

# ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF SPORTS IN FIGHTING HIV/AIDS in BUGULUMBYA SUB-COUNTY, KAMULI UGANDA

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Although sports has been widely used and believed to help in HIV/AIDS prevention to date its impact in fighting HIV/AIDS has not been thoroughly investigated. Because sports tend to conjoin many people of all walks of life either as participants or as spectators, the use of the power of sports in tackling the HIV/AIDS pandemic may be worthy studying hence this study. The study aimed at assessing the role of sports in fighting HIV/AIDS among the youth of Bugulumbya sub-county in Kamuli District.

**Methods:** The researcher employed a Descriptive cross-sectional study design that used both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. The methods included; questionnaires, interviews, observations as well as documentary analysis. The researcher used a purposive sampling technique to meet part of the population like the head-teachers and teachers whereas stratified random sampling was employed to select the students. Convenience sampling was used to select the parents of the students depending on their accessibility and availability. Part of the data collected was analyzed using content analysis while the quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The analyzed results were presented in form of tables, pie-charts, graphs and narratives.

**Results:** The results of the study indicate that majority of the youth who participated in various sports activities in their various schools had something to learn from the sports events where HIV/AIDS messages are conveyed to masses. This helped them to make informed decisions after participating in the above sports events hence leading to an overall positive behavioral change. They all recommended the strategy of using the power of sport in tackling HIV/AIDS among the youth as being an effective tool in fighting HIV/AIDS and as well as being a learning experience with fun. Most teachers, parents and head-teachers contended the strategy of using the power of sport to tackle the HIV/AIDS pandemic as being effective in creating awareness among the youth and reinforcing what the youth had already known about the HIV/AIDS scourge.

**Key Words:** Sports, HIV/AIDS, Prevention, Uganda, Bugulumbya sub-county

## Background

HIV/AIDS is still a major challenge in the world today. Over 33.4 million people are affected with HIV/AIDS globally (Government of Uganda (G.O.U), 2010; Wabwire-Mangen et al., 2009). In Uganda HIV/AIDS kills every year many people and also reduces the life expectancy of people. Owing to this fact, many children have become orphans and helpless. Secondly the youth have started being infected by HIV/AIDS and as a consequence the mortality of the

youth has increased too (Alpha Youth Uganda, 2012). Currently out of a population of 34.6 million in the country, 1.2 million (7.3%) are living with HIV and AIDS. Those living with AIDS are not only affected by the disease but also discriminated at all levels of the society. Though in the beginning of the late 1980s, the Government of Uganda, Non-government organizations (NGOs) and the International Community launched an aggressive public health response to AIDS, the problem is still not yet

resolved (UYDEL, 2012). There is need to continue with preventive strategies among the various population groups especially the youth who are the most at risk.

Literature indicates that AIDS is still a challenge among the youth and adolescents (UNICEF, 2012). According to UNICEF (2012) each day 6,000 adolescents are infected with HIV yet many have no access to accurate information, life skills or even health services. In Uganda, the youth in the age group of 15-19 years had a prevalence rate of 2% on average for both sexes (Uganda Aids Commission, 2012). The UNAIDS World AIDS Day Report of 2011 urges that declines in new HIV infections across the world have been spurred by changes in behavior among young people. Access to prevention services has empowered individuals and communities to act in earnest against the disease. In countries with generalized epidemics, a combination of behavior change, including reductions in sexual partners, increases in condom use and delayed age of first sex have reduced new infection (incidence) in several countries (UNAIDS World AIDS Day Report of 2011). The situation in Uganda is not yet known hence the need for further research to be conducted. Therefore strategies targeting prevention should be continued and geared towards change of behavior, attitude and increased access to information.

Sports can be used as a tool for preventing HIV spread (UNICEF, 2012). Evidence from different countries such as Zambia, Uganda and Kenya reveal that sports can play a great deal in HIV prevention (Lindsey & Banda, 2011; UNICEF, 2012; UYDEL, 2012). One of the key objectives of the Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports five year HIV/AIDS prevention strategic plan 2011-2015 is to increase the use of sports and other co-curricular activities in HIV prevention. This will help to increase the use of condoms and other preventive measures. According to Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL) (2012) and Ruth et al., (2008) participating in sports activities either as an athlete or spectator, where HIV/AIDS messages are conveyed to the masses is a way of creating HIV/AIDS awareness to the public. Although some youth may not be participating in sports activities, they can still make valid and objective judgment on the phenomenon and its impact on the youth depending on whichever source of information they have heard from. The same applies to the parents and teachers as well who may also inform the youth about HIV/AIDS

(Alpha Youth Uganda, 2012). This success will stem from participating in sports events where HIV prevention messages are conveyed.

