UNAIDS STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

UNAIDS STRATEGY REVIEW: Focus Group Synthesis template

Country: Philippines

- Organizer: Council for the Welfare of Children Positive Youth Development Network, Inc. United Nation Children Fund, Philippines
- Date: August 20, 2020 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

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UNAIDS STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Focus Group Synthesis template

UNAIDS STRATEGY REVIEW: Focus Group Synthesis template

Please use the template to organize your feedback from the session. Please keep responses succinct and as clear as possible to ensure our synthesis is a reflection of the focus groups hosted.

You can enter your report directly into a form on SurveyMonkey: <u>https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3HC9Q6M</u>

If you are not able to enter it on line you can send us a copy via e-mail strategyteam@unaids.org

Would you accept for UNAIDS to make your report publicly available: Yes

SECTION 1: Information about the focus group (to be completed by host of Focus Group)

Organization leading discussion:	Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) Positive Youth Development Network, Inc. (PYDN) United Nation Children Fund, Philippines (UNICEF Philippines)
Date of discussion:	August 20, 2020
Theme to be discussed:	Online Focus Group Discussions on HIV Prevention and Control for Adolescents serving as a resource in the continuing of UNAIDS Strategy Development.
Participants (types of participating):	 30 participants representing the following youth organizations organizations and organizations working with youth Youth Peer Education Network of Organizations & Institutions Community and Family Services International Team Dugong Bughaw Higyap PH SK Katangawan Council for the Welfare of Children AIDS Society of the Philippines Positive Youth and Development Network

Country, regional or global focus: Country focus - adolescents in the Philippines

Introducing the theme

Please enter the main characteristics of the theme being explored in 5 sentences (please share the presentation if possible by email)

An Online Focus Group Discussion on HIV Prevention and Control for Adolescents

- □ General and specific views of adolescents and young people affected by and/or living with HIV in terms of reach (demand generation), services and structures (service delivery) and contextual and enabling environment (policies).
- Identify effective programs and practices to scale up and the ones that do not work nor contribute to the achievement of the goals. In the case of the latter, suggest new approaches and proven effective strategies to reduce the HIV/AIDS transmission and effectively halth the epidemic and its related issues that affect the lives of the young key population group.
- □ The inputs gathered from the participants will contribute to the development of the UNAIDS strategic plan.

SECTION 2: People-centered response to HIV – key emerging messages

Please enter the main messages coming out, up to 5 points maximum per section

REACHING THE PERSON	
How do we see the current situation?	Youth nowadays still lack knowledge when it comes to HIV and AIDS prevention. They mostly turn to social media for information. Often, they are unable to determine if the information is complete and accurate. There are young people who do not see HIV and AIDS as important issue and thus not interested to talk about it. There are still a lot of misconceptions on HIV resulting in discriminative behaviors towards PLHIV's, YKP's and gender-related issues.
What concerns us?	HIV and AIDS cases are still increasing because youth engage in unprotected sexual activities. Some of them are just curious. However, they do not have proper information on HIV and AIDS. As the topic is still taboo, a lot of them are unwilling to learn. Youth advocates can reach out to their fellow peers and educate them about the danger of the virus. They must look into the practices of other young people in imparting their knowledge to the fellow youth in the community through innovative approaches amidst the pandemic.
What gives us hope?	Despite the need to increase awareness among the YKP group, there is an increasing number of valiant young people who found strength in each other and joined in the fight against ignorance on the HIV/AIDS epidemic. There are more YKP's involved in organizations and in community-based group who have become volunteers, peer counselors, facilitators and trainors. Peer counselling proved to be an effective method in reaching YKPs as they relate better with their own age group as well as with hard to reach groups such as out-of-school-youths, marginalized people and those living in far-flung areas of the country. The youth's uncanny ability to innovate and to readily utilize technology that is available to them such as social media apps and other online platforms to use as their tools to educate not only their peers but also their families and communities as well offer that hope to battle against the disease.
What constrains our ability to achieve our goals?	Many of the young key population face stigma, prejudice and discrimination in their daily lives. This pushes them to the margins of society, where poverty and fear make accessing healthcare and HIV services difficult. The epidemic of fear, stigmatization and discrimination has undermined the ability of individuals, families, and societies to protect themselves and to provide support and reassurance to those affected. These hinder in no small way, efforts at stemming the epidemic. They complicate decisions about testing, disclosure of status, and ability to negotiate prevention behaviors.
	Many young people do not receive adequate HIV and sex education. If young people are able to access comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) before becoming sexually active, they are more likely to make informed decisions about their sexuality and approach relationships with more self-confidence. CSE is one of the five key recommendations for improving the HIV response as this will help to increase knowledge on practicing safe sex, increase voluntary HIV testing among YKPs and reduce teenage pregnancy, especially when linked with non-school-based, youth-friendly SRHR services, provided in a stigma-free environment.
	Adolescents and young adults are at increased risk for HIV due to the many developmental, psychological, social, and structural transitions that converge

