



UYDEL Transforming society where young people live a good quality and life free from exploitation

PREVENTION OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG URBAN YOUTH IN UGANDA; STRATEGIES WORKING FOR UYDEL

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Alcohol and other substance use rates among children in schools, youths and adolescents in universities and other tertiary institutions in Uganda have risen substantially. Findings from a recent study carried out in 2017 indicates that 70% of children ages 12-24 attending schools in Kampala and Gulu had ever used alcohol and illicit drugs of which 39.1% reported regular use of substances, (Catherine Abbo et. al). Statistics show that alcohol and cannabis are the most abused substance in schools. In 2014, the World Health Organization's Global Status on Alcohol and Health Report indicated that Uganda was the highest consumer of alcohol for each person in the entire East African Region. Evidence shows that substance use has negative impact on health of young people especially when they start using at an early age and especially if they are using multiple substances at once (Newcomb & Bentler, 1989).

UYDEL is a local NGO that works with young people ages 10-24 years who are vulnerable to exploitation and are at risk of substance abuse and HIV/AIDS infection. UYDEL's mission is to enhance socio-economic transformation of disadvantaged young people through skills development for self-reliance. UYDEL uses Selective Prevention to counter substance abuse as our beneficiaries are already at risk of substance use. UYDEL's strategies are adopted from the Life Skills Program and the Project Towards No Drug Use Program. UYDEL's focus is mainly on creating a safe environment for the beneficiaries, strengthening anti-drug attitudes and norms among young people at the various safe spaces and building their self-esteem.

A team of social workers and trained peer educators facilitate the interactive sessions that are held throughout the year at the UYDEL safe spaces. The sessions provide instruction in motivation activities to not use drugs; skills in self-control, communication, and resource acquisition; and decision-making strategies. They also provide instruction in Life skills training where the young people learn social skills, personal self-management skills and information and



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resistance skills specifically related to drug use. The sessions are aimed at helping the young people build self-esteem, refusal & resistance skills for substance abuse and counter peer pressure among the young people. Personal and social skills education is very relevant for this age group and it has adequate evidence of effectiveness (Barkin et al, 2002). This is because they addresses perceptions of risk and harm associated with substance use, emphasize immediate age-appropriate consequences of substance use and addresses misconceptions regarding the normative nature and expectations of substance use.

We also provide the beneficiaries with alternatives to alcohol and substance use like Vocational skills training, Music, Dance and Drama, Art and Design, Debates, Quizzes, Sports and Business Skills Training for economic empowerment. According to the police and media reports, the high level of crime in Kampala is attributed to the increasing use of drugs especially alcohol and marijuana among young people combined with high rates of unemployment. UYDEL uses sports under the UNODC's sports based prevention program known as 'Line Up Live Up' Program to build resilience for youth at risk and reduce anti-social behavior and drug use among young people. The program uses organized sports to equip young people with life skills, such as critical thinking, healthy mechanisms of coping with stress and effective communication with their peers.



References;

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