Although sport has been used as a strategy of fighting HIV/AIDS in Uganda since 1993, its significance as a tool used to fight HIV/AIDS among the youth has not yet been adequately studied. This study assessed the role of sports in HIV/AIDS prevention particularly in areas of Bugulumbya, one of the sub Counties where HIV/AIDS messages have been employed during sport activities in the different schools within the sub county for a period of about three years now. This paper presents the findings on one of the objectives that was carried out to explore the role of sports in fighting HIV/AIDS among the youth.

### **Methodology**

The study was carried out at Bugulumbya sub-county, one of the political divisions in Kamuli District. The sub-county has about 30 primary schools, 8 secondary schools, 5 parishes and 67 LC1 villages in which both school going youth and various youth out of school are organized in different sports activities. However in some of the sport activities, HIV prevention programs have been incorporated into them to sensitize the youth on HIV/AIDS prevention, transmission and treatment in order to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS among the youth within the sub- county (Adapted from the Map of Kamuli District 2002, Macmillan Publishers).

The objectives of the study were to find out the level of involvement of the selected schools in sports, presence of programs on HIV prevention during school, their sport events and finally to explore the people's views and opinions regarding the role of sports in HIV and AIDS prevention in the selected study areas. This was a descriptive cross-sectional study that used both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The target populations were secondary school students, teachers, head-teachers and parents in selected schools in Bugulumbya. A purposive sampling technique was used to select part of the sample such as head-teachers, teachers and parents whereas stratified random sampling was employed to select students from four randomly selected schools (Kasambira High School, Kamuli community college Kasambira, Bugulumbya secondary school and Bright standard Secondary

school). Therefore a total sample of 80 (eighty) respondents were selected for the study. This included 60 secondary school students from the four secondary schools (i.e. 30 females and 30 males) and in each school 15 students were selected using stratified random sampling from 3 strata of S.1, S.2, and S.3 classes, each stratum consisted of 5 randomly selected students), then eight purposively selected teachers (i.e. two from each school), and 4 head-teachers from the four schools. And finally 8 parents of some of the selected students were conveniently selected to participate in the study depending on their accessibility, availability and willingness. The data collection methods included; Observation, Interviews, questionnaires and documentary review. The researcher first sought permission from the Department of Biochemistry and Sports Science of Makerere University and also from the school authorities of the selected schools so as to be allowed to carry out the survey. This was followed by selecting the participants for the study. A detailed explanation on the objective of the study was given and thereafter questionnaires were administered to the selected students; and the games and sports teachers. This was followed by interviews with school head-teachers and then the parents of the students respectively. The interviews were conducted basically on a one-to-one basis for both the parents and head-teachers. Each interview session on average lasted between 1 and 1½ hours in a safe and conducive environment such as under a tree, in a quiet office or classroom that was free from any external distractions. Interviews were tape recorded and also noted in a notebook.

In order to supplement on the primary data observations were concurrently employed so as to enable the researcher observe compliance with the PIASCY guidelines that's to say to see if PIASCY assembly messages were displayed for the students to read and know more about HIV/AIDS prevention, transmission and treatment. Notes on such observations were recorded in a notebook. Finally document review on the policies about HIV/AIDS and sports, the National AIDS Strategic Framework 2006-2010, UNAIDS report 2010, HIV/AIDS journals and related research reports were reviewed and the information obtained was used to augment the data collected.

During the research process, ethical principles were

taken care of. This included according respect, privacy and anonymity to the participants. In addition all participants were fully informed verbally of the purpose of the research and of the nature of their participation, which was entirely voluntary and were free to withdraw whenever they wished to do so. Prior to commencing with data collection, all participants were requested to give their verbal consent to be part of the research and they were assured that the information given would be treated with utmost confidentiality.