	in this period of their lifespan. There are also young key populations (YKPs) that bear disproportionate burdens of HIV and are the most vulnerable, specifically young men who have sex with men (MSM), transgender youth, young people who inject drugs, and adolescent and young adult sex workers. In order to achieve the global goals of zero infections, zero discrimination and zero deaths, a sustained focus on HIV research, policy and advocacy for YKPs must occur.
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THE STRUCTURES THAT RESPOND TO HIV	
How do we see the current situation?	The COVID19 pandemic brought a lot of challenges when it comes to access to adolescent and reproductive health care services. Due to limited activities that we can do during quarantine, this is an opportunity to partner with youth organizations in the grassroot level and strengthen the awareness campaign.
What concerns us?	Due to the imposed lockdown, immobility, and other protocols, young people have less chances of accessing condoms and lubricants. These also hindered the activities and initiatives of many youth organizations raising awareness about HIV/AIDS.
What gives us hope?	Difficult times presented itself as an opportunity to bring about new approaches to increasing awareness on the HIV/AIDS crisis while countries such as ours grappled with COVID19. This pandemic did not stop young leaders and facilitators from becoming more innovative in raising awareness among young people using digital technology as their tool for properly teaching about HIV/AIDS to the YKPs who are into that platform. As long as these young advocates find much needed support, tools and materials in fighting for the cause against AIDS - from the government sectors, private/public and other community-based groups and others who have been sponsors against the disease then more awareness, prevention, treatment and interventions can reach more numbers of the YKP set with more young leaders/facilitators joining the battle.
What constrains our ability to achieve our goals?	In the Philippines, there is a common notion, which may attribute to the generational gap between the young people and the Generation X, that entails the wrong mindset: educating people about sex encourages them to commit sexual activities. Likewise, culture also plays a big role since, most Filipinos are raised in a conservative environment where sex is a very taboo thing to be discussed over meals. Further, the lack of awareness about HIV/AIDS and its adverse effects including the fallacies and myths and misconceptions about HIV/AIDS and the community stigma attached to this topic continue to affect the achievement of the goals set in ending adolescent AIDS. During this pandemic, partnership with local leaders is quite challenging since almost all our leaders are focusing on COVID-19 response. Due to quarantine protocols, activities that require mobility outside of one's home had been limited.

CONTEXTUAL ENVIRONMENT	
How do we see the current situation?	There is a diminished government attention and allocation of funds on AIDS response due to the limitations imposed during the quarantine. However, this can be seen as an opportunity to partner with youth organizations in the grassroot level and strengthen the awareness campaign on HIV and AIDS.

What concerns us?	COVID 19 and the imposition of the community quarantine exacerbate the issue of access of YKPs to testing and other related services as they are not allowed to leave their homes; Some are apprehended because of violating curfew. Laws and policies are contradicting. (HIV Law, RH Law)
What gives us hope?	Difficult times provide opportunities and bring about positive change while patient persistence yields success. Filipinos, like the rest of the world have gone through a pandemic, but this did not stop young people from being innovative as long as there is much needed support and encouragement from organizations, government institutions, individual/s from the private and public sector willing to educate these YKPs and to provide means and platforms to gain knowledge on the basics of HIV/AIDS (i.e. tools to protect themselves such as correct use of a condom, etc.)
	Young leaders play an important role in social change, including the transformation of prejudice and stigma associated with HIV and AIDS. Young leaders, as they are known and admired by their fellow youth can help steer interest and commitment of young people to be involved in effective HIV prevention and change society's attitude towards the people affected by HIV and AIDS.
What constrains our ability to achieve our goals?	The apparent unwillingness of government agencies to work together and harmonize their policies and laws regarding the children do hinder in achieving the goal.
	During this pandemic, partnership to work with local leaders on scaling up the response on the HIV/AIDS epidemic is quite challenging since most of our country's leaders are focusing more on dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

