but for children no I have not heard”**

# Conclusion

- **Despite the fact that many MSM/KP led organizations are coming up to address the issues faced by the members. None of the groups have designed specific programs to address issues faced by their children.**
- **Respondents mentioned that there were several issues that their children face because of Sexuality or because of engaging in Sex work.**
- **The consultations revealed that there was minimal or no support for children of MSM that are living with HIV.**

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