

# Talking HIV in Post-conflict Sierra Leone

## Findings from Baseline Studies

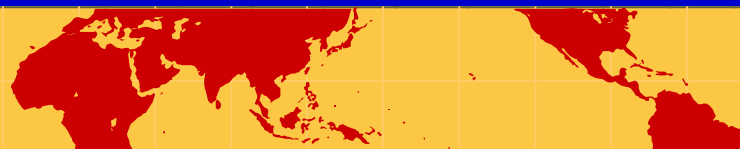
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CARE Sierra Leone

(Presented by Doris Bartel)

Reproductive Health: From Disaster to Development

October 2003



care <sup>SM</sup>

# Sierra Leone



# Tonkolili District

Total Population: 322,310 (estimated)

Displaced People: 30,924 (2001)

Number of dwellings destroyed: 50%\*

Literacy: 14%\*

Wasting malnutrition: 11%

Access to potable water: 30%

\*OCHA data, 2000

## CARE's programs in Tonkolili:

- Reconstruction and Rehabilitation
  - Houses
  - Water and Sanitation Systems
- Health education
- Governance and conflict reduction

# HIV in Sierra Leone

- $< 1\%$  \* ?
- $1 - 4\%$  \* ?
- $66\%$  ?

\*CDC prevalence data, 2001

# HIV Messages

Abstain!    Be Faithful!    Use Condoms!

# But...

- What does my faithfulness matter if my husband/wife has other sexual partners?
- If I now ask my wife/husband/partner to start using condoms, what will they think?

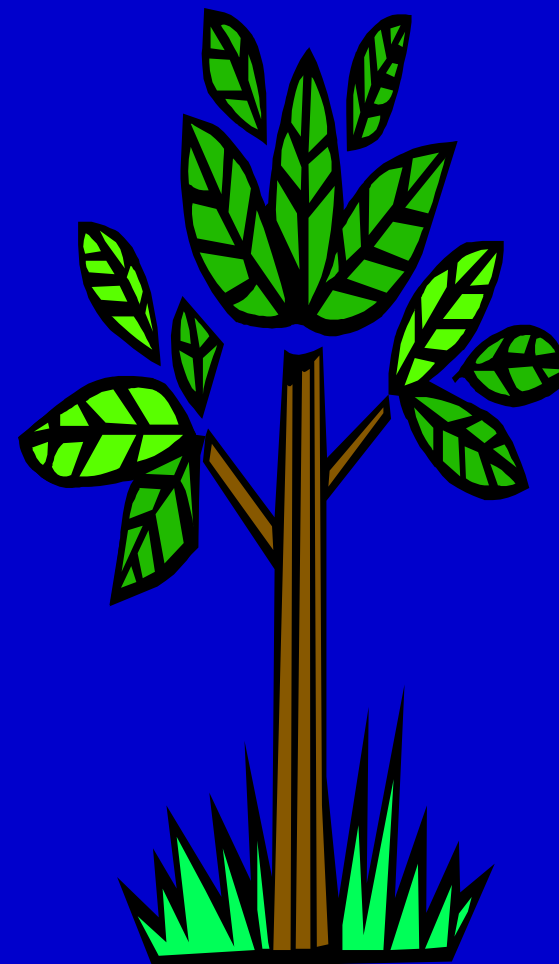
# But...

- I have not eaten for 2 days, have no family, no land. If someone offers me a piece of chicken in exchange for sex, do I have a choice?

