

# Examples of best practices in prevention of HIV and associated infections among youth at high risk FINLAND

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# Two examples – governmental actions and NGO actions

1. Sexuality education at schools
2. Activities of the Girls' House

# 1. Sexuality education at schools

- Started in 1970 as an obligatory subject;
- Voluntary during 1995 – 2001; each school could make its own choices → teenage pregnancies and abortions increased;
- In 2000 regulation about returning sexuality education as obligatory;
- 2004 new program: health education as an independent, mandatory subject; sexuality education as a part of it;
- Abortions among girls and women under 20 years have decreased steadily since 2004.

## To whom?

- 1st – 6th (6-13 years) grades: sexuality education integrated into environment and biology lessons and adapted to the age of children;
- 7-9 grades (13-16 years) – pupils of the compulsory secondary school: as a part of health education;
- 1-3 grades (17-19 years) – pupils of the upper secondary school
  - One course obligatory;
  - Two voluntary courses.

# Objectives of the sexuality education

The objective of the sexuality education is to increase:

- **Knowledge**

- about sexuality, human body, biology of reproduction, sexual encounter;
- about physical, cognitive, social, emotional and cultural aspects of sexuality;
- about contraception, prevention of STI and HIV-infection, prevention of sexual coercion;
- about counselling and health care services and their use.

# Objectives of the sexuality education 2

To increase:

- **Skills in and possibilities to**
  - make decisions based on knowledge and understanding;
  - communicate about sexuality, emotions, relationships and have the necessary language to do so;
  - build relationships;
  - express own emotions and needs;
  - build (sexual) relationships in which there is mutual understanding and respect for one another's needs and boundaries and to have equal relationships.

# Objectives of the sexuality education 3

To increase:

- **Responsibility and care for**
  - yourself and your partner;
  - growing to be a good parent;
  - equality between sexes;
  - recognising and preventing sexual violence;
  - bringing out sexual rights and responsibilities;
  - respecting sexual diversity.

# Effectiveness control

- School health promotion study carried out every second year (last time in 2013)
  - Respondents:
    - 14-20 years;
    - 8th-9th graders of secondary school;
    - 1st-2nd graders of upper secondary school;
    - 1st-2nd graders of vocational school;
    - Approx. 180,000 per year.



## Some results (source: [www.thl.fi](http://www.thl.fi))

Respondents	Indicators concerning sexual health:	2010	2013
8-9 graders of secondary school	No contraception during latest intercourse	18,3 %	16,3%
	Used condom and hormonal contraception during latest intercourse	6,6%	7,6%
	Have had sexual intercourse	22,1%	22,4%
	Experienced sexual violence sometimes or repeatedly*	n/a	14,2%

## Results 2

1-2 graders of upper secondary school	No contraception during latest intercourse	7,6%	7,1%
	Used condom and hormonal contraception during latest intercourse	8,5%	8,9%
	Have had sexual intercourse	41,8%	41,7%
	Experienced sexual violence sometimes or repeatedly*	n/a	15,7%

# Results 3

1-2 graders of vocational school	No contraception during latest intercourse	13,4%	12,5%
	Used condom and hormonal contraception during latest intercourse	7,0	8,3
	Have had sexual intercourse	64%	64%
	Experienced sexual violence sometimes or repeatedly*	n/a	21%

# Observations from the study results

- Boys have worse knowledge than girls;
- Migrant boys and girls have worse knowledge than native Finns;
- Knowledge of STIs has decreased among all groups;
- Amount of those who have had intercourse has decreased during 21<sup>st</sup> century;
- Inequality has increased: according to a cohort study for those born in 1987, girls who did not continue studies after secondary school, had more Chlamydia infections (15,8% vs. 5,5%), more abortions (20,7% vs. 3,9%) and teenage pregnancies (16% vs. 0,7%) than those who went to upper secondary school or other higher education institutes.