### **Data analysis**

Data was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis. An initial round of a qualitative analysis helped to identify data that related to the study objectives and the content acquired through observation, interviews and questionnaires as well as from the document review. Subsequent analysis of data under each of these objectives/themes was largely inductive or rather narrative using content analysis while quantitative data was analyzed using basic descriptive statistics. The data was presented in form of percentage and frequency tables, pie charts and bar graphs.

### **Results**

#### **Demographic findings**

The participants of the study included 31 (51.67%) females and 29 (48.33%) males. The female students were slightly more than the male students indicating that there were more females than males in almost all the schools visited. Regarding age bracket, 34(56.67%) of the participants were of the age bracket 16-18 years who were the majority, followed by 23 (38.33%) of age bracket 13-15 years and 2 (3.34%) were of age bracket 19-20 years while 1(16.6%) of the participants didn't indicate the age as requested. This choice was believed to give all the necessary information that was required about the students' age group for the study.

#### **Schools involvement in sports**

Four (4) head-teachers were interviewed to find out whether their schools got involved in sports and they all admitted that their youth (students) take part in sports competitions scheduled per term with the exception of third term that is reserved for summative examinations for O and A level finalists (S.4 and S.6 students). When the youth were asked whether they participated in the sports competitions

either as players or spectators, their responses showed that 27(45%) students participated in sports as players, 22(36.67%) as spectators while 11(18.33%) did not participate at all. Those who participated in sports were asked to state the reasons why they participated in sports and at least five reasons were given for participating in the sports activities as follows; 1) The schools had suitably qualified Sports and Games teachers and coaches, 2) Schools funded their sports activities and trips to

competitions, 3) Some schools had adequate sports facilities, 4) Availability of adequate sports equipment in some schools, and 5) Encouragement from peers and sports role models.

On the other hand, those who did not participate in any sports activity were further asked to mention the reasons why they did not participate and they gave the following reasons as summarized in table 1:

**Table 1: Reasons for non-participation in sports activities**

S/NO	Reason given	Frequency
1.	Disability	2
2.	Cannot balance between books (studies) and games (sports activities).	4
3.	Lack of interest in sports activities	6
4.	Health complications like feeling headache, too much thirst, etc. after playing sports.	3
5.	Lack of incentives and support from teachers to train them.	1
6.	Parents' discouragement at home.	4
7.	Peer influence.	3
8.	Lack of or inadequate sports facilities and equipment at schools.	1
9.	Sports and games are meant for boys only apart from Netball.	4
10.	Sports are reserved for those who are dense in classroom.	1
11.	Teachers' discouragement as sports waste a lot of time meant for books.	2
12.	Schools' failure to fund sports activities like trips.	1

The table shows the various reasons that were given by students for not participating in sports activity. Some of the students were discouraged from participating in sports by their disability; others were denied the opportunity by their parents while some lacked interest in sports.

**Presence of HIV/AIDS prevention program during sports events**

A question was posed to those who participated in sports whether there were people who used to talk about HIV/AIDS during sports events and at least 88.33% of the total number of respondents interacted with responded affirmatively. This means that majority of the students had been exposed to HIV/AIDS talks where sports is used as a tool to fight HIV/AIDS. Other activities that were involved in the prevention program included Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) prior or after the sport event and

distribution of leaflets that had information on HIV and AIDS prevention to enable them read more on HIV prevention. Observations in the school environments also revealed that there were HIV/AIDS prevention messages that were displayed on the notice boards in all the schools visited.

**Students' views and opinions on the role of sports in fighting HIV/AIDS among the youth**

Students were asked whether sports competitions/activities where people talk about HIV/AIDS are good. Majority (95%) of the students agreed that this was good while only 5% did not agree.

Reasons given by the students who said sports competitions where HIV/AIDS messages are conveyed to masses are good are as indicated in Box 1.

