# Language and HIV/AIDS

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## Chapter 6

# Discursive Constructions of Responsibility in HIV/AIDS Prevention: Re-entextualization Practices in Tanzania

CHRISTINA HIGGINS

## Introduction

In 1998, Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS, described AIDS as a 'woman's epidemic' (cited in Baylies, 2000: 4). His characterization of the disease aptly portrays the focus of most prevention efforts in sub-Saharan Africa since the 1990s, as increasing attention has been given to women's experiences in contracting, and also preventing, the spread of the disease. In Tanzania, the National Policy on HIV/AIDS recognizes the power of societal structures such as gender inequality, declaring 'Girls and women in our social and cultural environment are more vulnerable to HIV infection as they do not have control over their sexuality' (National Policy on HIV/AIDS, 2001: 10). Women are indeed at a higher risk of infection due to their physiology, their economic dependence on men, their lower status at home and their collectively lower education levels, which in turn make them more vulnerable in the economic realm. Accordingly, a great deal of HIV/AIDS prevention targets women in their conventional roles as caretakers and mothers through parent-to-child communication and mother-to-child-transmission prevention campaigns (Akeroyd, 2004; Baylies, 2000). Prevention campaigns have also been directed at lowering sexually transmitted infections among female sex workers as an indirect way of harnessing the transmission of HIV.

While these campaigns have made some progress in reducing the risk of contracting HIV among women in sub-Saharan Africa, such efforts result in a strongly *gender-specific* approach to HIV/AIDS prevention (Akeroyd, 2004; Baylies, 2000; WHO, 2003). In the field of international development, gender-specific approaches characterize the *Women in Development* (WID) framework[1], an approach established in the 1970s in order to formally create pathways for women in developing nations to participate more fully in liberalized market economies. WID projects target activities and skills women already perform and are concerned with getting women involved in economic activity. Though it is still a dominant approach to development (cf. Brown, 2007), the WID framework has been criticized for treating western liberal understandings of development as value-free and for myopically focusing on women's capacity to contribute to economic growth while failing to consider social aspects of development (Marchand & Parpart, 1995; Parpart, 2000). Furthermore, by treating men and women as separate groups with isolated problem sets, gender-specific approaches fail to address the problem of communication *between* men and women in terms of making decisions together about their shared sexual health (Akeroyd, 2004; Baylies, 2000). The same problem applies to the more recent approaches that specifically target men. For example, the 2000 World AIDS Campaign focused on men and boys explicitly (UNAIDS, 2000) with the 'men make a difference' slogan. Other efforts have included marketing condoms as a way to enhance one's masculinity through the branding of condoms with very masculine names such as *Dume* (literally 'maleness') in Tanzania or HIV/AIDS campaigns that used male soccer players to give public service announcements in Lesotho (Akeroyd, 2004).

In sum, a great deal of HIV/AIDS education and prevention efforts take a *gender-specific* approach by targeting men and women separately as groups who have their own unique needs. Much of the rationale behind this approach is premised on the existence of clearly defined gender roles at home and in most aspects of social life. However, as Baylies (2000) explains, any approach that focuses on women or on men as separate agendas assumes a particularly western, individualistic model of public health that will ultimately fail to transform the social and economic inequality that women experience. What is needed instead are prevention strategies that recognize the role of *gender relations* in the spread of HIV/AIDS, as articulated in the *Gender and Development* framework (GAD), an approach that emerged in the 1980s as the outcome of meetings and writings among Third World feminists (Sen & Grown, 1987). The GAD approach calls for investigations of women's material conditions and

patriarchal structures that maintain women's subordination across social spheres. A focus on gender relations also examines how men and women negotiate their sexual relationships, and it is concerned with how parents discuss sexual health with their children (Baylies, 2000; Boler & Aggleton, 2005; Bujra & Mokake, 2000).

In this chapter, I explore educational sessions sponsored by a large NGO in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, to identify whether and to what degree community awareness campaigns address gender relations. I analyze a variety of interactions at education sessions to understand how discourses of gendered responsibility are discursively constructed in role plays, street performances and community-based education classes. Employing an ethnographically informed approach to critical discourse analysis (Blommaert, 2005), I investigate the discursive positioning of men and women in regard to discourses of responsibility about the spread and prevention of HIV. The data show that women and girls are often discursively constructed as the target of NGO-sponsored educational efforts, and, yet, these efforts do little to distribute the discourses of gender and responsibility more equitably among male and female Tanzanians. To conclude, I discuss how raising awareness of these discourses among NGOs is a first step towards reframing the ways gender is treated in HIV/AIDS education.

Before turning to the details of the study, I briefly examine the relevance of a GAD framework for HIV/AIDS education in Tanzania. While the WID model has been critiqued as neo-colonialist and as ultimately detrimental to women in developing nations, I will argue that a GAD approach provides spaces for more bottom-up, grassroots negotiations of gender relations, which also makes space for local constructions of gender.