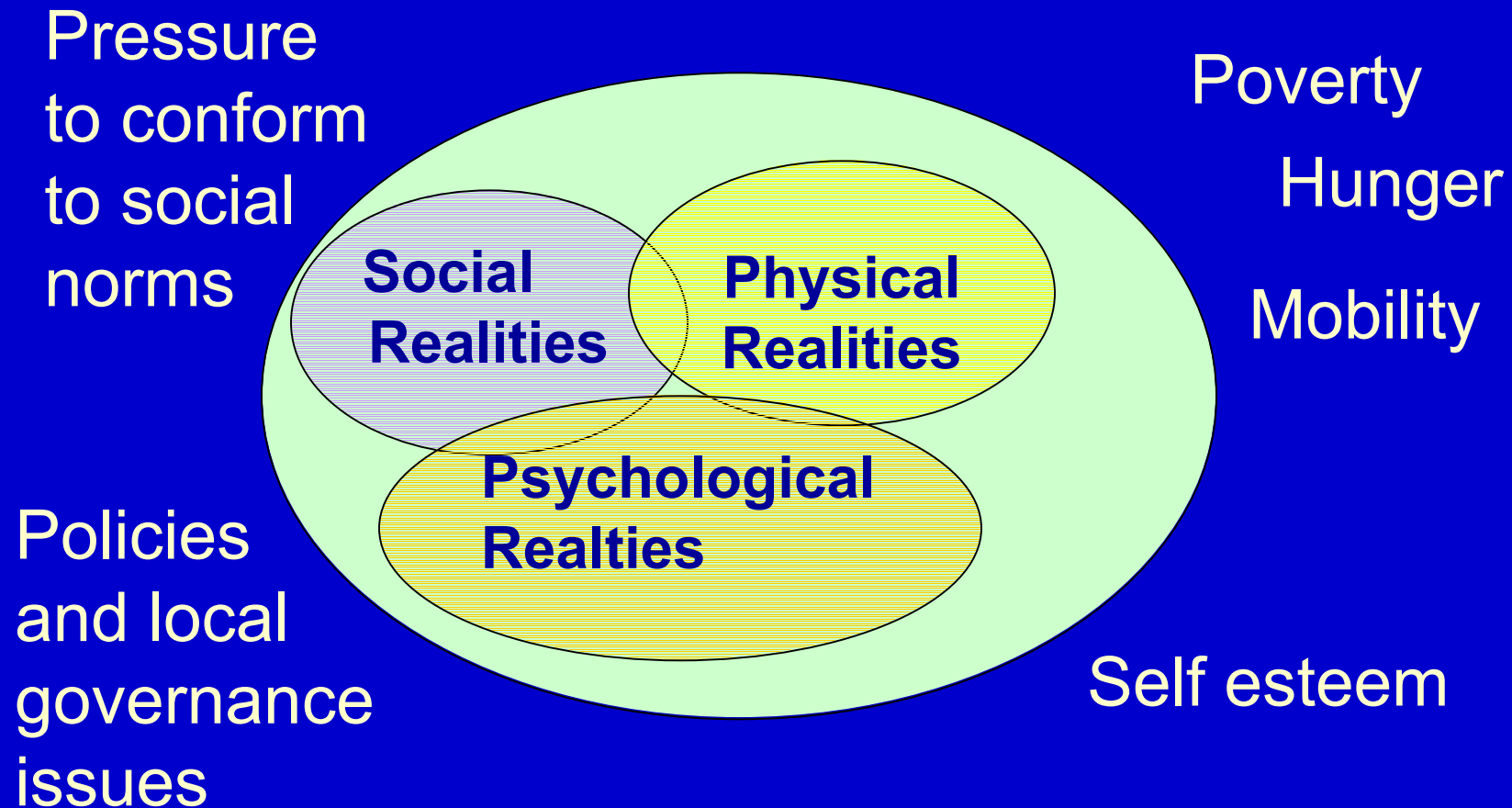
- It is too late for me. I was raped in the war.

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# Current Realities of Rural Post-war Sierra Leone

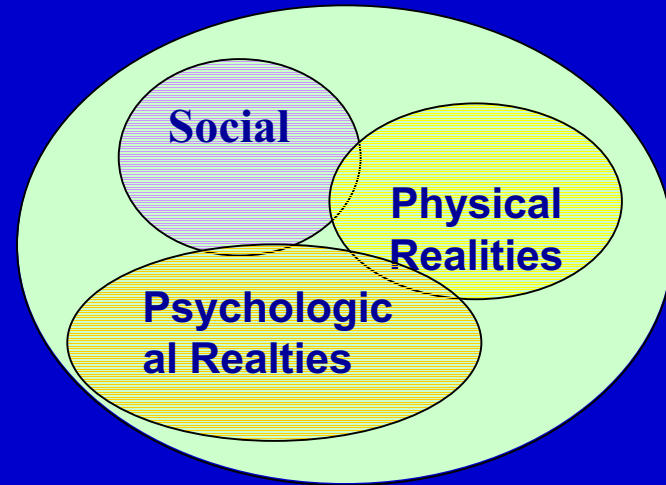


# Building an integrated framework



# Integrated framework for response

- Informing people
  - Fostering dialogue
    - Addressing multiple underlying causes simultaneously
      - Collective action, social change