**Box 1: Reasons why sports messages on HIV/AIDS are good:**

- ♦ They are educative.
- ♦ They teach people how to care for the HIV/AIDS victims.
- ♦ They teach people on how to prevent mother to child transmission.
- ♦ They help a person to abstain from sex.
- ♦ They help students to continue with their studies.
- ♦ They help us to avoid getting HIV/AIDS.
- ♦ People are told to use a condom if they cannot abstain from sex.
- ♦ They teach students about methods of preventing HIV/AIDS.
- ♦ They make people happy.
- ♦ They help people to carry out HIV/AIDS testing.
- ♦ They help people (sexual partners) to be faithful to one another.
- ♦ They help students to avoid sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
- ♦ They help to create more HIV/AIDS awareness among the youth and the general public.
- ♦ They teach students to behave well (hence positive behavioral change).
- ♦ They teach students (youth) to avoid early marriages.
- ♦ Counseling and guidance services are given to students.
- ♦ They help a person with HIV/AIDS to be physically fit.
- ♦ They teach people about the dangers of HIV/AIDS.
- ♦ They make people happy and reduce stigma.
- ♦ They help in the development of the country by fighting against the natural hazard that's HIV/AIDS.
- ♦ They help the youth to know their HIV/AIDS status through testing (VCT).

However the minority who did not agree that competitions or sports events where messages on HIV/AIDS prevention are conveyed to the masses are good gave the following reasons for their incongruous; they can lead people to get diseases, boys and girls can learn bad manners and that they waste a lot of time.

Comparing the reasons advanced by both categories of respondents, it is a clear indication that sports activities where messages about HIV and AIDS are conveyed to the masses have done a great job in informing the youth more about HIV and AIDS, and reinforcing what they had already known about on the same phenomenon.

**Teachers' views about sports and HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns**

When the Games and sports teachers were asked whether they thought the use of sports is an effective strategy in teaching about HIV/AIDS in schools and sports communities during sports events, six of the seven respondents (85.71%) agreed that it was an effective strategy in teaching the youth about HIV and AIDS while only one did not agree. Those who

said the above strategy is effective in teaching about HIV/AIDS prevention in schools or sports communities during sports events enumerated the following reasons:

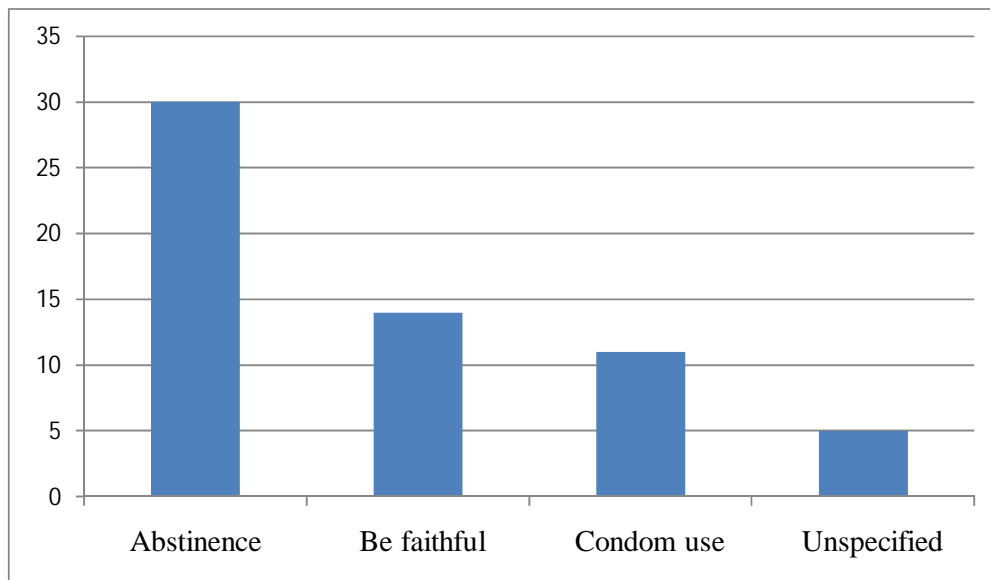
- a) It has a powerful social influence among the youth
- b) Sports help to keep the students busy
- c) Sports help learners refresh their minds
- d) Makes students responsible for their own lives
- e) Help students use their time profitably
- f) Creates awareness about HIV/AIDS change
- g) There is a positive moral behavior among sports men and women
- h) Many people can easily acquire the knowledge/message
- i) The youth need this message of guidance
- j) The local people equally require this message about HIV/AIDS prevention
- k) It is a way forward for the (HIV/AIDS) victims to positively live with AIDS
- l) Leads to improved moral behavior
- m) It may help in improving health mind

However the only one teacher who felt the strategy

was not effective in the teaching about HIV/AIDS had this to say *“the approach could best be improved in future by using people who are infected... This is because there is a belief that those who are infected can pass the message better since there is an emotional attachment to it”*(respondent 7).