## Local Knowledge and Gender

Many scholars of gender in sub-Saharan Africa have argued that present-day gender roles and gender relations are in large part legacies of the colonial period (e.g. Amediume, 1987; Oyewùmí, 1997; Snyder, 2006; Stambach, 2000). For example, Snyder (2006) examines how under German and British rule, the Iraqw people of central Tanzania experienced new forms of governance which had an enduring impact on gender relations. The colonial government followed European models and hence excluded women from positions of authority. At the same time, Iraqw women's work in the domestic sphere, once the source of women's authority, was increasingly devalued. A cash crop economy was put in place by the colonists, and taxation, wage labor and the introduction of education followed;

however, all were aimed at men. The result was a 'reformulation of the public sphere' in which women had less power after colonial contact (Snyder, 2006: 89).

In spite of such examples, WID development discourses have perpetuated neo-colonial depictions of women in developing countries like Tanzania as victims who have long been in need of western forms of modernization and emancipation (e.g. Chowdhry, 1995; Mohanty et al., 2001). This victimization has been exacerbated by the World Bank's structural adjustment programs that have impacted negatively on most poor women who now experience increased workloads and a higher cost of living (Chowdhry, 1995: 33). In response to these problems, feminist scholars have argued that development efforts which embody the GAD framework and its focus on the social construction of gender are more likely to promote the inclusion of local knowledge and empowerment for women (Connelly et al., 2000: 58). The GAD framework calls for policies that recognize that women in developing nations are affected not only by their sex, but also by their class, their role in the domestic and public spheres, their access to education and economic opportunity, and, in most cases, multiple forms of patriarchy. Importantly, the GAD framework calls for the deconstruction of WID development discourses that often reduce women to victims, and for the inclusion of women's voices in development policy and practice.

The example of the Iraqw people is one among many that shows how colonialism and development have perpetuated west-based, rather than African, discourses of gender (Callaway, 1987; Oyewùmí, 1997). Consequently, gender and gender relations in Tanzania cannot be thought of as purely 'local' since local conceptualizations of gender have adapted over time with reference to colonial west-based knowledge (cf. Canagarajah, 2002). Nevertheless, a feminist GAD framework provides new ways of thinking about ways forward in development because it welcomes diversity and acknowledges previously subjugated voices and forms of knowledge. Moreover, it questions the demarcation between the (outsider) policy 'experts' and the target populations. Parpart and Marchand (1995: 19) argue that a feminist GAD framework 'can lead to development policies that foster self-reliance and self-esteem, rather than ignoring women's knowledge and creating policies and projects that increase patriarchal control over women's bodies and labor'. Accordingly, in my exploration of the presence of WID or GAD frameworks in HIV/AIDS education, I seek to establish to what degree current educational approaches offer Tanzanians the opportunities to move past gender-specific approaches in order to contribute to policies and practices that decrease oppressive forms of patriarchy.

## The Context

The research I report here is based on fieldwork in the Kinondoni district[2] of Dar es Salaam, which contains some of the most densely populated and poverty-stricken wards in the city. Since my first visit to Dar es Salaam in 2001, I had noticed that the media often presented the idea that prostitution is caused by women, and that the clothing which women wear causes sexual promiscuity and sexual desire among men. My initial observations of NGO education sessions also revealed a strongly gendered pattern. While equal numbers of boys and girls attended the community-based education classes, community events organized by NGOs frequently failed to draw adult men. This was alarming since the 2003–2004 Tanzania HIV/AIDS Indicator Survey shows that men aged 40–49 years have higher infection rates than women of this age group, and it is often these men who act as 'sugar daddies' for younger women who have sexual relations in return for financial support (Tanzania Commission for AIDS, 2005: 15).

The emphasis on women as the target group for behavior change and responsible sexual practices was most evident to me in 2006 when the city commissioner of Dar es Salaam made a media spectacle in a poverty-stricken part of the city where prostitution, heavy drinking and drug use was rampant, a place known as Uwanja wa Fisi ('field of hyenas', named for a local soccer team). With the cameras rolling, the commissioner cleared out pay-by-the-hour guesthouses where prostitutes were working. Members of the media then forced prostitutes to be interviewed on television where they were interrogated for all to see. Practically no attention was paid to the male customers of these prostitutes during this time. Instead, the discourses about responsibility were heavily placed on young women's shoulders, women who typically had few choices for how to support themselves financially. They were asked a range of obtuse questions such as 'Why do you have sex for money'? and 'Are you a prostitute because you enjoy the work'?

The presence of discourses such as these pushed me to investigate the relationship between gender and education at NGO-sponsored events to which I eventually gained access. I became particularly interested to see how women (and men) were positioned at these sessions, and to see if the discourses of education cast them in roles that challenged the unequal degrees of responsibility that I observed in the public discourses in the media. In short, I wanted to see whether these sessions challenged the WID framework's 'continuing tendency to focus on women rather than on gender relations, and in spite of apparently adopting a gender discourse, to continue to treat women as merely victims' and as perpetrators of the spread of HIV (Bujra & Baylies, 2000: 48).