# Goal

To field test 2 methods of raising awareness and improve self-efficacy related to HIV prevention in post-conflict Sierra Leone

- Stepping Stones (adult)
- Auntie Stella (age 11 - 18)

# What are Stepping Stones?

- Training materials for HIV, sexuality and gender
- 14 participatory sessions (role plays, discussions)
  - Gender awareness, GBV
  - How to communicate, including how to be assertive, how to negotiate
  - Societal and household issues that affect personal decision-making
  - Technical information on HIV, STIs
- Developed in Uganda by Action Aid, Amref and others



# Purpose of the Study

- To learn the levels of awareness and understanding of HIV/AIDS in rural areas
- To learn the societal factors that could influence behavior with regard to HIV infection
- To determine the specific components of training materials best suited for post-conflict rural Sierra Leone

# Research Design

	<b>Intervention Area</b>	<b>Non-intervention Area</b>
<b>Baseline</b>	HIV KAP survey Focus Groups	HIV KAP survey Focus Groups
<b>Post-Intervention</b>	HIV KAP survey Focus Groups	HIV KAP survey Focus Groups

# Data Collection Methods

## **1. HIV Knowledge, Attitudes, Practice Survey**

HIV prevention, condom use

Family communication

Partner communication

HIV stigma

## **2. Focus Group Discussions**

Communication

Social cohesion

Governance in post-conflict Sierra Leone

# Data Collection Methods

## 1. KAP Survey

Questionnaire conducted through interviews

4 villages in Tonkolili District

April 2003

Random selection of households

50% men, 50% women

n=240, which is 20% of population

## 2. Focus Group Discussions

16 focus groups

# Demographic data of respondents

Survey Respondents = 240 (Intervention and Non-Intervention responses combined)

- Average age: 38.5 years
- 80% Muslim
- 92% subsistence farmers
- 78% no formal schooling

# Survey Results: Condom Access and Use

Know where to get a condom?

*57.9%* said “Don’t Know”

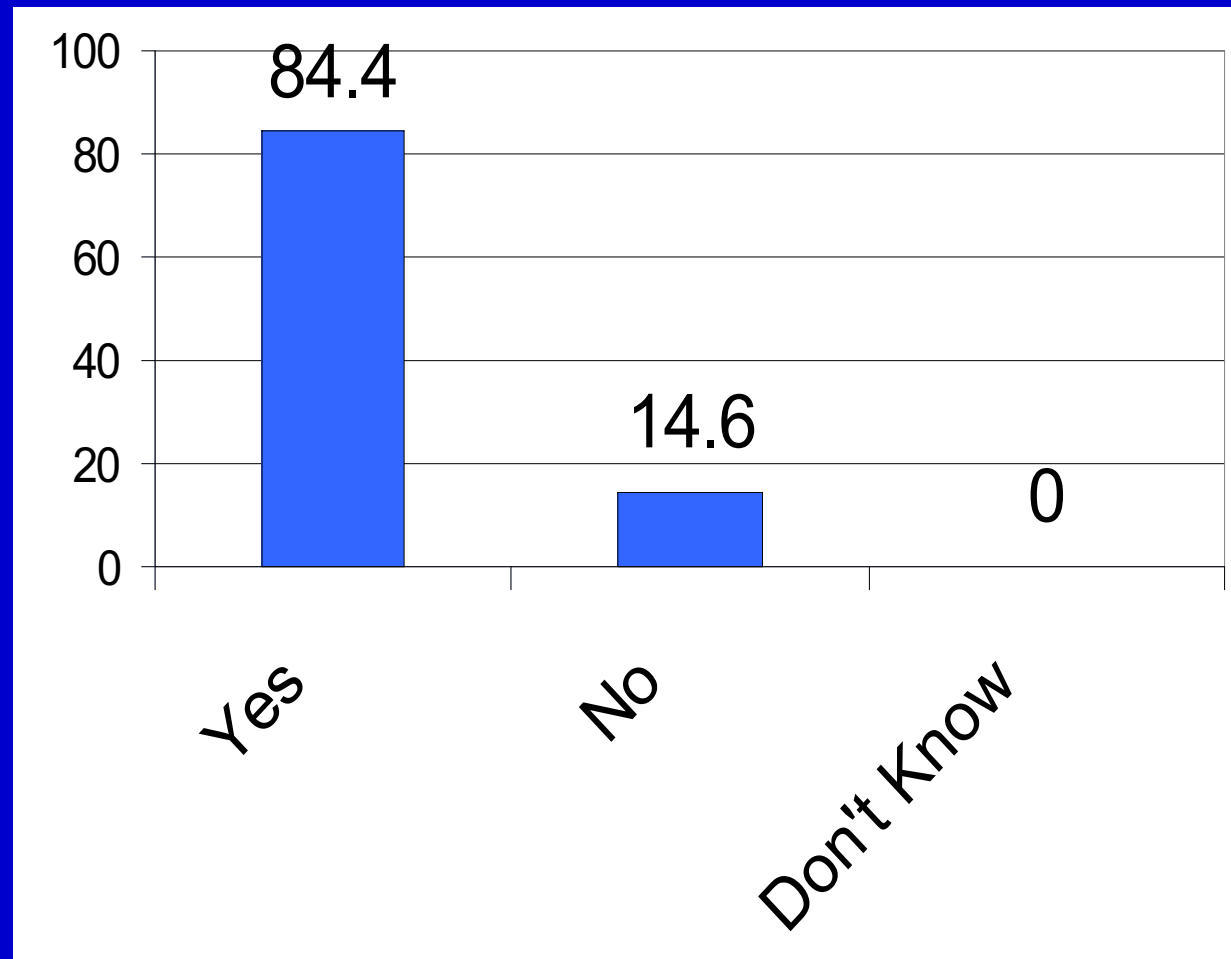
Used a condom at last sex? *96.3%* said “NO”