### **HIV/AIDS prevention methods usually mentioned at sports events**

The students were asked which methods of preventing HIV/AIDS were commonly mentioned at sports events and their responses included 1) Abstinence, 2) Be faithful, and 3) Condom use) as summarized in figure 1:



**Figure 1: HIV/AIDS prevention methods commonly mentioned at sports events**

Figure 1 reveals that majority (50%) of the students indicated Abstinence, 23.33% be faithful while

18.33% said Condom use was most emphasized during the sports events.



### **Lessons learnt and decisions made after participating in sports where HIV/AIDS messages are conveyed**

Students were asked to indicate whether they learnt anything good from such events. Majority of them (88%) learnt something good from the sports events where HIV/AIDS messages are conveyed to the

masses while only 9% reported not to have learnt anything from such messages. This is an indication that the use of sport in fighting against HIV/AIDS has created more awareness among the youth. The students were further asked to mention which key messages they had learnt from such experiences and the responses are as reported in Box 2:

#### **Box 2: Key issues learnt from HIV/AIDS messages that are delivered at Sports events**

- ♦ They are educative
- ♦ They teach people how to care for the HIV/AIDS victims
- ♦ They teach people on how to prevent mother to child transmission
- ♦ They help a person to abstain from sex
- ♦ They help students to continue with their studies
- ♦ They help us to avoid getting HIV/AIDS
- ♦ People are told to use a condom if they cannot abstain from sex
- ♦ They teach students about methods of preventing HIV/AIDS
- ♦ They make people happy
- ♦ They help people to carry out HIV/AIDS testing
- ♦ They help people (sexual partners) to be faithful to one another
- ♦ They help students to avoid sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- ♦ They help to create more HIV/AIDS awareness among the youth and the general public
- ♦ They teach students to behave well (hence positive behavioral change)
- ♦ They teach students (youth) to avoid early marriages
- ♦ Counseling and guidance services are given to students
- ♦ They help a person with HIV/AIDS to be physically fit
- ♦ They teach people about the dangers of HIV/AIDS
- ♦ They make people happy and reduce stigma
- ♦ They help in the development of the country by fighting against the natural hazard that's HIV/AIDS
- ♦ They help the youth to know their HIV/AIDS status through testing (VCT).

When asked what decisions they could make after watching or participating in sports and HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns, the students mentioned the following positive decisions; 1) The young ones to abstain from sex till marriage, 2) Not to play sex without a condom, 3) To have only one sexual partner and be faithful to him or her, 4) To dislike polygamous marriage (in future), 5) To fear and avoid adult women from luring me into playing sex with them, 6) To go for blood test for HIV, and 7) To revise and concentrate on my books. The other decisions included 8) To avoid bad peer groups, 9) To remain (stay) at school up to the highest level, 10) To use

and enjoy sports as a method of spending leisure, 11) To be trustworthy, 12) To work with health workers to help HIV/AIDS victims, 13) To work with peer educators to educate people about preventing HIV/AIDS, 14) To avoid sharing sharp instruments with others, and 15) To be actively involved in sports.

#### **NGOs/Individuals involvement in the sport and HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns**

Teachers were interviewed on whether they had seen any NGOs getting involved in HIV campaigns during sport events. Five (5) out of the seven teachers interacted with accepted that they had ever

seen some NGOs which labor to talk to the students about HIV/AIDS during sports events. With the exception of one head-teacher, three head teachers also acknowledged having seen some people talk to the youth about HIV/AIDS during sports events. One of the head-teachers reported that some youth group from Busoga Diocese once came and talked to the students during the inter-house sports competitions. Another head-teacher said some Whites (European/American people) have their NGOs (whose name he could not readily establish) which counsel and test youth for HIV/AIDS especially before sports competitions they (the NGOs) organize during holidays. The third head-teacher said they always invite health workers to counsel their youth whenever they are going out of school for sports competition/activities.