The data in this chapter come from a larger ethnographic study on language in HIV/AIDS education in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, which I initiated in the summer of 2005. My research is the result of my affiliation with a non-governmental organization called the African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF), a non-profit organization that has worked for over 40 years in sub-Saharan Africa to improve public health. AMREF is funded mostly by outside donors including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Family Health International, the Swedish International Development Agency and the European Union. AMREF identifies itself as the largest indigenous NGO in Africa, with projects and offices in seven countries. Notably, in 2005, AMREF received the Gates Award for Global Health, a million-dollar award given by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in recognition of AMREF's contributions to the improvement of public health in Eastern and Southern Africa.

In 2006, I collaborated with 18 community-based organizations (CBOs) that had received training from AMREF and which then had the responsibility of teaching their friends and neighbors and organizing community bonanzas which took an 'edutainment'[3] approach to HIV/AIDS awareness. Large NGOs with substantial budgets like AMREF offer many resources such as clinics for voluntary counseling and testing, and they also usually offer training and teaching materials for volunteers from CBOs who receive short-term training and then take the messages of the NGOs to their home communities to educate their neighbors. This transmission of information is meant to create 'capacity building' for NGOs, an increasingly important criterion for receiving funding from donor agencies such as USAID and the World Bank.

A unique aspect of the youth-oriented CBOs I worked with was that they were all led by young men. Mbilinyi and Mwabuki (1996) point out that small, grassroots organizations are typically staffed by unpaid female workers, and Bujra and Mokake (2000) note that the paid positions at NGOs are typically occupied by males, while female volunteers do much of the hands-on work 'on the frontline' (p. 168). A possible explanation for the male-dominated leadership of the CBOs I worked with is that they were affiliated with AMREF, an internationally recognized NGO with a great deal of resources. In spite of these circumstances, though, these male CBO leaders were not remunerated very well. They were given 30,000 Tanzanian shillings (approximately $30) a month to facilitate the work of the entire organization, which included coverage of any travel expenses, purchasing notebooks and pens for their community-based education classes, typing and printing monthly reports for AMREF and organizing

community bonanzas. Most of the CBO organizers I got to know over the course of my research were remarkably generous human beings who often used their own money to carry out their work, even though all of them struggled financially at a personal level in making ends meet.

The purpose of offering community classes and bonanzas was to spread the life skills education (LSE) curriculum into the community, using a 'ripple effect' approach. This curriculum for HIV/AIDS prevention has been developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) in order to provide people with the necessary skills that are supposed to reduce the risk of HIV/AIDS transmission. These skills have been standardized into a set of 10 skills, and they are used in most Tanzanian NGOs' training materials without any alteration. The training materials produced by AMREF list these life skills as: (1) self-awareness (*kujitambua*), (2) relationship skills (*mahusiano*), (3) communication skills (*mawasiliano*), (4) problem-solving skills (*kutatua matatizo*), (5) decision-making skills (*kufanya maamuzi*), (6) self-control (*kuhimili mihemko*), (7) stress management (*kuhimili msongo*), (8) creative thinking (*fikra bunifu*), (9) critical thinking (*fikra yakinifu*) and (10) empathy (*ushirikeli*). These skills do not explicitly encompass discussions of sexuality or HIV/AIDS in particular, but focus on more general skills that are supposed to provide individuals with the capacity to govern their daily interactions with others. These skills are highly decontextualized from the local constraints and challenges faced by particular communities, but their generic quality also allow educators to localize them in culturally appropriate ways.

Using techniques they learned from AMREF, all of the CBOs organized role plays and street shows involving theatrical performances to inspire audiences to attend their sessions and to transmit the messages of prevention in culturally relevant ways. Such innovative approaches are used in other educational contexts in sub-Saharan Africa as well and have been found to provide more comfortable environments for talking about HIV/AIDS (cf. Norton & Mutonyi, 2007). In the sessions that I observed, gender relations almost always became relevant, but unequal gender relations were not typically challenged or problematized. Instead, gender-specific aspects of the AIDS epidemic were depicted, and more often than not, women and girls were the primary focus of the LSE in two ways: (1) the audiences who attended the community bonanzas and street shows were largely comprised of females, and (2) the themes of the role plays used to teach the LSE typically starred a female character as the protagonist who became HIV positive or experienced other problematic consequences resulting from unprotected sex. While the choice to focus on the harsh realities that women and girls face is worthwhile since it focuses on a

high-risk group who generally lack full control over their sexual health, in all of the performances I observed, gender relations remained radically under-problematized.

For the purpose of this chapter, I discuss the activities I observed among three CBOs which were the most active. The data I gathered for the larger study include video and audio recordings of 35 educational sessions (seminars, life skills classes, community street shows, bonanzas), interviews with educators and their audiences, document collection, and field notes. I spent a total of four months researching AMREF's Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health project in this district, interviewing AMREF staff, collecting training materials, observing workshops and recording educational sessions carried out by the different AMREF-trained CBOs.

