

Youth development with reference to life skills in eastern province of Zambia from 2000- 2010.

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Abstract

Many youths in eastern province of Zambia are poor because they are not schooling and some have only reached high school level only. Most of the them have been expelled from schools as they could not pay their school fees, they have dropped out of school due to various reasons, they are orphans with no forms of support economically, they are unemployed, even if they have good marks to take them up to the college or university levels they could not make it due to lack of financial support and they are adolescent mothers among other forms of impoverishment. The youths in the province are pervasively conditioned by poverty, the situations of unemployment, economic problems, HIV/AIDS pandemic, gender based violence situations, sexual harassment especially for female youths and girl-children. In these situations, many youths have no possibilities of becoming good citizen, capable and able to plan for their own future lives, to live a happy life in the normality of daily life guaranteed by equal dignity. Empowering the youth with life skills have enabled them to withstand the challenges and demands of their daily life. Life skills have equipped the youth in handling the difficulties of the human life. Youth programs have been carried out in rural and urban areas, in compounds as well as in villages, targeting Christian youths and non-Christian youths, youths in schools, youths who have dropped out of schools, youths in colleges and other learning institutions, youths in streets and in communities. In this study analysed the status of youth development from 2000 to 2010. Based on the analysis report the recommendation and conclusion were made.

Keywords: Youth development, Life skills, youth Empowerment and Eastern province.

INTRODUCTION

The youths are considered as the custodian of the human life in a sense that they are the human resources of today and tomorrow, it is necessary to equip them with life skill which will enable them to be effective members of their communities and of the society. The youth are hopeful people who are eagerly looking for genuine guidance and inspiration in life where they can model their lives on. They are full of energy, enthusiasm and potentials which will need to be taped for their own good and for the good of the entire community and society. Unfortunately, the youth are becoming bitter, despairing and are losing their sense of hope for a better future. This frustration has led most of them to resort to social evils as stated above. It is within the perspective of respecting and upholding the human life and dignity that this life-giving project has found its way and orientation.

Although there is still a need to intensify youth development programs, Life skills activities have already shown that some of the youths are becoming effective and responsible members of the society and contributing in their own small ways to the development of their communities.

Most of the youth programs in the province have been planned with the consideration of the development of a human person that takes place at various levels such as, mentally, emotionally, socially and behavioral. In 2000 it had begun with 910 candidates and 2010 has reach to 4335 candidates.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Zambian youths are easy in pray of victims in many forms as the social structure , culture and economic status of the society allows them to fall in such. Most the African countries have the same problems with adults and different project were implemented to up lift the youths and the society but the progress is not up to the mark. Hence the researcher is indented to take up the study on "Youth development with reference to life skills in eastern province of Zambia from 2000- 2010".

Objectives of the study

The study specifically looked at youth programs and its progress. The researchers have framed the specific objectives for the study to find out the changes in youth development with reference to life skills and the financial contributions towards those projects really helps them in their life to change, if any among: The main goal of this youth program in eastern province is:

1. To analyse promotion of spiritual, intellectual and emotional development among the youths.
2. To analyse the youths talents, aptitudes and life-giving qualities.

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3. To assess the youth to cooperation with various human challenges, difficulties and hardships.
4. To assess the awareness and in participation in fight against of HIV/AIDS and other dehumanizing situations.
5. To analyse the encouragement of the youth to make some well informed choices in life.
6. To analyse the facilitation of various stages in the process of behavior change among the youths.

Limitations of the study

The study analysis is with the youths of different categories from 2000 – 2010. These youths are from the religious formation houses of Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (MIC), youths from the Catholic Church in different parishes, schools, colleges and other learning institutions, youths of streets and in communities, youths of different church denominations and religions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In a recent study in Kenya (Johnston, T. et.al,1999) adolescent orphans from AIDS afflicted households in Rusinga, reported that 76.9 percent of the boys dropped out of school due to their inability to pay school fees, while girls dropped out or were withdrawn either because they were pregnant or in order to marry (58 percent). The dowry that is given when girls marry represents one less mouth to feed and an economic gain for the family. Almost 12 percent of girls were withdrawn from school because of illness in the family due to AIDS.

