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BHESP Trains Peer Educators on Mapping and Size Estimation to better plan HIV prevention interventions



Bar Hostess Empowerment and Support Programme (BHESP) has trained 150 peer educators on key populations size estimation and mapping in order to better plan HIV prevention interventions.

The 2-day sensitization training, that was held at Blue Springs Hotel, equipped peer educators with the knowledge to identify behavioral risk factors among female sex workers and their clients.

“I have now understood the need to identify where risk takes place and how many people are engaged in risky behaviors at these spots so that as a peer educator I can target them with HIV prevention services,” said Justina*, a peer educator.

On her part Isabella*, an outreach worker said the sensitization training was very informative explaining that she is now ready for the rollout of the remapping exercise.

According to National Aids and STIs Control Programme (NASCO), Kenya conducted comprehensive mapping and estimation in 2012 covering 32/47 counties using programmatic mapping approach that revealed Kenya has an estimated 133,675 female sex workers.

NASCO emphasizes the need for remapping and estimation of key populations in 2017/18 in order to understand changes in the landscape and population in the last 5 years and collect new information about key populations.

“The process will help in validating the hotspots already mapped and programmed for, finding new hotspots where risk takes place and revising the estimates of people engaging in risk in those particular hotspots,” elaborated BHESP’s Project Officer Laveria Wanja.

On his part, Embakasi West Subcounty AIDS and STI Coordinator (SCASCO) Edwin Mwangi, who supervised the sensitization training, said the remapping exercise will help in prioritizing for scale up and understanding funding gap at the county level.

“We will work closely with BHESP towards the ensuring that the process is a success and will assist in getting a more refined estimate aggregated from the hotspots,” Mwangi concluded.

BHESP marks International Women's Day calling for scale-up of PrEP use among women and girls



This event aims to create awareness on PrEP among high-risk women and girls. We will also use the platform to call for collective action and shared ownership for driving gender parity.”

Hundreds of women gathered at the Huruma Grounds to witness a women football tournament organized by Bar Hostess Empowerment and Support Programme (BHESP) to mark International Women's Day on Thursday.

The tournament dubbed “Scoring for PrEP” was aimed at creating awareness on how young women can boldly fight HIV through the use of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP).

The one-day tournament brought together 6 women team from Roysambu DIC, Jogoo Road DIC, Kariobangi DIC, Knight Nurse, Sex Worker Outreach Programme (SWOP) and Kenya Sex Workers Alliance (KESWA).

While officially opening the tournament, Mercy Kamau from jhpiego said the event will provide an opportunity to create demand for PrEP use among young girls and women adding that it's the effective way to prevent new HIV infections.

“As you play soccer today I wish you the best of luck and let's remember to pass the message about PrEP. Your risk of getting HIV from sex can be even lower if you combine PrEP with condoms and other prevention methods,” Kamau said.

On his part, BHESP's Program Manager Sedaula Mwangi said the event provided an opportunity for women to take control of their health and was a celebration of women's social, political, and cultural achievements from the past and present.

“This event aims to create awareness on PrEP among high-risk women and girls. We will also use the platform to call for collective action and shared ownership for driving gender parity,” Mwangi added.

Jogoo Road DIC clinched the trophy after beating Kariobangi DIC 4-0 in the finals while Roysambu DIC secured the third place beating SWOP 1-0.

“This is a good opportunity for partners to come together and work towards a common goal of eliminating HIV and AIDS. I commend BHESP for coming up with this noble idea,” said Anthony from SWOP.

Lastly, BHESP's project officer Laveria Mwai said the event provided a good opportunity for women to showcase their talent while at the same time advocating for the use of PrEP.

“The event has been successful and I believe it will press for progress and forge positive visibility of women,” Mwai concluded.

I EMPOWER BAR HOSTESSES AND HELP THEM KNOW THEIR RIGHTS



Peninah Mwangi is the executive director of the Bar Hostesses Empowerment and Support Programme

I studied sociology and literature at university. After graduation, as I was job searching, I managed a pub for a relative. It was here that I came face to face with the violence that women who work in bars endure.

