BAD SICKNESS
RUBBISH SICKI
Understanding HIV and AIDS Risk and Vulnerability Among Solomon Islands Youth

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UNDERSTANDING HIV AND AIDS RISK AND VULNERABILITY AMONG SOLOMON ISLANDS YOUTH

Despite the low prevalence of HIV and AIDS, young boys and girls, men and women in Solomon Islands are at increased risk and vulnerability to HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). The level of risk and vulnerability is affected by certain behaviours like commercial and transactional sex, men having unprotected sex with men, and the lack of knowledge for safe sex and substance abuse. A Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) survey was jointly organised by UNICEF Pacific Offices and the Government of Solomon Islands from 2008 to 2009 to gain a better understanding of risk and vulnerability related to HIV and AIDS among most-at-risk and especially vulnerable adolescents, young people and general population youth in Solomon Islands (SI).

What the survey says

The survey has 604 respondents from Honiara area (125), Western Province (183), Choiseul Province (67) and Malaita Province (229). The KAP survey uses the term “adolescent” for youth ages 15-19, “young people” to describe the 20-24 age group, and “youth” for the sample of 15-24 years. The terms Most-at-Risk Adolescent (MARA), Most-at-Risk Young Person (MARYP), Especially Vulnerable Adolescent (EVA) and Especially Vulnerable Young Person (EVYP) are used in accordance with international standards.

The findings from mapping workshops, KAP survey questionnaires, Focus Group Discussions, and Key Informant Interviews are presented below.
Context of Vulnerability

- Forced sex
- Substance abuse
- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Sexual Violence
- Incest
- Lack of Community and Family Support
- Being away from home
- Being out of school
- Single mother
- Pregnant Teens
- Sexually-Transmitted Infections (STIs)
- Displaced populations
- Outside influences
Knowledge about HIV and AIDS risk and prevention

✿ A relatively low level (32%) of comprehensive knowledge of HIV and AIDS.
✿ Only 5.8% of sexually active youth had been tested for HIV and received their results.

Attitudes

✿ Only half of the respondents had used a condom, although three-quarters were sexually active. Reasons for not using a condom are lack of knowledge of using a condom, unable to obtain a condom, that condom was not safe and that it did not feel good.
✿ Sixty-seven percent said their parents talked with them about their sexuality and prevention of HIV.
✿ Forty-eight percent of respondents displayed low or no perception of personal risk, and lack of focus on changing unsafe behaviour despite a basic understanding of risks.