

“Children are vulnerable from HIV&AIDS....It's our responsibility to protect them” [Mr. Bashori]

It is true! Moreover the most important thing is how we deliver HIV&AIDS prevention messages to improve children's knowledge on HIV&AIDS protection.



Devi Ratriana explained reproductive organs to her friends

HIV&AIDS prevention is related with behaviour changes. In terms of HIV&AIDS prevention issues for children, the proper approach to deliver information should be through religion and peer. Since 2005 East Java has implemented those approaches in 180 Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) and 180 Islamic Boarding School or Pondok Pesantren. Information on HIV&AIDS has been shared with the students by 1,080 peer educators.

The initiative of UNICEF to implement those approaches (religion and peer) that has been implemented in collaboration with respective counterparts on HIV&AIDS, education and religion, were welcomed by School Principals and teachers.

Pak Rahmat Hargono, VoC reporter who visited State MTs (MTsN) at Bandung sub-district, District of Tulungagung -- one of program participants -- reported in this VoC. When he was interviewed by Pak Rahmat, Pak Bashori, School Principal of MTsN Bandung said: "... I let my students participate because I think they need to know how to protect themselves from HIV. I know that all facilitators are capable in this area. Of course I doubted about this program in the beginning, but after I knew the facilitators are from Education Office and Religious Affairs then I believe that they can guide my students better than I do in this matter".

"Regeneration" of peer educators (PE) has been done. An issue that was raised in the beginning of this program was replacement of PEs. The length of study in MTs is 3 years. In MTsN Bandung, 3 trained PEs have already finished their study last year. However, 7 new PEs were recruited and have conducted discussion with their friends. Pak Bashori said: "I am aware that students get the benefit of this program, so I manage this program the best we can. I asked Ibu Sri Utami, our counselor teacher, to prepare and implement activities to ensure the continuation of this program. She selected students to be appointed as new PEs from the first grade who work together such as inservice training with those 3 trained PEs. As a result, after those 3 previous PEs graduated we still have 7 new PEs".

Parents also support this program. According to Pak Bashori, he also informed parents of students. When parents visited the school, Pak Bashori describe how important this program for our children. He said: "I explain to parents that children should know reproductive health through discussion on

reproductive organs. Previously, this topic was considered as taboo by community to talk openly. Fortunately most parents had agreed to implement this program".

HIV&AIDS prevention materials are inserted in all learning subjects and become topics for discussion in extra curricula activity. Using these models of sharing HIV&AIDS prevention messages has attracted students to participate. As said by Devi Ratriana, one of new PEs: "I was interested to participate in this program after I've got information about HIV&AIDS from my senior schoolmate on how to protect ourselves from this disease. We talked about it during class break. At that time I just felt kind of fun and thrilling, because we talked about it while we were joking you know how young teenagers like us talking about dating wow ... it is always interesting". She got more clear explanation when she participated in the orientation in District Health office last year. She added her view: "It was a lot of fun, because the facilitators were delivering the topics by joking, games and quiz. Then I was willing to be a PE".



Students discussed HIV and narcotics during camp activities led by PEs

Response of students is also positive. In general, they said that the topics can be easily discussed with friends in any places and situations with PEs. However, one of them said that if the chat became 'hot' PE shouted: "Hey...beware...don't go further...remember....you can get HIV through free sex"

IEC materials for PEs to help them in explaining and guiding discussion are the biggest constraint. PEs had developed very simple materials. Pak Bashori asks UNICEF to provide better quality IEC materials for PEs.

Preparing Islamic students to be agent of change in preventing the spread out of HIV&AIDS is a hard work as many factors may interfere the process. However, with integrated actions and working together with relevant institutions, the objective can be achieved. Yes...they are vulnerable and we have to empower them for protecting themselves
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PEs prepare IEC materials for presentation