I saw women being grabbed by customers, male customers refusing to pay bills or taking a lot of drinks and declaring that they would only pay if the woman agrees to go home with him. The day

that I resolved to do something, a policeman had come in to drink and when the waitress asked him to pay, he dragged her out, bundled her into the boot of a car and went and locked her up in a cell. I knew that had to do something.

I gathered the hostesses and we stormed the police station. We took the matter up with the station OCS and the officer was reprimanded. That was when I knew that together, we had the power. That was 19 years ago. Today I work with bar hostesses, sex workers and young women. They are most vulnerable to acts of violence and HIV infection. The numbers are disturbing. For instance, every three out of four people infected with HIV are young women. How can we ignore that?

On a normal day at work, you will find me either setting up HIV testing stations in bars and rallying woman to get tested, or distributing condoms. We can turn our backs and say that the sex trade is not thriving but it is, and young women are exposed every day. So I empower them to speak out against violence, to ask a man to use a condom.

I also lobby to change policies that are discriminatory against women. In cases for soliciting for sex, for instance, while women are thrown behind bars, the men walk. The laws are faulty. We need a situation where gender fairness is respected. Just yesterday, I was handling a case of a policeman who has been harassing sex workers and forcing them to have unprotected sex with him. I am happy when we are able to take cases to court.

I have met many people who do not understand that ours is a human rights organization fight for sexual and reproductive health rights for everyone. I have met people who think that I am promoting prostitution. But the truth is that sex work is there and we can't change everyone. The ultimate dream for me is to live in a society where all women are respected, including sex workers.

My work can be emotionally taxing so when am not working, I like to spend some time alone. Going to most social places usually feels like work to me, so I will stay home and bod with my son and my partner.

“The day that I resolved to do something, a policeman had come in to drink and when the waitress asked him to pay, he dragged her out, bundled her into the boot of a car and went and locked her up in a cell. I knew that had to do something.”

BHESP advocacy team sweep Dandora police station clean



Bar Hostess Empowerment and Support Programme (BHESP) Advocacy team led a group of paralegals and peer educators to clean Dandora police station with an appeal to the law enforcers to address cases of violence

meted on sex workers in the area.

BHESP programme manager Simon Mwangi led the team to clean Dandora Police station compound, administration offices and the police officers staff quarters.

Mwangi hoped that the cleaning exercise will help create a good rapport with the law enforcers consequently creating a good working condition with the advocacy team.

“We are very humbled to have the opportunity to clean the police station and we are planning to conduct a sensitization meeting with the officers especially on key populations programming and human rights,” Mwangi held.

On his part, Dandora Police station OCS Mathew Ndogo thanked BHESP advocacy team for taking the initiative to clean the station explaining that the station has been side-lined by the community.

“The community fear the police due to lack of information. For the past three years, only one organization showed up and plant trees in this compound. Now you are the second group to come here and I really commend you for the job well done,” Ndogo explained.

In reference to violence cases, he noted that cases were not reported hence hindering access to justice.

“I encourage people to report cases and do regular follow-ups to ensure that justice is seen to be served including the use of alternative dispute resolutions mechanisms,” he said.

On her part, BHESP advocacy lead Josephine Mtende promised to come back and sensitize the law enforcers on human rights to ensure female sex workers are not victims of law enforces brutality.

“We will come back and create awareness both to the community and law enforces in this area on the benefits of reporting cases and violence response mechanisms,” she said.

“I am very happy to have the opportunity to interact with the officers during the cleanup exercise. Now am not afraid and in case of anything I will walk in here confidently and report any rights violations,” Ann*, a peer educator said.

ABC's of PrEP



- It is not an emergency pill that you can pop once after a sexual encounter. You need to be taking it for about seven days before you are effectively protected.
- You must take a pill every day. It's not to be taken only on days that you think you will have sex.
- PrEP only prevents HIV infections. It will not prevent pregnancies or other sexually transmitted infections.
- You can't get HIV from taking PrEP. If you take it regularly as you should, it will give you protection from HIV.
- PrEP does not give you permission to be sexually reckless and promiscuous.