Ever used a condom? *85.5%* said “NO”

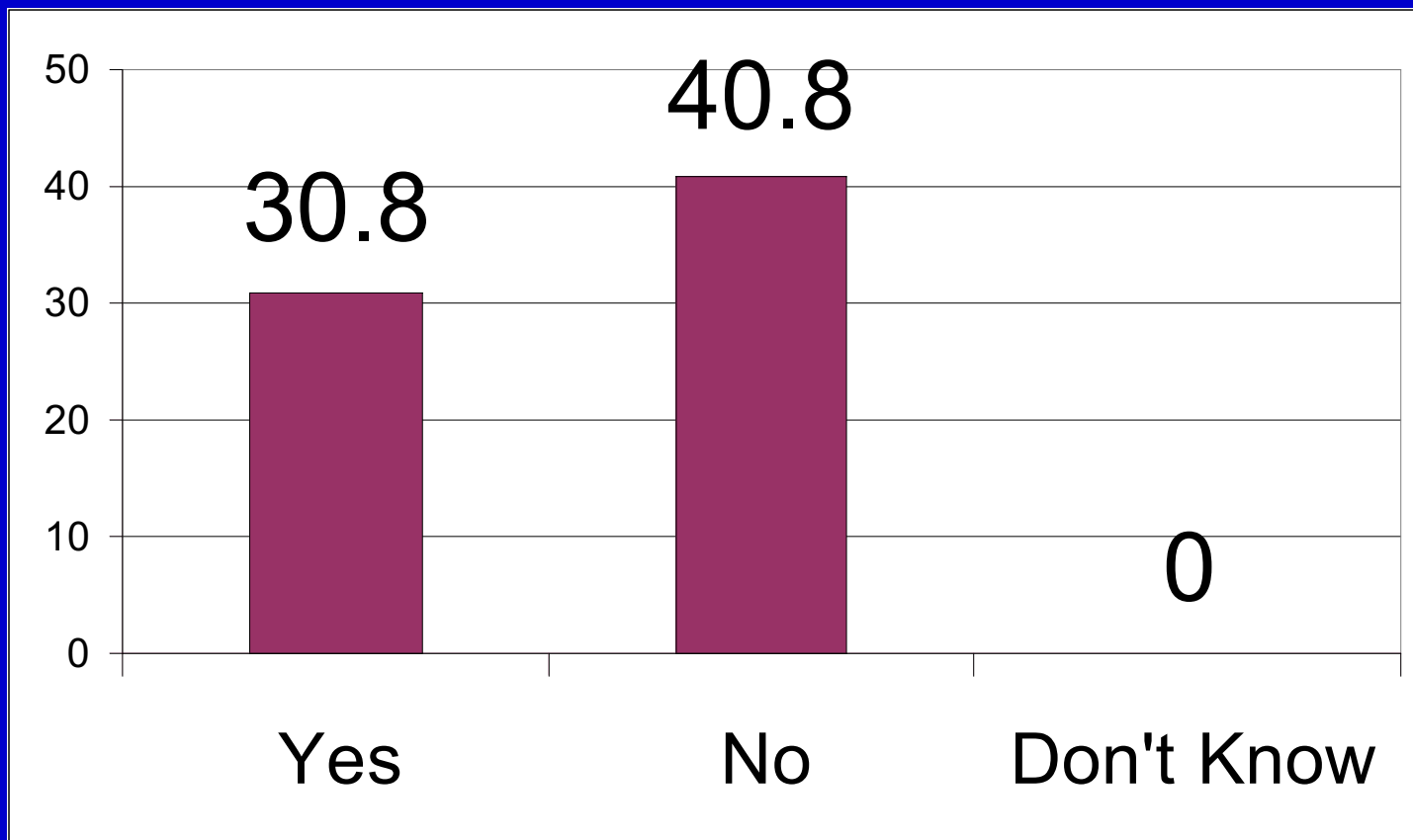
Ever seen a condom? *43%* said “NO”