## Re-entexualization of Responsibility

To examine how responsibility is discoursed in educational events, I turn to the concept of *re-entextualization* (Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Blommaert, 2005; Silverstein & Urban, 1996). This concept borrows theoretically from Bakhtin's (1981) notions of intertextuality and polyphony in that speakers' utterances are never uniquely authored, as each word has its own social history, imbued with the many meanings acquired from previous speakers and listeners. In the process of re-entextualization, speakers may 'take some fragment of discourse and quote it anew, making it seem to carry a meaning independent of its situation within two now distinct co(n)texts', or, alternatively, they can take a text and 'reanimate it through a performance that, being *a* (mere) performance of *the* text, suggests various dimensions of contextualized "interpretive meaning" added on to those seemingly inherent in the text' (Silverstein & Urban 1996: 2). Importantly, performances such as role plays can be understood as 'verbal art ... [that] can transform, rather than simply reflect, social life' (Bauman & Briggs, 1990: 69). In spite of the contexts of their production, which may seem riddled with gender inequality, and a lack of agency, verbal performances can be decentered from these material conditions and can attempt to shift a hegemonic discourse through re-entextualization. In considering the value of role play performances in education sessions, it is important to recognize that such performances may raise critical awareness by virtue of drawing public attention to the topic of HIV/AIDS, a typically very private matter. As Bauman and Briggs explain, 'performance puts the act of speaking on display – objectifies it, lifts it to a degree from its interactional setting and opens it to scrutiny by the audience' (Bauman & Briggs, 1990: 73). Of course, whether critical awareness is

raised depends on what the audience does with the messages being presented to them, and whether they interpret the performance as mere entertainment or something more profound.

My analysis focuses on whether the discourses of female responsibility are re-entextualized in ways that draw attention to gender relations, rather than to women's responsibilities in HIV prevention. I am especially interested in how the role plays and performances might produce local perspectives on gender relations, and whether such local viewpoints can be transformative as well. After recording and transcribing the educational sessions, I selected relevant data by locating episodes in the transcripts where gender roles or gender relations were made relevant.

In focusing on language in HIV/AIDS education, I do not mean to disregard the importance of structural factors such as economic opportunity and access to education among women. These factors clearly contribute to women's ability to control their sexual lives, and to control their own bodies. The study of discourse here, rather than social structures, should not be taken as an alignment with the rationalist approach to HIV/AIDS prevention (Boler & Aggleton, 2005) which treats the solution to the pandemic as filling knowledge gaps. In addition to structural challenges, I believe that discourse is part of all social practices that contribute to the reproduction of social structures. As Fairclough (2001) argues, if changes can be made in discourses and in the social relationships enacted within these discourses, then we can expect to see effects on the knowledge and beliefs of individuals, institutions and societies. Through addressing discourses, then, we can raise awareness and potentially transform social practices about HIV/AIDS.

## Data Analysis

The analysis of my data is driven by three general questions.

(1) Are the messages of educational sessions *gender-specific* in nature, or is there evidence that *gender relations* are a pedagogical focus?
(2) How is local knowledge about gender roles and gender relations discoursed?
(3) To what degree are hegemonic discourses of gender reproduced (i.e. women are responsible for societal ills) and/or re-entextualized (i.e. relationships among men and women are where transformation can begin)?

First I look at the messages of prevention that were created at educational sessions. The first example illustrates a typical session run by a CBO

in Manzese, the same part of town where prostitutes were expelled by the district commissioner in 2006. This session began with drumming and dancing, followed by a performance, which is the focus of analysis. Approximately 30 people stopped to listen to the music and watch the play, though many more came and went during the hour-long event. In this play, we see discourses of females as the group targeted for behavior change, discourses of females as promiscuous and the positioning of women as those responsible for sexual morality. The data come from a play performed by a CBO on the unpaved streets of the city. In the play, Adia's mother ('MamaAdia') has discovered birth control pills in her daughter's school bag. She confronts Adia and ultimately throws her out of the house for having sexual relations. The data are translated from Swahili.

## Street show in Manzese: Adia's story

MamaAdia:    So, Adia has gotten into these things. She goes to school but also gets into other things. Birth control pills. Adia! Adia!
Adia:        Yes, mother.
MamaAdia:    Come here, come here right now.
Adia:        I'm coming mother.
MamaAdia:    Explain these to me right now. What is this?
Adia:        One of my friends who I took pictures with at school during a party, at school,
MamaAdia:    Uh huh, and these birth control pills?
Adia:        Ah mother let me tell you. Now my friend gave me these pills when I had a headache.
MamaAdia:    You know, you youth, I don't want you to torment me. Do you hear?
Adia:        Mother, these pills were given to me by my friend.
MamaAdia:    Stop tormenting me. Do you hear? What kind of friend? I mean, do you go to school to do this kind of foolishness?
Adia:        No, mother.
MamaAdia:    You take pictures with men?
Adia:        No, mother.
MamaAdia:    You young people, this is what you do. ((mimicking a young person)) 'If I take birth control pills.' Today, you'll be the end of me today!
Adia:        Mother, I beg forgiveness mother!