Another study anticipates that in Botswana that there may be as many as 150,000 orphans by the end of this century. A 1992 World Bank study in Tanzania suggested that HIV/AIDS may reduce the number of primary school children by 22 percent and secondary school children by 14 percent as a result of increased infant and child mortality as well as lower attendance. In an-depth study conducted in Uganda on 20 students in a district hard hit by AIDS, nineteen of the students reported having been absent from school for periods ranging from five weeks to one and a half terms during the past one year. The most common responses given for absenteeism were lack of school fees and helping with the care of AIDS patients at home.

In Zambia, the HIV/AIDS crisis is not a new problem. The disease first manifested itself in the early 1980s. It has now grown to such proportions that in late 1997, it was estimated that the adult prevalence rated was 19.9 percent with prevalence rates being about twice as high in urban areas than in rural areas.

The threat of social stigma prevents young women from speaking out about rape and abuse. In Zimbabwe, rape cases are sometimes settled out of court when the perpetrator either pays compensation to the girl's father or pays a bride price and marries the girl to avoid bringing public attention and shame to the girl and her family.

Coined by the National Network for Youth (Hughes & Curran, 2000), "community youth development" integrates the positive youth development framework and provides a context of engagement while concurrently reinforcing the idea that context is a critical factor that must be developed to promote positive youth outcomes. Community youth development shifts the emphasis from a dual focus of youth being problem-free and fully prepared, to a triadic focus for youth

being problem-free, fully prepared, and engaged partners. More importantly, this focus recognizes that there is an interdependent relationship between positive and healthy youth outcomes and positive and healthy communities. Specifically, healthy communities have a higher probability of contributing to positive youth development, and healthy youth who are valued and part of a community contribute to sustain a community's strength and health.

The development of youth, either positive or negative, occurs as youth interact with all levels of their surroundings, including others in their environment: family, schools, peers, adults, youth programs, and their communities. The importance of different levels of a youth's ecology and the systems within those levels has been defined and studied by several scholars (Bogenschneider, 1998; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Small & Luster, 1994).

Chendi's assessment of the Malawi Life Skills Education Programme revealed the urgent need to train teachers, to develop additional materials for use in all classes in primary and secondary school in all districts in the country – and importantly the need to develop participatory learning practices in schools. To date, there is scant information on the impact the life skills programme is having in reducing the incidence and prevalence of STIs, unplanned pregnancies and young people's ability to engage in risk free behaviour.

The youth development approach empowers youth by fostering self-direction and skill development through encouraging personal responsibility in the health and physical, personal and social, cognitive and creative, vocational, and civic arenas (Hudson, 1997). Empowering relationships is encouraged in an effort to help youngsters avoid unnecessarily risky experiences, triumph over damaging experiences, and favor the pursuit of desirable, attainable outcomes (Kahne, Nagaoka, Brown, O'Brien, Quinn, & Thiede, 2001).

Social interactions become increasingly complicated as children move into adolescence. More time is spent with peers, and interactions with opposite-sex peers increase. Middle childhood (from ages 7-11) represents this time of transition, when children move away from the home sphere and spend more time with peers, and school and community groups. Social status is earned through competence and performance with peers. During these critical years, children either learn to be competent or productive or to feel inferior, which can lead to long-lasting social, intellectual and emotional consequences (Hansen, et al. 1998; Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000). While peers are important, family and parents continue to be an important influence into adolescence. Research done in the United States finds that an authoritative parenting style, defined as "warm and involved, but firm and consistent in establishing and enforcing guidelines, limits, and developmentally appropriate expectations" has consistently positive effects on adolescents (Steinberg, 2000).