# Survey results: Communication

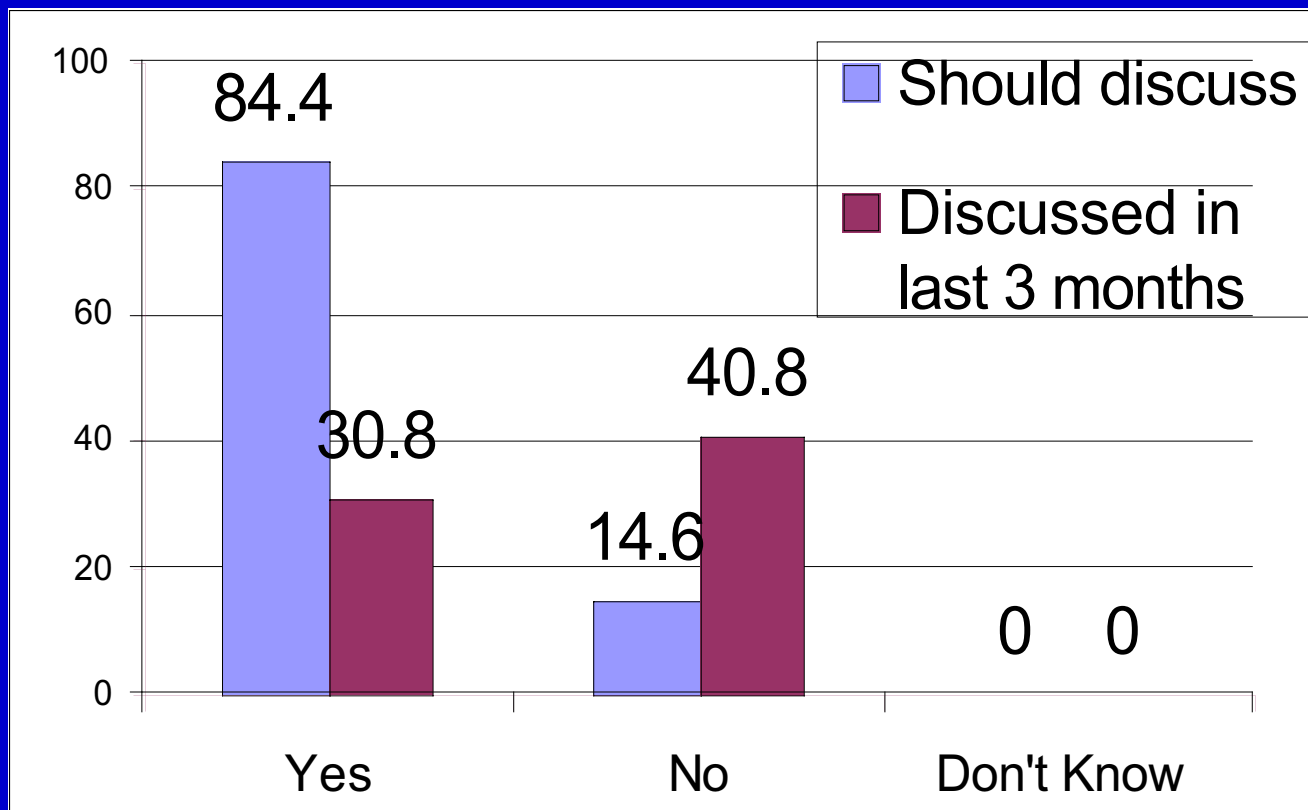
## Should partners discuss sexual issues?