### **Head-teachers' and teachers views about sports and HIV/AIDS prevention**

All the head-teachers and teachers asserted that the use of the power of sports in confronting HIV/AIDS is one of the tools that have led to an increased HIV/AIDS awareness and positive behavioral change among many of the youth. One head teacher further emphasized during the interview that;

*Sport is a powerful tool that can easily be used to conjoin people of all walks of life in a short period of time and draw their attention". With the eagerness of watching a particular sports competition about to take place, the highly attentive masses can easily be addressed on matters concerning HIV/AIDS hence easy grasping of the conveyed message (respondent 4).*

The head-teachers also affirmed that even those who dodge attending community organized meetings or workshops, places of worship (churches or mosques) or health/HIV-AIDS workshops organized by Health workers and Community Development Officers (CDO), can easily be reached by use of sports events if they are regularly organized within their vicinities. In this way sports events where HIV/AIDS messages are conveyed to the masses have helped a great deal in fighting against HIV/AIDS among the youth because they are easily mobilized since most of them if not all enjoy playing or watching sports events. All

respondents recommended the use of sports in fighting HIV/AIDS among the youth as one of the most effective strategies to confront the HIV/AIDS pandemic and create more public awareness as well as positive behavioral change among the population.

### **Parents' views on sport and HIV/AIDS prevention strategy**

Parents who watched the sports events where HIV/AIDS messages are conveyed to the masses were asked whether they learnt something from such events. Their responses indicated that majority of the parents (66.67%) learnt something from sports events where HIV/AIDS messages are conveyed to the masses as compared with the 33.33% who claimed to have learnt nothing. The parents who said they had learnt something from watching the sports events where HIV/AIDS messages are conveyed to the masses were then asked to mention what they had actually learnt and their responses are summarized below:

- a) Children can change their behaviors after counseling during sports
- b) Children can learn more about HIV/AIDS
- c) The commonest method of HIV transmission is through unprotected sexual intercourse
- d) Teachers tend to love their students when they go out of school for sports activities so these students are informed about HIV transmission in order not to make wrong love decisions
- e) HIV/AIDS kills and there is still no cure even when there are some ARVs on free offer or sale
- f) Other adults (sugar daddies and mummies) fall into love with young girls and boys

These parents were further asked to indicate whether their children told them about the same, the results obtained revealed that majority of the children (75%) told their parents about the sports events where HIV/AIDS messages are conveyed to the masses while 25% of the parents were not told about the same by their children. Parents were further requested to state what their children said they learnt from the sports events. Their responses are summarized in table 2.



**Table 2 Parents' responses on what children learnt from the sports events where HIV/AIDS messages are conveyed**

Response given by parents	%
1. Methods of preventing HIV/AIDS	41
2. AIDS is a killer disease	31
3. Modes of HIV transmission	26
4. Other relevant information children learnt	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

The table above shows that the most key message that was conveyed to the masses was the methods of preventing HIV/AIDS transmission (41%).

The parents were further asked if the sports events where HIV/AIDS messages are conveyed to people helped their children in any way and their responses indicated that 62.5% of the children were helped by the sports events where HIV/AIDS messages are

conveyed to the masses while 12.5% seem not to have been helped as claimed by their parents.

When asked to state how the sports events where HIV/AIDS messages are conveyed to people helped their children, those parents (the 5) who thought such events had helped their children responded as in the table 3.

**Table 3 Parents' responses on the different ways the sports events where HIV/AIDS messages are conveyed helped their children**

The different ways the children were helped	Frequency	%age
1. Children's behavior changed positively	2	40
2. Children learnt more about HIV/AIDS	1	20
3. Children developed more fear for HIV/AIDS	1	20
4. Children learnt how to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS	1	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table indicates that the sports events where HIV/AIDS messages are conveyed to the masses majorly contributed towards the positive behavioral change among the youth to a tune of 40%, while learning more about HIV/AIDS, developing fear for HIV/AIDS and learning how to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS. Only one parent said the sports events where HIV/AIDS messages are conveyed to people did not help the children in any way. This parent was asked to point out the negative effects the messages could have caused to the children and the responses were as follows:

- a) They waste children's time that would otherwise be spent on books.
- b) Teachers get chances to make sexual/love relationships with the girls they teach.

c) Children developed bad habits after participating in sessions where they talk about sex.

d) Children could come back home very late and exhausted hence not helping in domestic work.