# Recommendations and success factors

- Sexuality education is obligatory – it covers everybody;
- Holistic approach;
- Health education teachers have university degree;
- Interactive methods at school lessons;
- Kontula (2010): most successful teachers are those who aim at providing their students with:
  - Knowledge, tolerant attitudes, self-esteem, a sense of responsibility and respect for emotions;

# Recommendations and success factors

- School welfare team
  - Multidisciplinary team: school principal, school physician, school nurse, school social worker, school psychologist, teacher(s), study advisor, special needs teacher.
- Supporting network: school health nurse, contraception and counselling services at municipalities, testing and care of STI, web service for questions, consultation by phone; places like Girls' House, Boys' House, Open Doors of Family Federation etc.
- Close connection between education and services.

# GIRLS' HOUSE

# Facts about Girls' Houses

- 7 houses: Helsinki, Espoo, Turku, Tampere, Kuopio, Oulu, Rovaniemi;  
(2 Boys' Houses: Helsinki and Oulu)
- Target group: girls and young women at the age between 13-28 years;
- Financing: municipalities, Finland's Slot Machine Association RAY



# Principles of the Girls' House

- Gender-sensitive approach, concentrating on girls;
- Equality;
- Genuine encounters and interaction;
- Belief in girl's own resources;
- Respect for differences;
- Social empowerment;
- Sense of community;
- Participation;
- “The main objective of the Girls' House is to support the growth and identity of girls and women and help them to become who they want to be in an atmosphere that respects the sense of community and womanhood“ (from slides of Kristiina Hannila)

# Activities of the Girls' House (in brief)

- **Pop-in reception**
  - Confidential, free of charge;
  - Pregnancy tests, post-coital contraception;
  - Chlamydia tests;
  - Condoms;
  - Counselling.

# Activities of the Girls' House 2

- **Sisters – multicultural girls project**
  - Girl's life and growing up in a multicultural environment;
  - Individual support;
  - Group meetings;
  - Events;
  - Networks.

# Activities of the Girls' House 3

## Sexual violence work

- Girls and young women who have suffered sexual violence
- Methods
  - Individual discussions with professional employee of the Girls' House;
  - Peer group discussions facilitated by two professionals;
  - Networking with a lawyer, police, healthcare institutions, social protection, parents, teachers etc.
  - Help with paper work, finding an attorney etc.
  - Professional of the Girls' House as a support person at court.
  - PLISSIT model.

# Objectives of the sexual violence work

- Individual approach;
- Prevention of social exclusion;
- Empowerment;
- Developing skills needed in everyday life;
- Prevention of repeated trauma;
- Decreasing of substance abuse;
- Finding one's own limits in sexual and other contacts;
- Prevention of mental disorders;
- Raising of self-esteem.

# Feedback from the work

- Client survey carried out annually
  - Indicators:
    - "It is easy to come to Girls' House";
    - "I get the kind of support I need from Girls' House";
    - "I feel that I am met and heard as a unique person in the Girls' House activities";
    - "I have received support in some of the following issues: self-confidence, self-esteem, social relations, family relations, parenthood, emotions, studies and work, life skills, new views, hopes for future, sexuality, experience of sexual violence, own limits, girlhood, womanhood“.

## Feedback 2

- Client survey results are described in annual reports (in Finnish language); the indicators have been changing.
- In 2012, 85% of respondents in the client survey responded confirming to the question: "I have received support in some of the following issues: self-confidence, self-esteem, social relations, family relations, parenthood, emotions, studies and work, life skills, new views, hopes for future, sexuality, experience of sexual violence, own limits, girlhood, womanhood".


## Feedback 3

- Report "Nuorten naisten kokemuksia Tyttöjen Talon seksuaaliväkivallan tuesta". 2013. Marleena Vornanen. (This report includes description of activities with girls and women who have suffered sexual violence and analysis of interviews with five young women - clients)
- According to the results of the client interviews, young women who had experienced sexual violence and had received support at the Girls' House minimum half-a-year, felt that the quality of their life had improved, stress had decreased, their mood had improved, life skills had improved, self-esteem had risen, feelings of being guilty had decreased; finding own limits in relationships had become easier. Difficulties were met in becoming independent from the support, especially if the support was reduced without a careful preparation phase.



## Conclusions

- "It needs a village to raise a child"

 the whole system needs to be supportive.



**Thank you!**