RESEARCH DESIGN

Youth programs have been carried out in rural and urban areas targeting Christian youths and non-Christian youths, youths in schools, youths who have dropped out of schools, youths in colleges and other learning institutions, youths in streets and in communities. Hence there were hundred (100) respondents were selected for the final analysis.

A set of Twenty questions with 3 sections were formulated to solicit responses of four point scale that reflect the youth development programme, progress and status.

Responses to the questionnaire were categorized and converted as descriptive statements. These findings are presented in Narrative statements to explain the status of youth development with reference to life skills in eastern province of Zambia from 2000-2010.

DATA ANALYSIS

List of different categories of youth involved (2000-2010) in the youth project and other youth activities are given in the table below (Table.1).

Year	Male		Female		Total (No of Candidates)
	Age category	Number	Age	Number	
2000	15 - 24	430	13 - 20	480	910
2001	14 - 25	530	13 - 22	580	1110
2002	15 - 26	580	14 - 24	670	1250
2003	16 - 28	600	14 - 24	702	1302
2004	15 - 24	700	15 - 26	780	1480
2005	17 - 30	790	16 - 27	867	1657
2006	17 - 30	800	16 - 27	980	1780
2007	17 - 32	950	16 - 29	1,200	2150
2008	17 - 32	1,300	16 - 29	1,500	2800
2009	17 - 32	1,500	16 - 29	1,750	3250
2010	17 - 32	1,995	16 - 29	2,340	4335

The mental development of the youth

To help the youths in their mental development, various youth activities, rallies, seminars, workshops have been conducted throughout the province. Here, youths have been helped to analyze the situations of their human lives, to consider various options in their choices or decision making in life, to develop their personal values and ethics. In this program, youth have been able to use their personal and group creativities. For example, youths in colleges have come up with the idea of creating Anti-AIDS Clubs in Basic Schools and Secondary or High Schools. Youths have been given opportunities and space to become facilitators of various HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention programs to their fellow youths and to adults.

The emotional development of the youth

To help the youths develop emotionally, various workshops with specific topics on Gender Based Violence, Who am I ? Beliefs, Values and Ethnic Identity, Counseling and Guidance, among others have been organized and conducted. These workshops have been a source of help to so many youths who have continued to discover and deepen the sense of who they are as individuals.

The social development of the youth

As the saying goes, "No man is an Island". Indeed the youths have been helped to develop their mature and mutual relationships as they interact with one another in various gatherings. For example, the youths from eastern province and those from the neighboring country, Malawi invites each other for special events and gatherings. In addition, youths from different church denominations and religions, schools and communities come together for some educative and formative drama festivals once a year. Through these interactions youths have learnt to respect one another, to appreciate the views, ideas and opinions of other people. They have also shared their cultural beliefs and values. It is through the social development level that youths have discovered the importance of peer education. As peer educators, the youths have continued to enrich and educate one another in so many positive ways.

Reduction of early marriages of the youth

The youth in the rural areas, early marriage is one of the many reasons for lack of personal, family and community development and empowerment. In rural villages, boys and girls are marrying and getting married at tender age. As a result, they do not go far in their education affecting their individual and community development. Girls are married off at 13 years old, while boys marry at 16 years old.

In cases of girls, early marriages have continued to cause some serious psychological and physical problems as their minds and bodies are not fully developed to become wives and mothers. It has been reduced considerable after the this programme.

The behavioral development of the youth

The youth in the province have organized, prepared and followed different activities and workshops on Behavior change programs. Behavior change programs have enabled the youth to opt for positive and helpful alternatives in life rather than taking harmful and risk behaviors in life. For example, youths have resorted to sporting activities rather than taking drugs, alcohol, stealing and engaging themselves in deviant behaviors. Through sports, youths have continued to develop their creativities, potentials, talents, new skills, energy and good communication skills that can be used for the good of their communities.