EMERGING PATTERNS:

Emerging patterns from the Focus Group Discussion among participating adolescents revealed the following:

- □ To this day, children and young adolescents still lack awareness and have inadequate knowledge about HIV/AIDS. While lack of interest about the issue is one of the challenges, it can also be noted that young people rely heavily on social media platforms when seeking information. The information they find might not necessarily be complete and accurate thus misconceptions are not properly addressed.
- □ Generation gap, conservative culture of the Philippines due to religious beliefs as well as the prevailing culture and mindsets in young people's community pose real challenge in incorporating sex education, reproductive health discussion and HIV/AIDS in the educational system. Academic institutions can be excellent platforms in educating the young and old alike and in addressing the issue of stigma and discrimination among PLHIVs, at risk children and adolescents as well as other high-risk individuals.
- Community lockdowns and quarantine protocols during this COVID19 pandemic severely affected the delivery and access to essential services for those needing treatment, support, and testing on HIV/AIDS. Thus, there is an increasing the need for physical and psychosocial support for PLHIV and the vulnerability of children particularly those in impoverished living conditions.

- It is noteworthy that while in community quarantine, young people responded to the call of raising awareness using social media platforms in reaching out to the YKPs. They have also taken advantage of the lockdown to encourage more young people to volunteer and participate virtually in sharing relevant information on HIV/AIDS – its prevention, treatment and control and other related reproductive issues.
- Advocate for harmonized laws and policies (with corresponding resources) that would encourage inter agency collaboration in order to address increasing cases of HIV. Scale up programs that have delivered results over the years. Design interventions that can adapt to changes in the global and local context, including public health crisis like COVID 19, ensuring that children and young people are given appropriate attention.

SECTION 3: RECOMMENDATIONS World Café

Please enter the main messages coming out, up to 5 points maximum per section

What are the key	What are the key recommendations back to UNAIDS in terms of the strategy specifically?	
CONTINUE	What is working that we must continue to do?	
	Proper education on HIV/AIDS must continue as it is an essential component of battling ignorance about the disease as it has also inspired other YKP's in the cause. Advocating for availability of quality interventions and access to treatment. Lobbying for laws and policies that help in innovative approaches and other forms of information dissemination which can provide psychosocial support particularly for these young people and other vulnerable groups. Continued partnership with non-traditional stakeholders need to persist as funds are needed to sustain programs that proved effective over time and to form new programs that can adapt to the changing times.	
STOP	What must we stop doing that if we don't stop will ensure failure?	
	Intense campaign against HIV/AIDS mean also stopping discrimination in every social place, stigmatization on PLHIV's and other high-risk groups, intolerance because of gender and creation of hate groups that exacerbate social dysfunction and unrest.	
START	What are we not doing that we have to start doing?	
	Start expanding more HIVTesting centers as more testing sites means more access too for YKP's and other vulnerable people who can avail of accurate diagnosis and treatment. Start providing more health care services for YKP's especially in very far places of the country and for the marginalized sector of the society. Start creating more hubs which provide safe places for YKP's to congregate and openly discuss about HIV/AIDS and other STI's and reproductive health issues. These can be places of support for YKP's to gain strength against stigma and discrimination while battling the disease and dealing with other physical and psychosocial and economic issues related to HIV.	
	Start creating other platforms for proper education against HIV/AIDS through digital technology and other creative methods to better spread the message across YKP's and different sectors of the society.	
What is the one key recommendation you want to reiterate for strong consideration?	Highly recommended and reiterated a comprehensive barangay-wide re- education and awareness campaign on HIV/AIDS and sex education starting with the families. Equipping parents to join seminars on the reality of the disease on children. Emphasis on utilizing other platforms to spread more awareness (Tiktok, Twitter, etc.) and to engage YKP's to learn more about the disease. Integral to the cause is having a holistic approach for HIV and AIDS in harmony with policies (laws, guidelines, inter agency programs, etc.)	
	Encouraging stakeholders that strongly support the advocacy to continue in the fight against the HIV/AIDS battle with their generosity to the cause so that programs can be sustained and more adaptive programs can be created to reach the goal against HIV eradication. Key also is more accessibility and availability of health care services so more can be tested - for prevention, treatment and other interventions as needed especially for the YKP's.	