### DISCUSSIONS

From the research findings, majority of the youth (81.67%) participated in the sports events where HIV/AIDS messages are conveyed to people. As far as the respondents' views about the role of sports activities in fighting HIV/AIDS among young people is concerned, the strategy of using sport as a tool to confront the HIV/AIDS scourge, has full support of the students as they claimed to have learnt important messages about HIV/AIDS, made important personal decisions and changed their ways of behavior. This is in agreement with Hobman,

(2005)'s findings where he stated that "88% of the participants believe that sport has helped them in a positive way, contributing to feeling healthier, developing social confidence and making new friends". A similar suggestion was made by Alpha youth Uganda (2012).

The youth claimed to have learnt many important things after participating in the sport and HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns leading them to make a number of positive decisions geared towards a positive behavioral change. Notable important decisions made included to abstain from sex, delaying sex (till marriage), have only one sexual partner and being faithful to him/her as well as using a condom when playing sex. It is possible that such positive decisions made by the youth as aforementioned above could be among the key factors that could have led to a reduction in HIV/AIDS among young people in other countries as per the UNAIDS World AIDS Day Report of 2011. HIV/AIDS is usually believed to be a taboo subject and the creation of secure and relaxed places to discuss HIV/AIDS through sport and games allows young people to learn about what steps they can take to protect themselves from this disease and to avoid risky behaviour. In a study conducted by Mercy Corps on two of their programmes on sport and HIV prevention in Liberia and south Sudan, it was revealed that HIV/AIDS knowledge and protective attitude levels of the participants were higher after being involved in sports programmes (International Platform on Sport and Development, 2013; Grassroot Soccer 2013).

The majority of the teachers also supported the use of the power of sport in fighting against HIV/AIDS among the youth giving a number of reasons and suggestions on how it could be improved in future such as using the people who are infected in voicing the messages themselves as this could carry the message better during the sport event. They further acknowledged that the use of sport in fighting against HIV/AIDS is a very effective method of conveying HIV prevention messages to the youth. According to UNICEF (2012) sport is regarded all over the world as an important and effective instrument with which to counter the spread of HIV/AIDS. Sport can reach groups of people who are at great risk of becoming infected with HIV, such as young people. According to International Platform on

Sport and development (2013) experience demonstrates that programs which aim to show how infection spreads, along with its causes and symptoms are also effective when physical activities and games are used to communicate these ideas. It is also a known fact that a message has more effect if it is related to the interests and daily experiences of target groups. Therefore information is less threatening when it is placed in the context of sport, in part because of the trust involved. This undoubtedly compounds the findings of this study as the use of sport in the fight against HIV/AIDS is an effective tool to combat HIV/AIDS. Other programs such as tuberculosis and malaria have also used similar approaches successfully to raise awareness about prevention from these diseases. Even the Go Sisters' Project in Zambia provides support on factual information pertaining to sexual and reproductive health through sports opportunities just like the Thailand Migrant Sportworks project which focuses on using sports as an educational tool to teach children about infectious disease prevention (International Platform on Sports and development, 2013).

Just as the teachers did rate the strategy of using sport as a tool to confront the HIV/AIDS pandemic as being one of the most effective strategies that can be used to reach people of all walks of life, the School Head-teachers also rated it as being an adequate method and one of the factors that has contributed to the positive behavioral change among the youth. This is in a way in conformity with the project findings of GrassRoot Soccer, (2013) where they urged that although not a cure, sport can play an innovative and creative role in reaching out to populations. This is possible because sports bring together various categories of people in large numbers, the youth being the majority yet the most at risk group.

