Community Support and Girls’ Efficacy: Results from the Supportive Community Index in Botswana, Malawi & Mozambique

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Strong Girls! Strong Communities!
Background

- Adolescent girls in sub-Saharan Africa are 3-5 times more likely to be infected with HIV than their male peers.
- The Go Girls! Initiative was designed to address this disparity by reducing girls’ vulnerability to HIV.
- Community support was identified as a key factor in reducing girls’ vulnerability.
Framework

Social Ecological Framework for the Go Girls! Initiative

INDIVIDUAL
Community-based life skills
School-based life skills

FAMILIES & SOCIAL NETWORKS
Adult-child communication

COMMUNITY
Community mobilization

STRUCTURAL
Economic strengthening
School personnel training
Cross-sectoral fora

Reality radio programming
Methods

Timeline: 2007-2011

Project Countries:
- **Malawi** (1 District; 2 peri-urban & 2 rural communities)
- **Mozambique** (2 Prov., 4 peri-urban & 4 rural communities)
- **Botswana** (1 District; 2 peri-urban & 4 rural communities)
Methods

Survey Methods

- Quasi-experimental, separate-samples
- Sample size per country
  - Baseline (Sep & Oct 2009)
    - Adolescent = 800
    - Adult = 500
  - Endline (Sep – Dec 2010)
    - Adolescent = 400-600
    - Adult = 400
- Today’s presentation is based on post-intervention adolescent data
Supportive Community Index (SCI)
### Supportive Community Index

**What is it?**
- A community/structural level measurement tool

**How can it be utilized?**
- Measure the level, and change in, community/structural support in a community – emphasizing vulnerable girls’ support

**Why is it important?**
- Communities/structures have a large impact on individual behaviors yet they are rarely addressed or evaluated
- Measurement allows for evaluation of structural interventions
Methods

Why focus on structural factors?

• Research shows that structural factors – access to educational, employment, & financial opportunities as well as policies that affect the distribution of resources – are key to HIV reduction

• Yet, structural interventions lag behind biomedical and individual-level behavioral interventions

• Nonetheless, community members prioritize structural interventions

• Practitioners argue that structural effects are difficult to measure
Methods

SCI Domains

• The SCI includes seven domains (each with 3-7 indicators)

• Identified from the literature & formative research in the communities of interest
  – Alcohol Regulation
  – Sexual Abuse Regulation
  – Community Safety
  – School Safety
  – Community Cohesion
  – Community Leadership
  – Community Support for Girls
Methods

Application of SCI

• Each domain was standardized.

• Standardized domain scores were dichotomized at the midpoint or median (depending on whether results were normally distributed).

• Respondents were assigned a 0 if the domain score was below the cutoff and a 1 if above the cutoff.

• The domain scores were summed to create the SCI.
## Results

Multilevel, bivariate and multivariate logistic regression assessing the relationship between sociodemographic characteristics, the supportive community index (SCI), VGI, and indicating the situation of girls has improved in the community among girls in select areas of Botswana, Malawi, and Mozambique, 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Botswana (n=401)</th>
<th>Malawi (n=414)</th>
<th>Mozambique (n=613)</th>
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<tr>
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<td>0.70</td>
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*ps0.10; **p ≤0.05; ***p≤0.01; ****p0.001
## Results

Multilevel, bivariate and multivariate logistic regression assessing the relationship between the supportive community index (SCI), VGI, sociodemographic characteristics, and indicating the confidence to ask a sexual partner to use a condom among girls in select areas of Botswana, Malawi, and Mozambique, 2010

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<td>0.67</td>
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*p ≤ 0.10; **p ≤ 0.05; ***p ≤ 0.01; ****p ≤ 0.001
## Results

Multilevel, bivariate and multivariate logistic regression assessing the relationship between the supportive community index (SCI), VGI, sociodemographic characteristics, and indicating the confidence to refuse sexual intercourse with a boyfriend among girls in intervention areas of Botswana, Malawi, and Mozambique, 2010

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*ps0.10; **p ≤0.05; ***ps0.01; ****ps0.001
Results

• Across the three countries, the SCI was associated with
  – perceptions among adolescents that the situation of girls had improved over the previous year and
  – the efficacy to refuse unwanted sex with a boyfriend (albeit, marginally so in Botswana (p<0.10).

• In Botswana, efficacy to use condoms was associated with scoring above the mean on the SCI.
• The Supportive Community Index combines structural factors that influence girls’ HIV risk into one single, applicable measure for the first time.

• The evidence presented here suggests that the structural factors that constitute the SCI are predictive of community actions that can be protective of vulnerable girls and are important in mitigating potential threats to their wellbeing.
• Most behavior change research and programs focus on the individual – ignoring the structures that constrain or enable individual-level actions

• GGI (research & program) was designed with community- and structural-level foci

• GGI was implemented a structural level intervention in three countries
  – As well as measuring the structural change through the SCI

• Future researchers and programs can use the SCI to design and test structural level interventions
• Unique index, tested in this study; further validation and refinement required:
  – Augmentation of domains, expansion to new audience segments, new health areas

• Yet, researchers and programmers should feel equipped to measure structural change using this index.

• Such applications will provide additional validation and, potentially, encourage funders to support multi-level interventions for improved and sustained health outcomes.
References and Resources

To access the full Research Reports of Go Girls! and other resources visit:

http://www.k4health.org
http://www.aidstar-one.com
GHCommunicationsTeam@usaid.gov


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