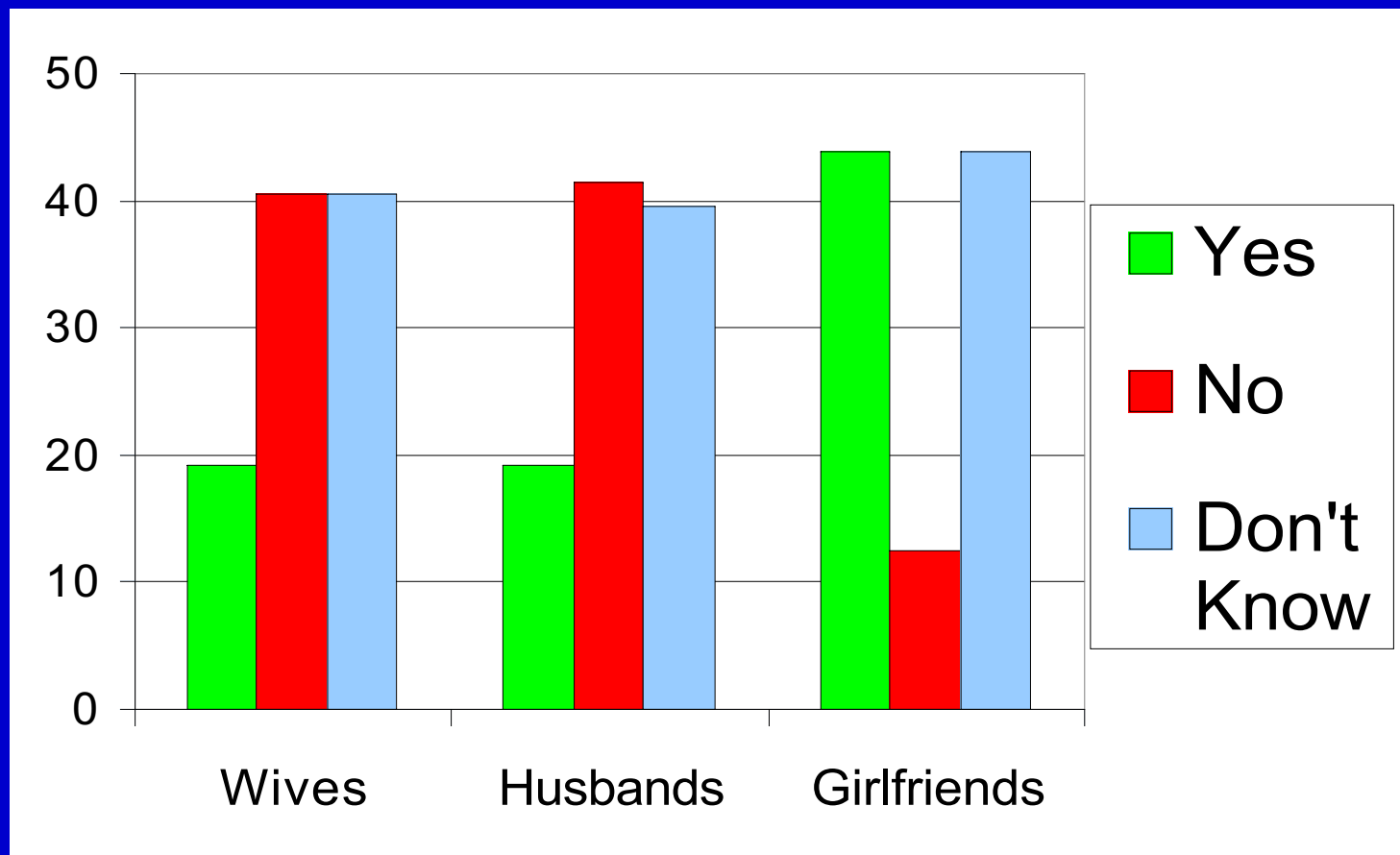
# Have you discussed sexual issues in the last 3 months?