However, during the study there are students who were found not to participate in sports events because of reasons such as disability, parents' discouragement, peer influence and negative attitude with an assumption that sports is meant for only boys and not for girls. This type of thinking is wrong, because apart from missing out such important messages on HIV prevention, there are other biological and physical benefits that come with participation in sports. These include; improvement in physical fitness, controls obesity, social assimilation, development in motor skills, teaches

self discipline, stress reduction, improved academic performance and also leads to active, fit and healthy lifestyle outside school (Datko, 2011; National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2009). A study carried out in America found out that 41.1% of children in schools did not participate in physical education. This leads to increase in obesity and sedentary crisis (PHIT American Foundation, 2011). Surprisingly teachers and some parents were found to discourage some students from participating in sports events with the view that it wastes a lot of time and draws the students' attention from books. This is unbelievable because teachers unlike some parents are expected to know the benefits that come with sports and physical education. They should actually be among the people who should be encouraging learners to get involved in sports.

In Uganda Physical education used to be one of the teaching subjects that were taught at primary level and teachers used to learn it during their training too, but unfortunately it was scrapped off from the education curriculum for reasons unknown to the researcher. This affected the learning process in the country greatly, considering the benefits it has on a growing child. Having no physical education or sports is bad for our children's health and brain function thus affecting academic performance. A study carried out in California and Texas on 3 million children in schools found a strong correlation between higher fitness scores and higher academic scores (PHIT American Foundation, 2011) which further emphasizes on how academic performance could be affected by not participating in sports or physical education. However, recently this issue was revisited by the Ministry of Education and Sports in Uganda, a policy on sports was developed and it is now being recognized by various schools progressively at all levels of education programs i.e. primary, tertiary to university levels.

Apart from a few parents who did not agree, majority of parents admitted that their children benefited from the strategy of using sport as a tool for tackling HIV and AIDS in a number of ways and in particular bringing about a positive behavioral change among their children after having learnt something from the same experiences. Although some of them did not attend sports events where HIV and AIDS messages are conveyed to the masses, they could still make valid judgments about the strategy. This is in

collaboration with Bosman (2008) who point out that sport can be used as a tool for creating awareness, improving knowledge and changing attitudes to HIV affected people.

### **Conclusion**

In view of the findings of this study and with due considerations of the findings of other studies conducted on a similar phenomena, the strategy of fighting HIV/AIDS through sports among the youth seem to have impacted on the youth in the study area positively. This is evidenced by the youth's own personal revelations and the positive decisions made after participating in physical activities where HIV/AIDS messages are conveyed to the masses. Their parents, teachers and head-teachers also affirmed the strategy of using sport to fight HIV/AIDS has been beneficial to the youth in a number of ways ranging from increased awareness about HIV/AIDS to positive behavioral change and as some teachers pointed out in the study "sports is a powerful social influence among the youth".

The objection to the effectiveness of the strategy and the few fears among the minority respondents as regards to the students' morals and conduct must also be put into consideration perhaps to form a basis for future investigation into the issues raised however few they are.

Admittedly, the study findings have demonstrated that in spite of the fewest identifiable factors that appear to negate sports' contribution towards the success story in the reduction in the HIV/AIDS prevalence among the youth, the use of the power of sport in confronting the HIV/AIDS scourge is one of those powerful strategies in fighting against HIV/AIDS among the youth as put forward by majority of the respondents and other previous researchers. However, despite the positive role played by sport in fighting against HIV/AIDS by creating public awareness among masses and bringing about positive behavioral change among the youth, it has received little recognition from both the development and research community.

Therefore, the strategy requires an urgent attention from all stakeholders in this country if more success is to be achieved. However, despite the positive findings of the study, the experiences may be quite new in most parts of Uganda and possibly non-

existent in some other parts.

### Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations are therefore given to help to improve the strategy of HIV/AIDS prevention through sports:

- The strategy of using sports as a tool in HIV and AIDS prevention should be embraced in other parts of the country because it has been identified by this study and other previous studies as a powerful tool that could be used successfully since it brings together large masses of people during sport events.
- Students who do not participate in sports should be encouraged to do so because there are a lot of benefits that come with sports including acquiring knowledge such as preventive strategies for HIV/AIDS.
- Parents and teachers should encourage their children/ students to participate in sports as this is rewarding both physically and mentally.
- The government of Uganda should encourage, empower and support community based organizations and non government organizations to take up this noble cause since it has proved to be a very fruitful strategy in combating HIV.

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