Teen Clubs Promote Responsibility & Health

Challenge

Teenagers make up 30 percent of Nicaragua's population. According to surveys, half the country's youth initiate sexual activity before 18 years of age and 15 percent before age 15. The teenage pregnancy rate is 25 percent - one of the highest in Latin America.

Photo: USAID/Jan Howard

Teenagers in the rural community of Las Grecias give talks to their parents on reproductive health.

"It was difficult at first but we have to learn to talk about these things openly."

- Marvin Lorenzo Quiroz, youth program participant

Initiative

In an effort to reduce teenage pregnancies and prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, USAID is funding teenager clubs throughout Nicaragua to provide teenagers with the information they need to make wise health decisions. The program is part of a nationwide project under the NicaSalud Federation of nongovernmental organizations.

In the rural community of Las Grecias, located 120 miles northwest of Managua, 19-year-old Marvin Lorenzo Quiroz gives monthly talks to parents and neighbors on reproductive health and sexual responsibility. He is one of 120 teenagers from Las Grecias who participate in the USAID-funded reproductive health care project.

Using innovative approaches, such as drama groups and a special vehicle outfitted with video equipment and loudspeakers called the "cinemovil," USAID-funded clubs are getting health education messages out to even the most remote communities of the country. Subjects that were once considered to be taboo are now discussed openly at community-wide meetings where teenagers educate adults.

Results

The USAID-funded program has trained more than 300 teenagers to give talks on responsibility, abstinence, fidelity and other reproductive health issues, and to recruit other teenagers. Close to 14,000 youths are now participating in these clubs. In addition to health education, the clubs provide teenagers a place where they can participate in sports, recreational activities, and community service projects.

Case Study

USAID