MamaAdia:    ((yelling)) You monkey! You dog. I don't want dogs like that. If I look at you these days, you've become like a monkey to me. You're like a dog. ((audience laughter)) Don't say anything to me, and if your father comes you will be the end of him. You, we've lost so much money on your for your studies and now there's no forgiveness. ((audience laughter continues))
Adia:        Forgive me mother. I made a mistake. ((begging))
MamaAdia:    There is no 'mother' here.
             ((audience laughter and extended applause for MamaAdia's performance))

In this play, mothers and daughters are presented as the primary characters who are affected by decisions about sex. Adia's mother takes on the role of determining sexual morality, and Adia is presented as a 'bad' daughter for not listening to her mother and not being grateful for her parents' financial support for her school fees. The father is only briefly mentioned in the play, and no mention is made of why Adia chose to become sexually active with men; her sexual partner does not even appear as a character in the play. At the end of the performance, Adia is cast away by her mother, who insults her with a string of verbal abuse. Judging by the audience's reaction, it was clear that the play was very entertaining. The audience laughed throughout the play and applauded with enthusiasm for the animated performance by the actress portraying MamaAdia.

The play highlights a recurrent theme in many conversations among the older generation in Tanzania when discussing changes in society that they have witnessed over their lifetimes. In conversations about the younger generation, there is a strong tendency to construct modernity as the source of societal problems and as an external force that corrupts local values. In his anthropological study of the Chagga, Setel noted that AIDS is 'one of the many diseases of development' (Setel, 1999: 196), and that Tanzanians associated the disease with a range of behaviors involving desire, greed and a lack of self-control. Likewise, Becker (2007: 31) writes of 'a tendency to reify the past, especially regarding its supposedly higher moral standards' among Muslims who express high levels of discontent over the current state of maendeleo ('development') in the Lindi region of Tanzania. These themes are also present in Dilger's (2003) research on the Luo in Northwestern Tanzania, who often cited advanced schooling as a main factor in the decreasing importance of the African family in imparting moral teachings. With many temptations surrounding them, and with

higher degrees of independence due to schooling, Dilger's participants expressed that young people are freer to spend time away from their parents. This theme is echoed in Adia's story as well when her mother questions whether she attends school in order to be sexually active.

When I interviewed people who watched this performance, many onlookers thought that the play pointed out the need for greater communication between parents and children. All three of the interviewees I include below were women, and their views are representative of the perspectives I found among the audience. Below are some of their responses to 'what they learned from the play'.

(1) 'I've learned that communication of parents and children makes for good child-rearing. We shouldn't cut our children off from our families, this kind of parenting isn't what we need.'
(2) 'I learned that we should educate our children, and together with that, we shouldn't castigate our children.'
(3) 'If parents talk to their children, they can prevent these kinds of problems, like using birth control pills.'

These comments are not surprising since many CBOs focus on the topic of parent-to-child communication as part of the life skill of 'communication'. While they may achieve some awareness raising through modeling poor parent-to-child communication in plays (and exaggerating it for humorous effect, even), such performances fail to address the issues of gender relations and the forces that act upon young women such as Adia. Plays almost never star a male protagonist, nor do they represent mothers discussing sexual education with their daughters.

### Role Play in the madrassa: Munira's story

A similar set of discourses was present in a role play that was done after a LSE class at a madrassa, an Islamic school. Since it was the first LSE class, the lesson was on the first skill, 'self-awareness' (kujitambua). Approximately 15 children between 9 and 15 years were in attendance, and the educator was a 25-year-old Muslim CBO leader who had arranged the class with the help of the local imam. The educator had asked a group of children to develop a play illustrating their understanding of 'self-awareness', and they developed an impromptu performance that focused on Munira, a young girl who is lured into having unsafe sexual relations with Sele, a boy who has been approaching her on her way to school. Here again, we see that the primary female character is targeted as promiscuous because of her decision to agree to sexual relations.

Scene 1

| Sele: | How's it going? |
| Munira: | Good. |
| Sele: | Come closer. Why are you this way (so far away)? |
| Munira: | I'm afraid of my mom. |
| Sele: | You're afraid of your mom! Will your mom come here? |
| Munira: | What if she sees me? |
| Sele: | How can your mother find us? Your house is far away. She won't come here, don't worry. Okay? Don't worry at all. You're with me, okay? |
| Munira: | Okay. |
| Sele: | Don't be so afraid of your mom. ((Sele's friend Felix enters the scene)) |
| Felix: | Hey Sele, my friend ((gives him a high-five, then they move off to the side so Munira cannot hear)). Give her money for a drink, even juice from the street or something. |
| Sele: | ((To Felix)) I'll see you later. ((Sele gives Munira money)) |
| Munira: | Well, I'm leaving for home. |
| Sele: | Okay, see you tomorrow. |

Scene 2

| Sele: | How's it going? |
| Munira: | Good. |
| Sele: | What's new? |
| Munira: | I went to the hospital. |
| Sele: | Mhm. Malaria? ((audience laughter)) |
| Munira: | No. The problem is … that I'm pregnant with your baby. |
| Sele: | ((cries out)) Hey now, speak the truth. My baby, oh no! It's not my baby, you. It's not my baby, you. You shouldn't try to mess with my head, I'm a grown person. The idea of you with my baby, you, no way. ((Sele leaves)) |

Scene 3

| Munira: | Hello, mother. |
| MamaMunira: | Hello. Now come here so I can see you. |
| Munira: | Today I didn't go to school because my stomach hurt. |

