



Title: USE OF SAFE SPACE TO PROMOTE PrEP

Background

Being cognizant of the fact that there are limited spaces where women can freely express themselves, BHESP has set up a safe space. BHESP Safe space provides a platform for the adolescents' girls and young women to converge interact and freely express themselves on matters concerning them.

Myriad Challenges faced by young woman, concerns on regards to PrEP use, innovations to enhance awareness and increase acceptability of PrEP as well as sharing of personal experience of PrEP use are some of the agendas of discussion in the safe spaces.

BHESP safe space provided an environment where AGYWs feel safe, comfortable and empowered to make individual responsible choices on HIV prevention and general health

Additionally, the safe space provides an opportunity for the organization to provide and receive feedback on programming and possible ways of improving the same

AGWY fully take lead of activities and sessions at the safe space which positively increases ownership.



Olivia introducing the days agenda

Discussions held at the safe space indiscriminately target all AGYWs irrespective of whether they are on PrEP or not.

Story

As usual the peers would meet in the safe space in afternoons of Fridays.

Despite it being peer led, staff at BHESP including the organization director usually attends the sessions to provide support as well as just get to know and learn from the AGYW community.

On Friday of 3RD March at 2pm as it has been usual a meeting was held at BHESP safe space commonly referred by them as “Baze”.The meeting was attended by

Determined

Resilient

Empowered

AIDS-Free

Mentored

Safe



15 AGYWS. The discussion kicked off with introductions and welcome remarks from Olivia who was the day's moderator. She shared the day's main objective and the theme which was "nothing for us without us". She went on and elaborated that it's through the safe space that they could address all concerns around PrEP and how the forum could promote PrEP use among their peers with them being part of the innovations. Olivia added that the day's agendas will revolve around these questions as follows,

- What are their greatest concerns on HIV?
- HIV prevention methods they knew about?
- How many people had heard about PrEP?
- Who can take PrEP?
- How can they create demand for PrEP use among their peers?
- How will they promote PrEP during the upcoming international women's day?

She ended by reinforcing that, "every idea is valid".



Discussions sessions in the safe space

The forum was very interactive; everyone opened up and fully expressed themselves in Kiswahili, English and slang. Sitting in a circle, the team revealed that their concern is the alarming new HIV infection increase among their peers. "We still have rampant sexual gender- based violence experienced by the youth and this has really affected HIV prevention efforts," said one of the participants. Another participant explained that lack of knowledge among the AGYWs on HIV prevention and fear to disclose to the health provider as being at risk for HIV was her greatest concern.

The team agreed that there is urgent need to inform their peers about the availability of PrEP and link them to BHESP AGYW friendly clinics to access PrEP dramatically reduces chances of Infection.

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From the feedback it was evident that quite a number of participants in the room knew about PrEP and there I, the project manager had the opportunity to provide more information about PrEP, who is eligible for PrEP, what is done before PrEP initiation and how long does one take PrEP among other facts about PrEP

“How soon can I get PrEP?” One participant asked. I responded by referring them to BHESP Clinic for assessment and initiation of PrEP.

In reference to creating PrEP demand for PrEP, participants agreed to innovatively use approaches like one to one peer communication at the AGYWs hang out areas, availing and distribution of IEC materials and proactively use of Social media. They were also urged to invite at least five new friends to the safe space meetings.

“I will be bold and promote PrEP use among young women and girls for HIV prevention”

They discussed that during this international women day they are going to promote the theme “Be bold for change” by encouraging their peers to be bold and use PrEP as an alternative for HIV prevention. The team come up with the following messages to be used in social media activation in the month

and during the international women day. The message includes;

“I will be bold and promote PrEP use among young women and girls for HIV prevention”

“I will be bold and step up for young girls and women by creating PrEP awareness”

Outcomes

During the week after the safe space meeting and up to today it came to our attention that there was significant increase in discussions around PrEP on Tweeter and Face book It came out that more youths are interested to learn more about PrEP and where they can access PrEP.

“How soon can I get PrEP, because I want to prevent myself from HIV”

Through the hotline number I have received a number of calls from individuals interested on taking PrEP.

The safe space provided an opportunity to promote and create demand for PrEP use. It's one of the strategies adopted by BHESP to reach out to the AGYWs to create PrEP awareness.

At the wellness centre, you will hear the AGYWs say to each other “Tukatane Baze” “Let's meet in the safe space” as they bid each other bye.

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Wanjiku with a print of one of the messages developed by the team

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