Please share with us any references you think would be useful for the EStrategy Development, such as examples of case studies that illustrate the challenges or recommendations you outlined in the discussion report.

Please also share a list of names and email addresses of participants who would wish to continue to be informed of the Strategy development process. Note names and contacts will not be shared publicly or with any third party.

You can send us additional documents via e-mail strategyteam@unaids.org

UNAIDS

20 Avenue Appia CH-1211 Geneva 27 Switzerland

+41 22 791 3666

unaids.org

BREAK-OUT GROUP OUTPUT

TEMPLATE 1: Group A

Knowledge And Misconceptions On HIV/AIDS Transmission And Preventive Methods	
How do we see the current situation?	Youth nowadays still have lack of knowledge when it comes to HIV/AIDS Prevention. They are more focus on social media that might give false information to them and some information are not well assessed from which sources or references it came from. It can cause misunderstanding and misconception.
What concerns us?	HIV/AIDS is rampant because out of curiosity, the youth engaged in unprotected sexual activities. The reasons why the youth are not well-educated, don't have proper information and not aware regarding HIV/AIDS because they are close-minded and this topic is prone to discrimination. As a youth advocate, we must guide and responsibly educate our fellow youth about the danger of this virus since we are more knowledgeable and educated about this.
What gives us hope?	In order to build our future, we need prove that we are the hope of our nation, not the one that contributes to the problem. We must involve ourselves about this situation and use our voice to spread awareness and accurate information.
How can we achieve this?	We must cheer each other up and encourage everyone to seek consultation from the experts. We can partner with other HIV/AIDS related organizations and be a pillar to widen the awareness against HIV/AIDS.
What can you contribute to achieve these goals?	Lastly, try to inspire our folks like our family, friends, love ones and colleagues even in a simple things and try to educate them the basics of this issue since they are the ones who are closer to us.
What constrains our ability to achieve our goals?	 Youth lost their interest easily if the topic is about HIV/AIDS. It is a challenge to divert their interest to listen about this topic. As a youth leader, in facilitating HIV/AIDS seminars, we must know how to connect with the audience to avoid boring and dead-fine lectures. There are still youth who are close-minded that don't have the interest to learn about HIV/AIDS. Discrimination is still present specially when knowing that a person is infected by HIV and we need to stop that stigma.

Template 2: Group A

What Are The Key Rec Specifically?	ommendations Back To UNAIDS In Terms Of The Strategy
CONTINUE	 Giving awareness Educating People Give hope to people Be part of the community Approach others

STOP	 Discriminatory actions Gender discrimination The STIGMA
START	 Expand HIV Testing Centers Loving those people living with HIV Access to health care services Being an open-minded person
What is the one key recommendation you want to reiterate for strong consideration?	We want to reiterate a strong recommendation to the access and information to health care services on HIV/AIDS because most of the people living with HIV don't know what to do and who to approach when they have it.

Template 1 : Group B

Knowledge And Misconceptions On HIV/AIDS Transmission And Preventive Methods	
Alex: Consider the communities and their culture. Provide information tailored to the communities. Context is important while dealing with different sectors especially with strong views about sex.	
No testing center in Abra.	
Jenny: Poverty is a driving force in increasing the number of youth at risk in their community. Misinformation is also a big factor in failure to protect themselves.	
Christine: Knowledge - sex, and HIV and AIDS education integration to schools. See the communities (e.g. Church, Schools) as possible partners.	
Allen: It is actually challenging to reach out of school youth. Basic skills are not even taught to them such as reading and writing.	
Ester: As long as there are people who stand with the advocacy, there is hope.	
Christine & Alex: Seeing progress in the advocacy: more people engaging and impacting the policies of the government institutions (DEPED).	
Allen & Jenny: Seeing people who support the advocacy. This also gives hope to the people who the advocacy is serving (PLHIVs, Youth). Ester: Being a representative and a leader opens opportunities to talk to other young people.	

