



Multiple and Concurrent Sex Partnerships Among Youth: Food for the Hungry's Curriculum

Kim Buttonow, MPH

HIV/AIDS Programs Coordinator

Food for the Hungry



Background

- Work in consortium through AERDO's HIV/AIDS Association; 7 FBOs
- 4,000 churches across 4 countries
- Objectives for youth include increasing abstinence before marriage, but secondary goals are to engage with sexually active youth to reduce risk

Context



- Single youth engage in a variety of types of sexual relationships which may be influenced by or in conflict with their cultural and faith norms
 - External influences (coercion, transactional, peer pressure)
 - Internal conflicts based on these pressures
 - Youth may lack confidence to discuss issues openly
- Youth have not necessarily internalized that their actions put them at higher risk for sexual activity.
- Talking about youth and sex frankly and openly is challenging given these influences

Single youth and 'B'



- 'B'/Be Faithful for unmarried youth is not a message comfortable in some cultural/faith contexts
 - Partners may not want to promote sexual fidelity between unmarried couples
 - Partners may not want 'faithfulness' to be confused with marital fidelity
 - What is 'faithfulness' in the youth context? (duration, number of partners, etc.-)
 - 'Sexually active', 'higher risk' or 'MCP' are more concrete terms
- 'Faithfulness' v. Long Term Relationship

Considerations



- Partnership/management: degree of engagement by local pastors, imams, teachers, leaders, parents
- Terminology: framing the program in language common to youth, palatable to cultural/faith norms, and addressing sexually active youth and MCP
- Data collection: accuracy, terminology, translation

Possible strategies: FH's approach

- Focus groups; awareness campaigns

“Sometimes I just like talking with girls and not be pressured into having sex.” – boy in Nigeria

“A lady should be married if she wants to have sex.” – girl in Ethiopia

- Throughout curriculum: references to marital faithfulness as a ‘healthy behavior’
- In 2007, created Risk Reduction modules to address the higher risk relationships among youth
- Help create a supportive environment by:
 - Mentors to help continue a supportive environment for youth’s choices
 - Ongoing relationships with institutions to increase understanding and ownership
- Linkages to services (VCT, RH, etc.-)

Risk Reduction Modules in *Choose Life*

- Created based on focus group discussions and our own KAP data.
- Examines levels of risk for HIV based on type of sexual activity
 - Participants personalize risk for their own life
 - Includes skill building exercises, to build confidence in participants' ability to reduce their risk, role playing strategies to avoid risky actions, and the practice of good communication techniques.
- Leads participants in a discussion of on correct and consistent use of condoms and the importance of testing
 - May be facilitated by a health post staff person

Faithfulness in Marriage

- FH US developed the *Faithfulness in Marriage* curricula (completed in 2006) to address the high risk of transmission among married couples aged 15-49
- Couples define “faithfulness” and do so in the context of gender.
 - In Haiti it wasn’t until they had much discussion that they agreed amongst themselves that *maybe* faithfulness was also something required of men. Women do not always dare to take extra partners.

Changes to *Faithfulness in Marriage*

- Adaptations were made based on feedback from staff, KAP research, and focus groups
- Changes centered on terminology and greater inclusion of different types of relationships: “*Long term committed relationship*”
- For engaged in long term committed/”socially sanctioned” or marriage relationship

Keys to a Healthy Relationship

- Title changed from *Faithfulness in Marriage* to *Keys to a Healthy Relationship*.
 - Some couples were offended if asked if they wanted to come to a 'faithfulness' training.
 - Those who have multiple partnerships, were less likely to attend a training on faithfulness.
- Stronger language was given to partners to recruit participants outside of typical 'marriage' relationships.
- Greater focus on younger couples who are at greater risk

