

# HIV/AIDS PROGRAMMING WITH SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT



**AFLATOUN INTERNATIONAL**  
**CHILDREN EMPOWERED**

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A new independent review by the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie): “*Financial education for HIV-vulnerable youth, orphans, and vulnerable children: A systematic review of outcome evidence*” concluded that **plural education interventions (combining financial education and sexual and reproductive health education) with self-efficacy (social education) have positive effects on HIV-related outcomes.**

These outcomes included improved knowledge, attitudes and reduced sexual risk-taking behaviour. Evidence also showed improved self-efficacy, including increase in confidence, negotiating ability and social conditions that enable people to act on knowledge. Self-efficacy was found to be important as both a set of conditions to support reduced vulnerabilities and a way to measure them in terms of outcomes. [6]

## THE CHALLENGE

Despite the global efforts to eradicate HIV, young people present the highest rate of new HIV infections. In 2019 alone, 460,000 young people between the ages of 15 to 24 were newly infected with HIV, of whom 170,000 were adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19. [1]

HIV is the leading cause of youth mortality in Africa, and the second cause of death among young people worldwide. If the current trend is maintained, the objective of the SDGs to eliminate AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 will not be reached, this is especially important for girls and young women who are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS. [2]

## SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL EDUCATION CONTRIBUTES TO THE LIVES OF GIRLS LIVING WITH OR AT RISK OF CONTRACTING HIV/AIDS

Gender inequality and a lack of women’s social and economic empowerment are key factors limiting their ability to take control and reduce their risk of HIV infection as well as access to treatment. Adolescent girls and young women often do not protect themselves because they lack the skills, the support or the means to adopt safe behaviours. They often cannot choose when and who to marry, whether they attend school or travel on their own. They often cannot earn and manage their own money or start their own business. [3,4]

Girls and young women living with HIV face contexts in which they can claim their right to life saving health care. They also face stigma and harassment from family, classmates and community members who know they are living with HIV. [5]

## OUR SOLUTION

Aflatoun International helps girls and young women take greater social and economic control of their lives by empowering them in the following three sectors:

**Economic Empowerment:** Financial education enables girls to have ownership and be in control of economic assets, including access to training, services and financial saving products, which results in them gaining decision-making power. This combined with lessons on how to save financial and non-financial resources increases their independence and self-determination.

**Social Empowerment:** Social education includes improving participants' self-confidence, self-efficacy, and knowledge of their rights; which helps them take greater control of the decisions that affect them. They learn to think about their lives critically and set more healthy boundaries whilst assessing what they wish for themselves and their community in the future.

**Health Empowerment:** Comprehensive sexuality education allows girls and young women living with HIV, and those at risk, to gain access to information that tackles myths and misunderstanding about living with/contracting HIV. They learn about risky behaviour, where to go for contraceptives, testing and treatment. This education allows them to simultaneously stay in school, reduce the likelihood of transactional sex, decide when they marry and have children. [7]



# AFLATEEN+

Life Skills and  
Financial Education  
Through a Gender Lens



## OUR PROGRAMME

Aflateen+ programme focuses on gender equality and economic prosperity for girls and women, addressing issues faced specifically in developing countries. Aflateen+ is specifically designed to work with boys and girls aged 14-19 providing materials for life-skills education. This includes comprehensive sexuality education, financial education and entrepreneurship – all taught through a gender lens.

The programme gives girls and women the opportunity to learn about their rights and tackle not only ethical issues, but economic and financial aspects; that play an important role in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS. The programme can be used with girls only, or with mixed groups; and as a standalone programme or to complement ongoing efforts.

## DEMONSTRATED IMPACT

Overall Aflatoun International is a credible research partner, with research conducted in 40+ countries including 10 Impact Evaluations. Research demonstrates that Aflatoun programmes strengthen young people's self-efficacy [8], future planning and rights awareness [9], communication skills [10], savings behaviour [11, 12], entrepreneurial behaviour [13], and overall attitude towards education [14]. Economic, social and health skills empower girls living with or at risk of contracting HIV to break the cycle of poverty in their families and communities and directly reduces their vulnerability to exploitation.

External studies in Tajikistan (RCT) and in Mozambique show that children have more knowledge about HIV and AIDS after completing the Aflateen+ programme [15, 16]. Additionally, it was shown that participants began to realize the importance of being respectful towards people living with HIV due to the lessons taught by Aflatoun [17]. Two new Randomized Control Trials in Burkina Faso and Cameroon found improved saving and spending behaviour as well as reduced likelihood to be bullied. Adolescent girls were also less likely to start sexual activity [18].



In Lesotho, CRS are using Aflateen to develop adolescent girls into Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe women (DREAMS). The same method is also used by Project Hope in Namibia to mitigate the impact of HIV. In Botswana the Aflateen methodology is used by Stepping Stones International in life skills classes and vulnerable girl's safe spaces in schools. The most vulnerable girls participate in Naledi Clubs (Shining Start Clubs) which focus on economic empowerment and building social assets.

But, also in other regions (Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe) the girls empowerment tool is being used. For example, in Tajikistan the Aflateen programme implemented by Mercy Corps targets girls aged 14 to 18 in secondary schools. It includes peer-to-peer training sessions. Girls from participating schools form Aflateen clubs through which the core elements of Aflateen+ are taught and practiced. While supported by teachers and other adults, girls were the primary drivers of activities.



**For more information,  
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