

**My name is Ogwal Sam a peer educator, I was enrolled for a training on HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases by Community Development Shield Uganda (CDSU).**

Sam a 23-year-old youth had his story to tell, that before he got the information about HIV/AIDS, he did not know much about it, he used to even fear the hospital and also, thought HIV/AIDS was contracted when you share sharp object with anybody. Further, Sam stated that *"I used not to care about my health status but the training was an eye opener as I was encouraged to know my HIV status"*

He further said that *"I decided to go and get tested; this alone changed my life and started living a more careful life style as it was my first time to do the testing. A new chapter was crafted, as I now do it after every three months as recommended"*.

Furthermore, Sam used to fear to visit the health center before the training but now he doesn't because he gained communication skills through the trainings he had. He affirmed that there is a youth friendly corner at the facility and that the nurse is friendly too and could offer counselling as well.



Sam further stated that the training enlightened him on preventive measures of HIV like proper use of condoms as he did not know how to use. The trainings involved demonstrating to the young people how to wear a condom properly. *"I also got to know about PrEP that is given to someone who had sex with a person who doesn't know the HIV status like people who are raped"* Sam re-echoed.

A transformed and valuable individual in the community, *"I have also encouraged fellow peers how to use condom well, I also advise my peers who are not yet in a relationship to abstain from sex and also know their HIV status and if they are positive living they should continue to take their ARVs"*. Wise words from Sam

Additional revelation from Sam indicated that Sam is now a very confident youth due to the knowledge got from the training. He stated that before, he used to be very shy and fearful to talk in public but now *"I talk confidently because I was taught life skills"*. As a peer educator, Sam is supporting his fellow youth to access health services and for those who fear and do not know where to get the service he normally goes with them to the health facility.

**My name is ACEN VICKY 24 years of age peer educator; I was enrolled for a training on HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases by Community Development Shield Uganda.**

*"I am grateful to CDSU who trained me on HIV/AIDS awareness as I grew up, I used not to know about HIV and though I could not be transmitted to another person. I was not even aware of what to do before starting a relationship as I thought people*

just go for sex without any knowledge of checking their HIV status and other health issues” Vicky stated.

Further, Vicky knows since, she engaged in the training that before engaging in a sexual relationship with someone *“I must first check their HIV status and also use a condom for protection therefore I should not have sex with someone I do not know their HIV/AIDS status”* Vicky stated

Vicky did not used to know that the female condom also exists as she had never seen it. Though the training, she learnt that there are female condoms out there for use and Vicky brags about learning how to use it accordingly. *“I also learnt how to wear a male condom incase my partner didn’t know I can teach him”* she said.

Before the training Vicky had phobia to visit the health center and also to know her HIV status as she knew the nurses were arrogant and could shout at her. But the training helped me a lot as I learnt how to communicate confidently and also, I now know about youth friendly services and youth corners at the health center which made it easy for me to access the health center for ART services.

With my experience, *“I encourage my friends visit the health center and know their status and also receive youth friendly services that they need like counselling, condom collection, HIV checkup, information sharing”* Vicky adds.

*“I also have some friends who are positively living, I also encourage them to take their drugs well”.* This Vicky remembers from her trainings She also continuously advises her peers to regularly go for medical checkup as this help to suppress the virus as help them live healthy.

*“I also encourage my peers to be faithful to one partner and use a condom or even abstain from sex to be safe from getting HIV”* Vicky concluded.



**My name is Angwech Oliver 25-year-old peer educator, I was enrolled for a training on HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases by CDS Uganda.**

We quoted Oliver saying, *“As I grew up, I used to think that HIV was contagious and can easy spread by contact with infected person and also sharing items such as plates, cups, bed, spoons etc. with the infected person. For sure, i feared and hated a lot the person who had it so I used not to share anything with them be it plates and cups or even clothes”.* Oliver said.

She further stated that she is now aware; that HIV is not contagious and this changed her mindset totally toward persons living with HIV/AIDS to even support them. With the knowledge I attained from the training "I encourage my fellow young people to always go to the health centers whenever they are not feeling well and also take their drugs properly so as to live healthy".

When further asked, Oliver stated that she used to think HIV was only transmitted through sex, but now she knows the various ways that it can be transmitted like sharing sharp object with infected person, not using a condom properly, blood transfusion, accidents, and also mother to child.

Oliver learnt that someone can take PEP when they are raped to avoid contracting HIV and also can use condoms as well. "I also now know that if I am to engage in a relationship, I should do an HIV test and other health checkup with my partner before having sex" she noted.

Oliver *is currently* creating awareness on HIV/AIDS with the knowledge she attained from the training since, many youths do not know much about it and encourages her peers to as well go for HIV testing because when one knows their status they live more careful and as many youths nowadays live a life of, I don't care. "Many youths were not aware of the youth friendly services at the health centers but I told them about it and many of them now go to health center to access services". Oliver affirmed. As community youth peer educator, I also tell the youth to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS as HIV does not cure and those who already have it I, normally advise them to take their drugs well and avoid spreading it to others.

Oliver motivates her fellow peers through experience sharing that she used to fear to approach the nurses at the health center but after the training she became bold and confident "*I can now approach the nurse and tell her my problem this made my peers build courage to go to the health center to access services*".

