

Scouting for Solutions to HIV

Scouting for Solutions (SfS) is a five-year skill-building and dialogue-based project that works to promote abstinence until marriage and avoidance of unhealthy sexual behaviors among Scouts in both Kenya and Uganda. PATH, with funding from USAID, is implementing this project in collaboration with the national Scouts associations in both countries. By 2009, the project will reach an estimated 325,000 girls and boys aged 12 to 15 years with intensive and repeated HIV prevention strategies and health promotion activities. The project will also facilitate positive behavior formation and behavior change by building on the Scouts' value system. The project will engage Scout families and communities to promote frank discussions about the causes and consequences of HIV and AIDS and create motivation and endorsement for behavior change.

The project delivers information and builds skills that encourage the "A" (abstinence) and "B" (being faithful) components of the comprehensive AB and C (condoms) approach to HIV prevention. By building on Scouts Associations' existing structures and programs, the SfS project is rapidly and effectively scaling up state-of-the-art HIV education for Scouts, their families, and communities. Closely aligned with Emergency Plan's behavioral objectives, strategic approaches, and crosscutting themes, the SfS project will center on three key interventions:



SfS Key Interventions

1. Reach young people with information and skills for HIV prevention.
2. Engage parents/guardians and other protective adults in creating a supportive environment for young people.
3. Strengthen Scouts Associations' capacity to implement and monitor HIV-prevention programs.

1. Provide young people with information and skills for HIV prevention, with a focus on abstinence until marriage, fidelity in marriage, monogamous relationships, and avoidance of unhealthy sexual behavior. To share information and build life skills, the SfS team is revising curricula and developing Activity Packs that include accurate information, discussion guides, and interactive activities. Annual contests will recognize Scouts (through participation in radio production, "shoot back" video production, jamborees, and Scouts Voice newsletter production) and ensure broad dissemination of successful HIV-prevention experiences.

2. Involve parents, guardians and other protective adults in creating a supportive environment for young people to adopt HIV-prevention behaviors. Because

community support is essential to HIV-prevention behaviors such as abstinence, SfS encourages dialogue and interactions that provide adolescents—especially younger adolescents—with the adult support they need to protect themselves from HIV.

3. Build the capacity of Scouts Associations to develop, implement, and monitor large-scale HIV-prevention programs. SfS will strengthen Scouts Associations, including management capacity; build information and a skills base for Scouts' staff and trainers; and strengthen Scouts' HIV-education programs. Revised curricula, issue-based activity packs, and merit-badge programs ensure access to HIV-prevention resources.

PATH improves the health of people around the world by advancing technologies, strengthening systems, and encouraging healthy behaviors.

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In all of its interventions, SfS addresses gender issues (including coercive sexual activity and adolescent socialization), strengthens protective factors, reduces risk behaviors, and builds community support. SfS strives to involve more girls and out-of-school youth in scouting, thus bringing important HIV-prevention information and skills to these vulnerable groups. All SfS activities are designed to increase Scout Associations' and community capacity to develop and implement effective HIV-prevention programs. By involving local partner organizations, youth and adult stakeholders, and communities, SfS facilitates the effectiveness and sustainability of these programs—as well as their impact on HIV prevention.



President Mwai Kibaki unveils the new HIV and AIDS badge at the SfS Launch in Nairobi

Formative research

Understanding that HIV/AIDS prevention programs are most effective when they are evidence based and grounded in the communities they aim to serve, PATH conducted a formative assessment of youth behavior, knowledge, opinions, social experiences, and information sources regarding sexuality and HIV. The assessment included an in-depth literature review, an appraisal of training needs, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions among youth aged 12 to 15 years in Kenya and Uganda. Findings from the formative assessment were used to plan SfS activities and interventions. The following key areas were among those investigated: gender norms, peer pressure (especially with regard to sexual relationships), boy-girl relationships, adolescents' environments, accessibility to adult mentors and counselors, knowledge of HIV and AIDS and prevention.

Launch activities

SfS organized official launch ceremonies in both countries to bring awareness and support to the project and present the new HIV and AIDS badge. In Kenya, SfS was officially launched on the Kenya Scouts Patron Day in July 2006 at Statehouse, in Nairobi, and officiated by President Mwai Kibaki, the Patron of Kenya Scouts Association. Members of parliament, ministers, USAID representatives, and SfS partners were all in attendance. In Uganda the launch was held on Founder's Day in Mbarara, with representatives from the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education, members of parliament and USAID.

Training Scout Leaders

The SfS team has trained, 2,992 Scout Leaders in Kenya and 2,000 Scout Leaders in Uganda. During the six-day training workshops, which were held from May to July 2006, Scout Leaders enhanced their knowledge of HIV and AIDS, monitoring and evaluation, gender, scouting, and behavior change communication; and had an opportunity to practice and strengthen participatory communication and facilitation skills.

Activity Packs

PATH has developed activity packs that Scouts must complete to earn the HIV and AIDS badge. Activity Packs encourage discussion and exploration of attitudes and beliefs. They also require Scouts to talk with their friends and families. The first two Activity Packs are: Values and Principles, and Gender and Power Relations. Instituto Promundo is the SfS partner responsible for gender programming.

HIV and AIDS badge

Earning badges is a way for Scouts to assess their personal progress as a Scout. SfS worked with the Kenya and Uganda Scouts Associations to develop a new HIV and AIDS badge, the Red Ribbon Badge. Scouts can earn this new badge by carrying out activities that promote health education. The related activities will build Scouts' ability to understand and successfully adopt safer behaviors. Scouts must complete each of the Activity Packs in order to earn the badge. To monitor the progress of this badge, along with all other badges, SfS created a progress book in collaboration with the Kenya and Uganda Scouts Associations.

Scouts Voice

Scouts voice is SfS's biannual newsletter produced in collaboration with Straight Talk Foundation and distributed by the Scouts organizations; for each issue 60,000 copies are distributed in Kenya and 40,000 are distributed in Uganda. Each issue is centered around a theme. The first four issues have been on abstinence, friendship, values and involving girls in scouting. Scouts are encouraged to send in stories, articles, and answers to questions printed in the newsletter.