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How Intergenerational Relationships Are Hampering HIV Prevention Efforts in Adolescent Girls and Young Women in Blantyre City

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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
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**FAST-TRACK CITIES
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Topic Introduction

- What are intergenerational relationships?

These are relationships between Adolescent Girls and Young Women aged 15-24 and elderly men aged 45-70 that are for the sole purpose of exchanging sex with money.

(Contemporary) These elderly men have been famously nicknamed “blessers”.

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Project Introduction

- FACT Malawi, a youth-led organization
- Implementing HIV testing demand creation project targeting young people in Universities and Colleges (Pause and speak on creating a culture of wanting to test before engaging in sexual relationships.)
- The aim is to contribute towards the reduction of HIV incidence in Blantyre city.

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Activities Being Implemented

HIV testing (linkages and referrals to HIV treatment)

Linkage to PEP

Condom distribution and promotion

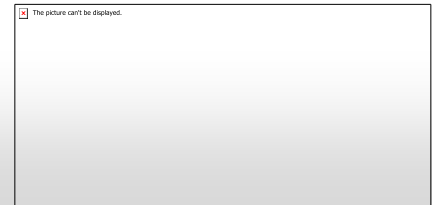
Providing IEC materials (distribution and opening our resource centre to the young people)

STI screening & Counseling (Referrals to STI treatment)

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Problem Statement

- The data collected during the project implementation and the ongoing youth-friendly HIV testing at FACT organization shows that university girls are at a higher risk of contracting HIV infection.



Why are Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) highly affected.

- Through dialogues with the AGYW;
 - I. Intergenerational relationships with “blessers” is the leading cause of high HIV infections among AGYW.
 - II. Girls keeping condoms in their bags is a cause of embarrassment among their peers
 - III. The scare of pregnancy is higher than that of HIV hence why emergency pills are popular among AGYW

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The intergenerational relationships case in detail

- A local Malawi newspaper produced a cartoon of how much money the government would make if there was a toll gate on the road to the girls' hostels of the famous "x" university which is at the center of Blantyre city.
- Many girls live in the nearby townships surrounding the university, where the FACT Malawi HIV testing center is located.
- The campus is always full of cars from outsiders
- **"Blessers" who are the older men dating these young girls are the owners of these cars.**

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Blessers and slay queens

- Slay queens are girls that lead an expensive life they can not afford
- To maintain the high standards, slay queens enter into sexual relationships with “blessers for money and material things
- Most of the blessers are the elite, respectable people in the society
- Speaking to girl A who tested HIV positive at the FACT youth-friendly center, she said; “I had a birthday party plan that was expensive. I met a man who promised to sponsor the party if I had sex with him and I agreed.”

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Blessers and slay queens

- Speaking to girl B; a student at “X” university, she stated that there is a lot of competition for blessers on the ground. You need to keep on looking good if you want to keep your blesser because your friends can snatch him.
- “Keeping up appearance is not cheap, most of us we have more than a single blesser for good sponsorship”, said girl B.
- Most of the girls reported having at least 2 blessers, 1 for rentals and groceries and the other for enjoyment. Usually, the 1st one doesn’t sponsor the drinking and the clubbing life, making him different from the second whose purpose is to support “enjoyment”



Sexually Transmitted Grades; Lectures as blessers.

- The case of sexually transmitted grades has become so popular among university students in Blantyre city.
- Many girls, due to their slay queen lifestyle miss classes and perform poorly in class.
- To make up for the lost time, they have sex with their lectures so that they can get better grades which have popularly been known as “**sexually transmitted grades**”
- From a simple rapid assessment by FACT, about 10% of girls in their final year at university, have once had some **sexually transmitted grades**.

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On index Testing

- On average, 1 college lady can give 3 names of people she has had sex with.
- Out of these 3, 2 are blessers (an older man and 1 a boyfriend of her age).
- In one special case; a 19-year-old girl from a local private university had **7 index testing follow ups**. 3 were blessers, 2 were Lecturers (Sex for grades), 1 her boyfriend (peer), and 1 was her landlord (**issues around rental payments**)

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Conclusion

- From the statistics and the stories presented, **intergenerational relationships are a contributing factor to high HIV incidence rates among AGYW in Blantyre City.**
- The need for empowering the girl child in universities cannot be overemphasized.
- Let's put more effort into fighting for the girl child, for **she is the next Michelle Obama, the next black billionaire, she is the future we have been waiting for.**

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Call to action

- More research on intergenerational relationships effects on HIV prevalence among AGYW.
- More projects and programs to target city girls/slay queens and their behavior patterns.

Together, Pamodzi. We can end HIV and AIDS!

Thank you

Gracias

Zikomo