What constrains	Lack of institutionalizing of HIV and AIDS education in the
our ability to	country.
achieve our goals?	•
	•
	Generational gaps with the older people.
	•
	•
	Predominantly Christian views of the country affects the
	•
	•
	Out of school youth - hard to reach
	•

Template 2: Group B

What are the key recommendations back to UNAIDS in terms of the strategy specifically?		
CONTINUE	• Looking for sponsors • • Tapping on to volunteers - young and old • • Provide more information •	
	Lobby for laws that are beneficial •	
STOP	Group B Stop being afraid. Put the conversation out there. Communicate with the sectors that have strong views against the advocacy.	
START	More treatment hubs • • Start demanding the government for more centers - community level • • More access to ARVs and condoms •	

What is the one key	•
recommendation	Similar with the START
you want to	•
reiterate	
for strong	
consideration?	

Template 1: Group C

Commence of HILV Dressontion And Intermentions		
Coverage Of HIV Prevention And Interventions		
How do we see the current situation?	The COVID-19 pandemic brought a lot of challenges when it comes to access to adolescent and reproductive health care services. Due to the imposed lockdown, immobility, and other	
What concerns us?	protocols, young people have lesser chances of accessing condoms and lubricants. This also hinders the activities and initiatives of many youth organizations that concern raising awareness about HIV/AIDS.	
What gives us hope?	What gives us hope is the fact that regardless of the current situation, a lot of young people still find their own ways to continue the fight for this cause. Some participants have shared that while in community quarantine, they still conducted	
How can we achieve this?	activities that raise awareness about HIV/AIDS through online platforms. Some even started debunking myths and misconceptions in their own families and circle of friends.	
What can you contribute to achieve this goals?	As young people, it is very important to innovate on the things that we cannot do given the ongoing circumstances. We will contribute into making sure that we'll reach every young person both online and offline in this fight.	
What constrains our ability to achieve our goals?	Some of the constraints mentioned by the participants that hinder young people to achieve our goals are: generational gap that entails to the wrong mindset that educating people about sex encourages them to commit sexual activities; culture also plays a big role since we are raised in a conservative culture where sex is a very taboo thing to be discussed over meals; lack of awareness about HIV/AIDS and its adverse effects; and the fallacy of the myths and misconceptions about HIV/AIDS and the community stigma attached to this topic.	

Template 2. Group C

What Are The Key I Specifically?	Recommendations Back To UNAIDS In Terms Of The Strategy
CONTINUE	Raising awareness in community-wide levels, in barangay levels, and through the help of young people.
STOP	Nothing.
START	Creating platforms where young people can participate in discussions about HIV/AIDS and even other sexually transmitted diseases both in online and offline platforms.

What is the one key	Start a barangay-wide reeducation and awareness campaign on
recommendation	HIV/AIDS. A lot of young people need a changed mindset in order
you want to	to debunk the stigma on this topic. Discussions of sex education
reiterate	inside a family must start and parents must be skilled to be able
for strong	to provide support to their adolescents and youth.
consideration?	

Template 1 : Group D

Multi-sectoral approach	n to AIDS response
How do we see the current situation?	Joshua – How do we adjust and how do we sustain? - Government's Attention and Allocation of funds on AIDS response
What concerns us?	Rob – Development Orgs that will cater to the needs of the children regarding sexual health.
	Emee Lei – Laws and policies are contradicting.
	- Look at things through the perspective of child protection.
What gives us hope?	Q3. Jervy – Goal for the youth to gain knowledge on correct condom use. PLHIVs started as
	Q3. Joshua – make it through the pandemic
How can we achieve this?	Q4 Joshua – Harmonize with the laws so we can give appropriate response. Cooperation with the government
	Q5. Joshua - Abstinence, Awareness, and Sensitivity.
What can you contribute to achieve this goals?	Q3. Cholo – People are more open in discussing HIV and AIDS. Its not a taboo anymore. People are willing to talk.
	Q4 Cholo – For people to open up more; to educating themselves on other matters that doesn't necessarily affect them.
	- Eliminate stigma
	Q5. Cholo – to make progressive ways in educating people. Mainstream Media.
	Rob – Understand YKPs and know how to cater the concerns

