



**Vulnerability to HIV infection
among intellectually impaired and
mainstream learners in Nigeria:
parents have a role to play**

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Introduction

- Nigeria with HIV prevalence of 3.6% & 2.98mill. PLWHA is 2nd to South Africa in the number of PLWHA
- About 80% of persons with disability (PWD) live in developing countries
- Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for two-thirds (22mill.) of the global HIV burden (33mill.)
- Little is known about the vulnerability of intellectually impaired learners (IIL) to HIV in Nigeria

Background

- This presentation is part of a larger study that compared HIV knowledge, attitudes and sexual practices among IIL and mainstream learners (ML) in Nigeria
- It draws mostly on teachers' accounts of parental attitudes to HIV and sexuality education of learners

Methodology

- Comparative, cross-sectional study
- Key informant interviews among teachers & in-depth interviews among learners
- Age group of learners – 12-19 years

Results

ML are vulnerable to HIV infection due to:

- Parents are uncomfortable to discuss sex-related issues with their children
- Parental poverty
- Parental traditional beliefs e.g., blood is sacred and learners are warned against allowing strangers access to their blood
- Refusal to test for HIV due to the fear of parents' suspicion that ML must be sexually active to have taken HIV test
- Parents believe that their children are too young to contract HIV

Results

IIL are more vulnerable to HIV infection than ML due to:

- Parental neglect – due to stigma & negative attitudes
- Parental overprotection
- Parents directly arrange sexual partners for IIL or are influenced by teachers to do so
- Most parents do not know how to communicate with IIL and rely on teachers
- Parents lack the skills to give HIV & sexuality education to IIL
- Parents believe that because IIL are both young and have intellectual disability they cannot contract HIV

Conclusion

- Parents are contributing to vulnerability of learners to HIV infection by their lack of sexuality and HIV education skills, beliefs, poverty and ignorance
- ILL are more vulnerable to HIV infection than ML because their parents, in addition to factors common to all parents, also have to struggle with disability-related stigma

The way forward

- Sexuality education for all learners should involve parents at all levels
- Collaborative sexuality & HIV education involving parents, teachers and community should be considered for IIL
- For parents of IIL, such education should include coping mechanisms related to stigma and identification of their children's potentials
- Involvement of parents of IIL should go beyond standard sexuality & HIV education to include prevention of sexual abuse, acceptable social behaviours etc packaged in a tailored HIV & sexuality education



Thank You