MamaMunira:  When did the stomachache start? Since when? Now tell
             me clearly. Be straight with me.
Munira:      It's not that my stomach hurts, mother. I went to the
             hospital and found out that I'm pregnant.
MamaMunira:  You're what?!
Munira:      I'm pregnant.
MamaMunira:  You're pregnant. Ehe! ((starts to push Munira away))
Munira:      No, mother!
MamaMunira:  If you are pregnant I don't even want to see you with
             my eyes. Get out, get out, get out!
             ((pushes Munira out of the house))
             ((audience laughter))

As was the case in Adia's story above, Munira's mother is presented as
the character responsible for determining sexual morality (rather than any
male character) when Munira invokes her mother as a reason for avoiding
physical contact with Sele. Instead of taking the opportunity to model
a discussion between Munira and Sele that shows how young people might
talk about their choices, the students enacting this role play depict Munira
as a 'bad' daughter since she did not listen to her mother. Moreover, Sele is
presented as an easily corruptible boy who listens to his male friends, rather
than a young man who can talk to his romantic partners about safe sex. Like
Adia, Munira is characterized as a young girl who can be corrupted by desire
for material things (in this case, money, drinks and food).

In the end, Munira is the one to suffer the consequences, as she, like
Adia, is thrown out of her home. The moral of the role play seems to be
that Munira should have made different decisions, rather than being
swayed by Sele's efforts. The role play does not depict Sele as responsible
for the consequences of unprotected sex, and at the end of the play, the
audience expects that Munira has to find a way to take care of herself and
her baby on her own.

After the role play, the CBO facilitator engaged the students in a discus-
sion of what they had learned, which provided me with the chance to see
how they interpreted the performance they had just witnessed. The
children worked together in groups to write the lessons of what they had
learned on large pieces of paper. From their answers (presented here in
translated form only), it was clear that they focused on gender-specific
aspects of the play, rather than noticing that the gender relations between
Sele and Munira could have also been important. The children also
highlighted the theme of temptation in the film, a factor that highlights
the failings of Munira and Sele as individuals rather than addressing the

unequal gender relations in Tanzanian society which often constrain the
degree of individual agency women and girls can experience.

Educator:     Now you've had the chance to talk together. So, can you
              explain what you've learned, what have you learned in
              your group? From this play of ours.
Student (f):  We learned that temptations aren't good. And that if a
              person has a friend, you should really critically look at that
              friend. I mean that, Sele, he had a friend who was
              persuading him to do bad things. So, we- you have to
              check out your friends. If this one has good character, then
              you go along with him or her. Then, also, girls shouldn't
              be fearful. They need to be assertive. In this way, Munira
              wasn't assertive. When she was called by Sele, she just
              went with him. She didn't assert herself; she didn't respect
              herself. So, in addition, we also need to respect ourselves.

The next group was asked to report on what they had learned by read-
ing from their poster-sized paper. This group highlighted the relationship
between Munira and her mother and also the relationship between Sele
and Felix. No discussion of the relationship between Sele and Munira was
raised.

Educator:     Yes, now the next group. Number two.
Student(m):   Well in the play we learned that there is self-protection and
              there is temptation. And if a person doesn't listen to her
              parents, she gets pregnant. And protecting oneself from
              sexual diseases like AIDS and chlamydia and others. Not to
              be persuaded by temptations of any kind. Getting pregnant
              without wanting to, being kicked out of your home, and
              being rejected by a man who got her pregnant, like Sele.

Another group reported what they learned in the class, pointing out the
importance of the relationship between Munira and her mother, and
MamaMunira's responsibility towards her daughter's well-being. This
group ended by citing a well-known proverb about the need to teach the
young while they are still willing to be taught, which clearly points to the
group's focus on the mother–daughter relationship, rather than that
between Munira and Sele.

Student(f):   We learned about MamaMunira, when she was teaching
              her child at home. But she didn't follow up Munira's
              progress at school. The result is that she didn't know what

she was doing at school or if she went to school. Every day she could have told Munira to give a report, or something. It wasn't a happy story. And Munira didn't care about school. She was only caring about romance. She didn't know, let's say, she didn't know the importance of school – and romance and sex, these things don't have importance. Because she is very young she didn't know. Her mother didn't even tell her.

**Educator:** Yes,

**Student(f):** And then this guy (Felix) here tempted his friend, and Sele proceeded to deceive Munira. Sele followed Felix, thinking this is my friend, maybe he'll teach me something good. But he didn't learn anything. Afterward, his friend corrupted him. When that happened, he didn't know what to do, so he rejected Munira. And her mother kicked her out of the house. Let's say, there's a saying about this. *'Samaki mkunje angali mbichi'* ('bend a fish while it is still wet', i.e., teach a child while s/he is young).

In sum, the discussion in the *madrassa* focused on how Munira and Sele should have been stronger individuals who were capable of thinking for themselves and taking responsibility for their own actions. The GAD focus on gender relations was absent in the role play and in the class discussion, as no attention was paid to why boys and men offer girls and women material goods such as drinks and money, and no strategies for how to reject such an offer were mentioned.