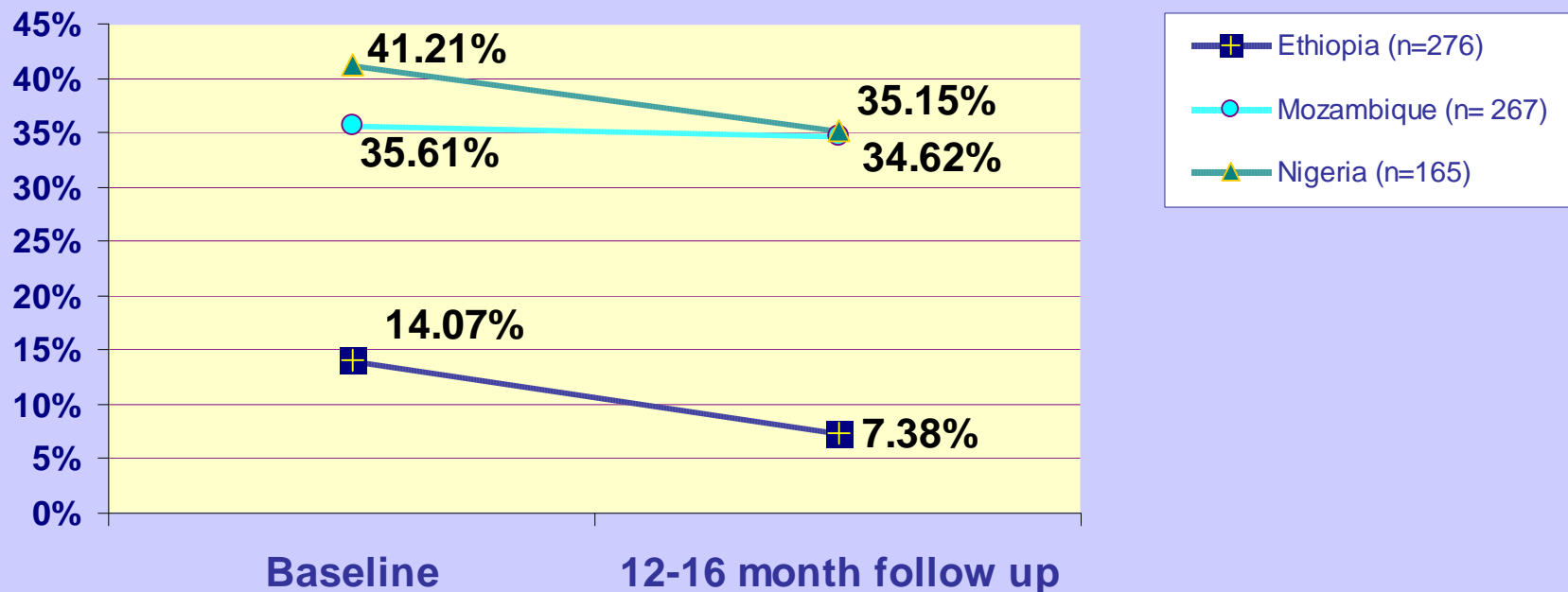


Keys to a Healthy Relationship

- Examines expectations, and allows participants to measure the importance of faithfulness.
 - help them to reflect on faithfulness in light of information shared about increased transmission risks of infidelity.
- Includes skill building exercises, building confidence in participants' ability to be faithful, role playing strategies to avoid unfaithful actions, and the practice of good communication techniques.
- Leads participants in a discussion of sero-discordant couples and risk reduction strategies for those in high risk sexual relationships and emphasizes testing

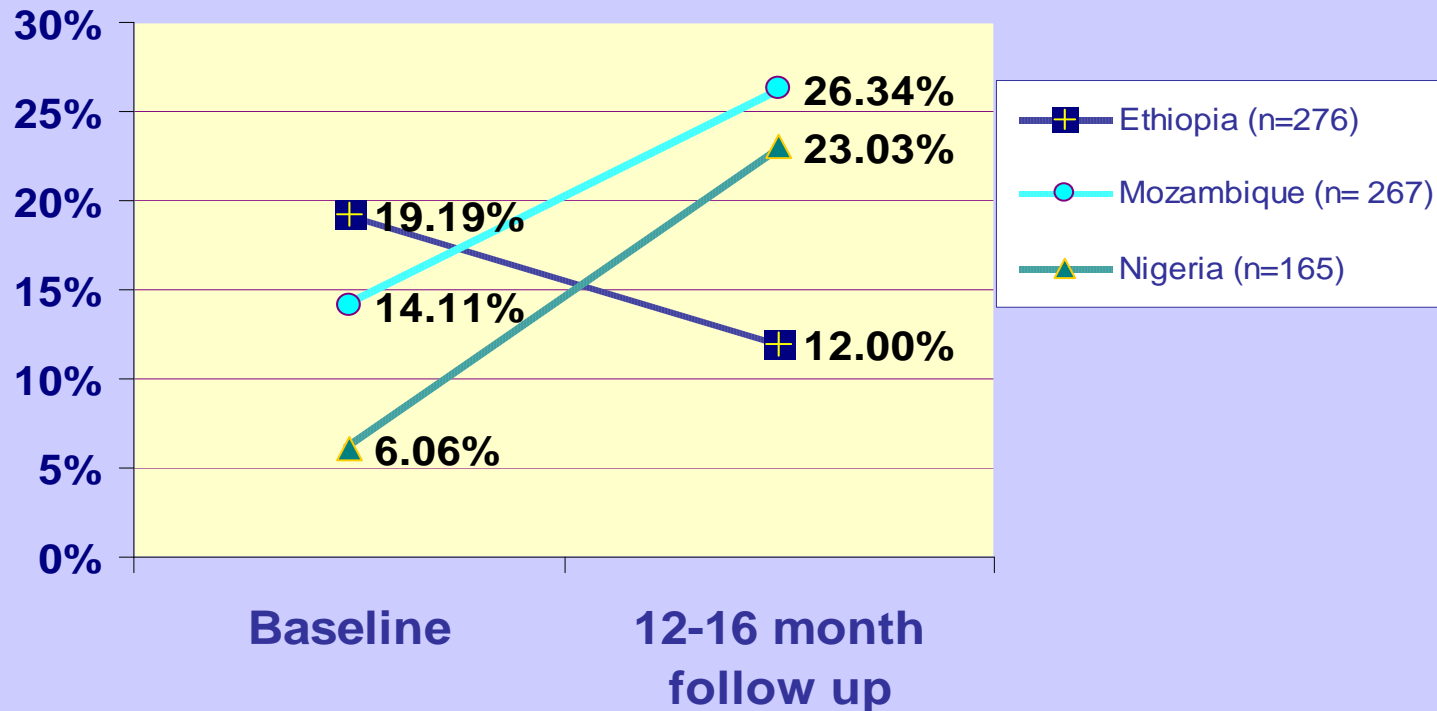
KAP findings: Single youth and any form of sexual activity

Single youth aged 10-24 who have ever had any form of sex (of ALL youth surveyed)
(matched by age and gender)



Single youth's knowledge of partner reduction

Single youth aged 10-24: Know that Limiting or Reducing the Number of Sex Partners Reduces HIV/AIDS Risk of All Youth Surveyed (matched by age and gender)





Thank You!

Kim Buttonow, MPH
HIV/AIDS Programs Coordinator
Food for the Hungry
236 Mass Ave, NE Suite 305
Washington, DC 20002
Kim.buttonow@fh.org