Stages in the process of behavioral change

Several workshops on behavior change have been conducted. These workshops have enabled the youth to understand how strong the influence of behavior can affect one's life. Some of the youths have been transformed through behavior change programs, for example, some youths have stopped smoking, alcohol, using drugs, sexual promiscuity, prostitution, deviant behaviors, among other unhelpful ways of living. Through the sessions, youths have been informed of the dangers and harmful effects of their certain behaviors that need to be changed. Others have replaced the above mentioned behaviors with religious practices, hardworking in schools, at home and places of work.

In order to sustain the new behaviors, youths have been encouraged to form some supportive groups. The youth are also participating in the review and change of some of the African beliefs, traditions and cultures that contributes to the infringing of the human dignity and rights. Youths have continued to transform their behavior that perpetuates the spread of HIV/AIDS for example, wife or husband cleansing and inheritance.

It has been encouraging to see that the youths have realized that behavior change can only occur within the perspective of awareness.

HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention

The youth in the province have been involved in the fight against HIV/AIDS pandemic through workshops, seminars and drama performances. Youth have become aware of the facts and myths about HIV/AIDS in their communities. They are now able to distinguish between facts and myths concerning the HIV/AIDS. Through campaign programs against HIV/AIDS, youths have come to understand the seriousness of the vice in their society. It is for this reason that the youths have engaged themselves to encourage and support the formation of Anti-AIDS Clubs in schools and communities. At least youths are now aware that the current HIV rate in Zambia is 14% among the 15 – 49 year old age group. Specific workshops have been conducted on Abstinence as one of the ways of helping the youth to avoid early and unwanted pregnancies, contracting HIV and other STIs.

Gender roles

Workshops on Gender Based Violence has been organized and conducted for the youths to help them understand and differentiate gender roles that are determined by sex (for female or male) and those determined by culture. Gender role workshops have helped the female youths to go beyond some of their tradition beliefs and take up some leadership roles in youth movements. At the same time, these workshops have enables both female and male youths to start appreciating biological and physical differences which they see as a source of their complementarily for the good of all.

Goals and visions for the development of the youth

For the past 10 years, the youths have been encouraged to acquire the habit of journaling, recording the main aspects of their daily lives. They have been encouraged to create goals for their lives and to believe in those goals as they work towards the achievement of their individual goals. This activity has given opportunity to many youths to have some sense of directions in life.

A good number of youths, have been supported and encouraged to go further with some vocational training skills in Agriculture, bricklaying, carpentry, catering, computer, accounts among others. Some of the concrete signs of the achievement of this program are clearly seeing in the fact that some youths have now become facilitators of various workshops, others have become farmers, carpenters, lecturers, teachers, secretaries, medical doctors, clinical nurses and among other professionals.

Communication skills

Communication skills are some of the needed elements in the

areas of life skills. Different workshops have been conducted on communication skill. As part of communication skills, youth are able to welcome, to receive and give feedbacks to one another without prejudices or without attacking or feel attacked or offended. Youths have learnt that their actions, attitudes and behaviors are all means and ways of communication depending on the promptings and nature of communication. Youths have also learnt that the influence one gets or gives to others is part of communication. Therefore, it is quite evident that youths have become aware of communication through peer pressure.

Organizing seminars and workshops need a lot of communications with and to the concerned people. Youths have been trying to disseminate information and messages to their fellow youths on appropriate topics, but there is still room for improvement. Youths are more concerned for one another as a result of communication skills' workshops.

CONCLUSION

All in all, the youths programs in the province aims at empowering the young people through sports, games, seminars, workshops, cultural exchange programs, international exhibitions, drama performances and poem presentations, art skills and life skills' programmes among others in order to promote self-reliance, improved living conditions, initiate positive behavior change for their personal and communal transformation as they become responsible citizens and effectively contribute to the economic growth and sustainability of their communities.

It is necessary also to ensure that young people are spiritually, emotionally and socially prepared to become productive members of the human society.

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