### Interview with all-male focus group

A final set of data comes from interviews I carried out with a group of vocational students aged 18–25 years who had just sat through a co-educational life skills class in which they learned about effective communication strategies as part of the LSE curriculum. In the class, several students were asked to perform a role play in which a teen-aged boy would approach a teen-aged girl and ask her to become his girlfriend, a theme also present in Munira's story above. The students were instructed to show how the girl might refuse the offer, which gave the class the opportunity to re-entextualize the discourses of HIV/AIDS prevention with female agency, and also to highlight the importance of negotiating gender relations. The role play appeared to succeed in this, as the female student-actor quickly rejected the male student-actor's offer to buy her food in a very straightforward manner. She simply said *'mimi sitaki'*

('I don't want to'), and the boy went on his way. As we saw in Munira's story, in Tanzania, the offer to buy a girl food, or even a soda, is often interpreted as a sexual invitation (also see Bujra & Baylies, 2000). In this brief role play, however, the male character immediately accepted the female character's rejection without further comment. In my interviews with the male students after the class ended, I suggested that such a rejection might not be so realistic. The students discussed how 'real-life' interaction was typically much more complicated. Here the English translation is provided with relevant Swahili words and phrases included.

**C:** Okay, we saw that the girl was able to say she wasn't interested (*mimi sitaki*), and then the boy left her alone. But I've seen here at NGOs with CBO groups that they really emphasize *uthubutu* ('assertiveness'), do you understand *uthubutu*? Especially for girls, so that they can say *'Mimi sitaki'* and be listened to. But I'm not sure that they can really say it once and then have success. What do you think?

**M1:** It's possible since it happens a lot. It's happened to me like three times where a girl has said *sitaki* and she doesn't want to talk and so she leaves.

**M2:** The thing is, it depends on the attitude of the person. ... For example if someone says *sitaki* and their heart really says it too, and there are others who say *sitaki* and it's that they are analyzing you to see what kind of person you are, if you seem like you have money, if you have the ability to enjoy the nightlife by going out, 'What's this person like? Does he have the ability to buy me things, clothes, what might I wear?' Then she agrees.

**C:** How do you all differentiate these different *sitaki*s?

**M2:** There is the sincere *sitaki*,

**M3:** The *sitaki* of *kukutega* (setting a trap for you).

**M2:** Then there's the *sitaki* of looking you over,

**M3:** Meaning, to look you over, like – do you have the courage to keep trying or what. Because you can keep trying to get a girl for like a whole month while being rejected, but she's assessing you the whole time, checking out your personality and character. Now if you increase your efforts, she sees, 'Oh, this guy, he really likes me.'

To compare the male perspective with the views of the female students at this education session, I also interviewed the female students separately. They offered rather different views, which points to the urgency of attending to gender relations at these education sessions.

**F1:**    If you decide to say *sitaki*, then you need to really refuse for real.
In other words, you must refuse beginning with your face, and
then your whole body. But if you refuse here ((points at face)) and
if you agree here ((points at body)), it shows that you want more.
But if you say *Mimi sitaki*, then you must refuse with a voice that
shows that you really aren't interested. So, your body, your hands,
I mean, you say you don't want it but then, you're surprised
because your suitor thinks you want more, and he pursues you.

**F2:**    He knows that this one wants me but still she refuses. Maybe if
I bring her something, she'll agree. So he keeps trying until you
agree. That's how it works.

These comments reveal that even though some education sessions offer
the opportunity to re-entextualize education with GAD discourses, these
discourses often require deeper discussion. The example of the multiple
kinds of *sitakis* illustrates the necessity of drawing on life experience of
the participants in order to uncover how unequal gender relations
govern everyday interactions. The women's comments above reveal their
perceived need to formulate their behavior with regard to a male perspec-
tive, rather than being able to engage in a negotiation that involves both
male and female points of view. Notably, they do not argue that the young
men are the one who need to alter their understandings of women's
perspectives. These comments suggest that further discussion of how such
conversations actually unfold in educational settings could encourage
young people to delve into the area of gender relations. More frank discus-
sions about cross-gender interactions could be a promising way to provide
young men in particular with ideas about how to share the responsibility
of safe sexual relations with young women.

## Discussion

In these three examples, we see that the models offered in the education
sessions generally are not highly successful at re-entextualizing gendered
discourses of HIV/AIDS responsibility among males and females towards
a focus on gender relations. These examples show the predominant trend
of reproducing a focus on women and girls as those responsible for making
decisions about their sexual relationships, rather than including men and
boys as equally responsible agents. The examples also show how a great
deal of LSE does not encourage a focus on gender relations, at least as it
is currently being carried out in practice by CBOs. If a greater focus
on gender relations is to come to fruition, it will be necessary for LSE

educators to emphasize this approach in HIV/AIDS education. However,
since the educational practices of most NGOs and CBOs are driven by
international policies produced by the WHO and the World Bank, change
will have to come from above if gender relations are to be a focus of
prevention efforts. At the same time, awareness of how LSE is connected
to transformative practices can be initiated from the ground up. If more
research is carried out on actual educational practices, local educators can
have a better sense of the messages that they are producing in their educa-
tion efforts. Unfortunately, very little attention (and funding) has been
given to qualitative research on HIV/AIDS that could shed light on the
discourses which circulate in educational practices.