What constrains our ability to	Q6. Emee – Willingness of agencies to work together. Until hindi na haharmonize ang policies and laws regarding the children
achieve our goals?	

Template 2: Group D

What are the key recommendations back to UNAIDS in terms of the strategy specifically?		
CONTINUE	Joshua - Strategize further to get across other platforms. Utilize other platforms. Think outside the box	
STOP		
START		
What is the one key recommendation you want to reiterate for strong consideration?	Utilize other platforms to spread more awareness (TikTok, Twitter, and etc.) Holistic Approach for HIV and AIDS to Harmonize policies - For Agencies to have the same approach in handling the situation and services	

PYDN OUTPUT

Template 1

Knowledge and misconceptions on HIV/AIDS transmission and preventive		
methods		
How do we see the	There are young people who are close-minded and do not	
current situation?	put attention to this topic that need a strong campaign to	
	provide them awareness about this campaign. Also,	
What concerns us?	misconceptions about HIV/AIDS are spreading quickly and	
	the HIV survivors are being discriminated.	
What gives us	Amidst the pandemic there are lots of young people taking	
hope?	action on their innovative ideas, imparting their knowledge	
	to their fellow youth in the community.	
How can we		
achieve this?		
What can you	Providing the young people with right information and	
contribute to	materials that they can use to educate their fellow youth.	
achieve this goals?		
What constrains	In some areas, this is a sensitive topic and some young	
our ability to	people are close-minded and do not have the interest to	
achieve our goals?	learn about HIV/AIDS.	
	Some survivors of this are being discriminated. This is one	
	of the reason that we need to strengthen the campaign and	

enu the sugna.		end the stigma.	
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Coverage of HIV pr	evention and interventions
How do we see the	Youth in marginalized area have limited knowledge when it
current situation?	comes to HIV/AIDS and the pandemic has really brought
	challenges on access to reproductive health. Conducting an
What concerns us?	activities are also challenging due to this situation.
What gives us	Young people making their innovative ideas into reality and
hope?	partnering with their local leaders and private sectors as
	well.
How can we	
achieve this?	
XA71 .	
What can you	Strong partnership with stakeholders to support young
contribute to	people with this campaign.
achieve this goals?	
What constrains	Due to quarantine protocols, activities are limited.
our ability to	
achieve our goals?	

Multi-sectoral approach to AIDS response		
How do we see the	Due to limited activities that we can do during quarantine,	
current situation?	this is an opportunity to partner with youth organizations	
	in the grassroot level and strengthen the awareness	
What concerns us?	campaign.	
What gives us	Partnership with young people to reach the grassroot level	
hope?	and marginalized areas to achieve the goal of preventing	
	the transmission and spread of HIV/AIDS.	
How can we	Supporting the youth in this advocacy and believing that the	
achieve this?	youth can truly provide solutions on issues like this.	
What can you	Online awareness campaign.	
contribute to		
achieve this goals?		
What constrains	In this time of pandemic, partnership with local leaders are	
our ability to	quite challenging for this campaign since almost all our	
achieve our goals?	leaders are focusing on COVID-19 response.	

RECOMMENDATIONS

What are the key recommendations back to UNAIDS in terms of the strategy specifically?	
CONTINUE	Continue the awareness campaign, strengthen the advocacy and continue the partnership with young people with innovative ideas, and other stakeholders

STOP	
START	Providing the young people, a safe space where they can share their ideas. Creating platform for young people that they can easily access
What is the one	Look for stakeholders that strongly support the advocacy
key	and that can equip the young people with knowledge about
recommendation	HIV/AIDS
you want to	
reiterate	
for strong	
consideration?	