One of the central messages that calls for greater attention in current
educational efforts is the tendency to link potentially risky or harmful
sexual behavior with modernization and lifestyle changes among the
younger generation, changes that are often associated with schooling and
urbanization. In many role plays and LSE classes I observed, this 'modern
living' is often castigated by Tanzanian elders as the source of social ills
and is targeted as the cause of the loss of a 'local' sensibility with an exter-
nally 'modern' (and corrupt) way of life. In the role plays starring Munira
and Adia, schooling practices were treated as opportunities for girls to
become sexually active, and the desire for recreational pleasures was
depicted as the cause of moral corruption in Munira's story and in the
interviews with the vocational students. In addition to many other role
plays and street shows that I have observed, these three performances
illustrate how young Tanzanians usually treat the choice to live a modern
life as a morally questionable one that is full of risks, rather than one that
can be challenged by re-appraising gender relations in an increasingly
modernizing Tanzania. Realistically, there are no signs of change on the
horizon in regard to this modernizing project, because many young
Tanzanians continue to leave their families in order to attend secondary
schools in distant places, and the desire for material goods continues
to grow, particularly among the younger generations. These changes in
lifestyle seem to have outpaced the way that many Tanzanians manage
their social relationships and how they conceive of responsibility in their
gender relations.

## Conclusion

At the end of my two months of research, I shared my findings with
AMREF regarding discourses of gender as well as several other themes.
NGOs such as AMREF do not do such research on their own educational

practices, as they are typically staffed by medical doctors and public health experts who value large-scale quantitative research over and above qualitative studies of educational discourse. In spite of our different orientations to research, however, I am happy to report that AMREF was very interested in my research. The project manager for the Kinondoni district project expressed sincere disappointment that the responsibility for safe sexual practices was being targeted at girls and women, and he agreed that more needs to be done to address this issue in particular.

Although AMREF staff are required to attend seminars that examine the role of gender and HIV/AIDS, it was clear to me that without closely analyzing their own educational practices, NGO workers are often not able to see the discourses of gender that are being reproduced in their own work. Many of the staff reported to me that they had never thought about the role of language from the perspective of discourse, and that my research offered them the opportunity to see their work from a new angle. They were especially enthusiastic about my transcripts, and they wanted to use them for future training of educators.

For many reasons linked to policy initiatives and funding constraints, institutions like AMREF are not able to mandate a wholesale shift from gender-specific HIV/AIDS education to an approach that focuses on gender relations. However, if international agencies such as the WHO advocate for more attention to the GAD framework, it is highly likely that NGOs will implement these policies in order to align with policy and to qualify for the funding opportunities. In the meantime, I continue to work with AMREF to address these concerns through materials development that will train peer educators to more deeply consider the ways that language and discourses operate in their educational practices.

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## Notes

1. The WID framework was formulated as a policy statement in the Percy Amendment to the US Foreign Assistance Act of 1973.
2. The Kinondoni district houses Manzese, Mwananyamala, Tandale and Kigogo, four wards that are notorious for high rates of crime, prostitution, illicit drinking, drug use and harsh living conditions (Kinondoni Municipality, 2007). The research I report on here comes from Mwananyamala and Kigogo. Other parts of the district are distinctly middle and upper class (e.g. Mikocheni, Msasani and Sinza).
3. Edutainment combines education and entertainment in the forms of plays, singing and dancing in order to disseminate messages of prevention at public events.

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## Chapter 7

# Uganda's ABC Program on HIV/AIDS Prevention: A Discursive Site of Struggle

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### Introduction

In Uganda, what began as a national war against HIV/AIDS has become a battle for ownership of the discourse on HIV/AIDS, with life and death implications for Ugandan people, and young women in particular. One such battleground is Uganda's ABC program on HIV/AIDS prevention (A for abstinence, B for be faithful, C for condoms), in which diverse stakeholders are implicated in struggles over the policy and its implementation. This chapter will address three of the primary stakeholders in this battle, namely policy-makers at the macro level, teachers at the institutional level and female students at the micro level, respectively.

At the macro level of policy, we consider the genesis of the ABC policy, and its relationship to national and international agendas of development. We demonstrate that the discourse of the ABC program, particularly with reference to condom usage, is a site of struggle in which national and global agendas take precedence over the daily challenges of those most affected by policy initiatives. At the institutional level, we consider how policy at macro level impacts health education in schools. At the micro level, we investigate the challenges young rural Ugandan women face in negotiating the principles of ABC on a daily basis, demonstrating how the ABC program inadequately addresses what is being called the increasing 'feminization of AIDS' (Dworkin & Ehrhardt, 2007: 13).

We frame our argument with reference to poststructuralist theories of language as 'discourse' (Bourdieu, 1977; Foucault, 1980; Weedon, 1987), in which language is conceptualized as the complexes of signs and practices