# Idealistic versus realistic discussions of sexual issues

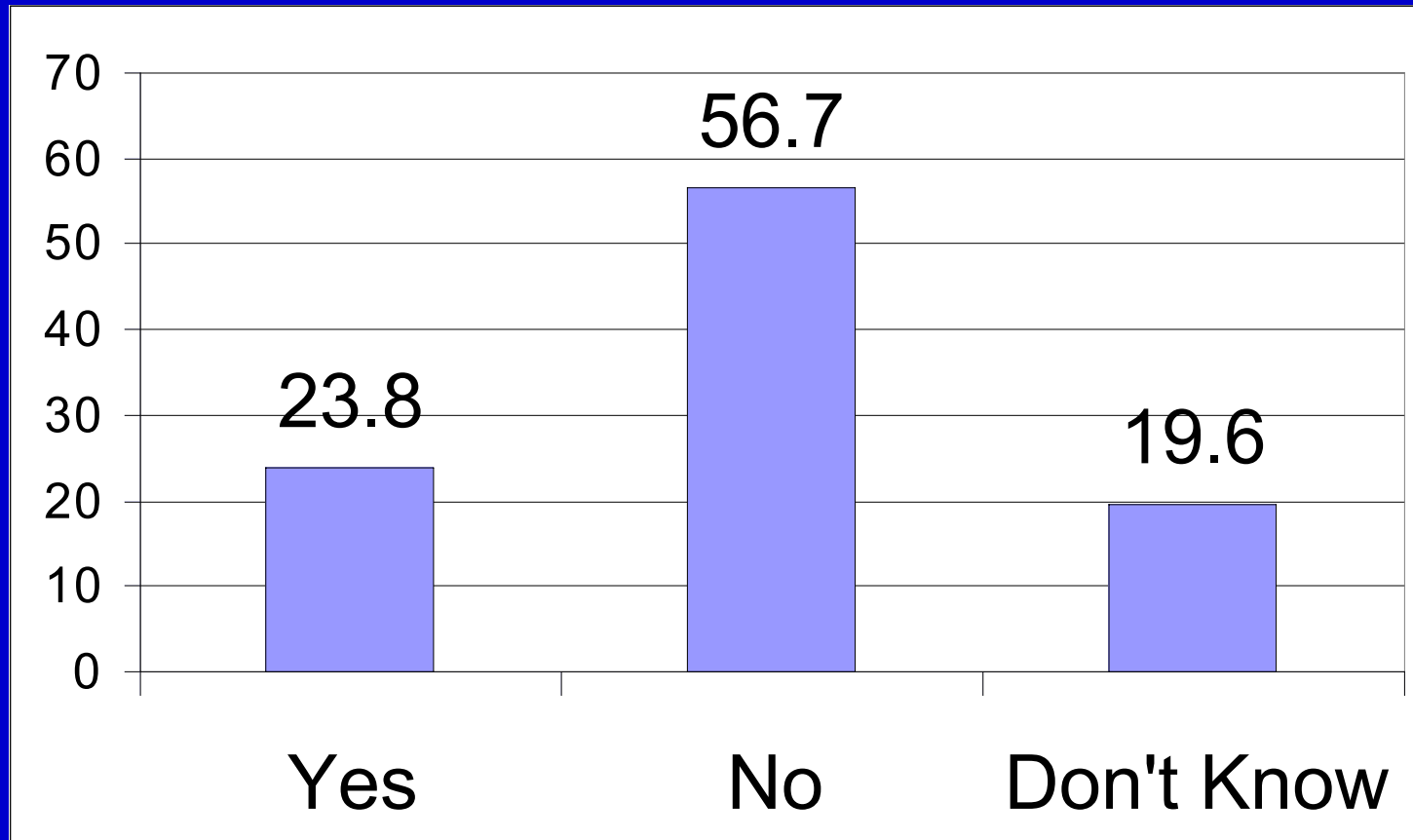


# Results: Is it OK for partner to ask for condom use?



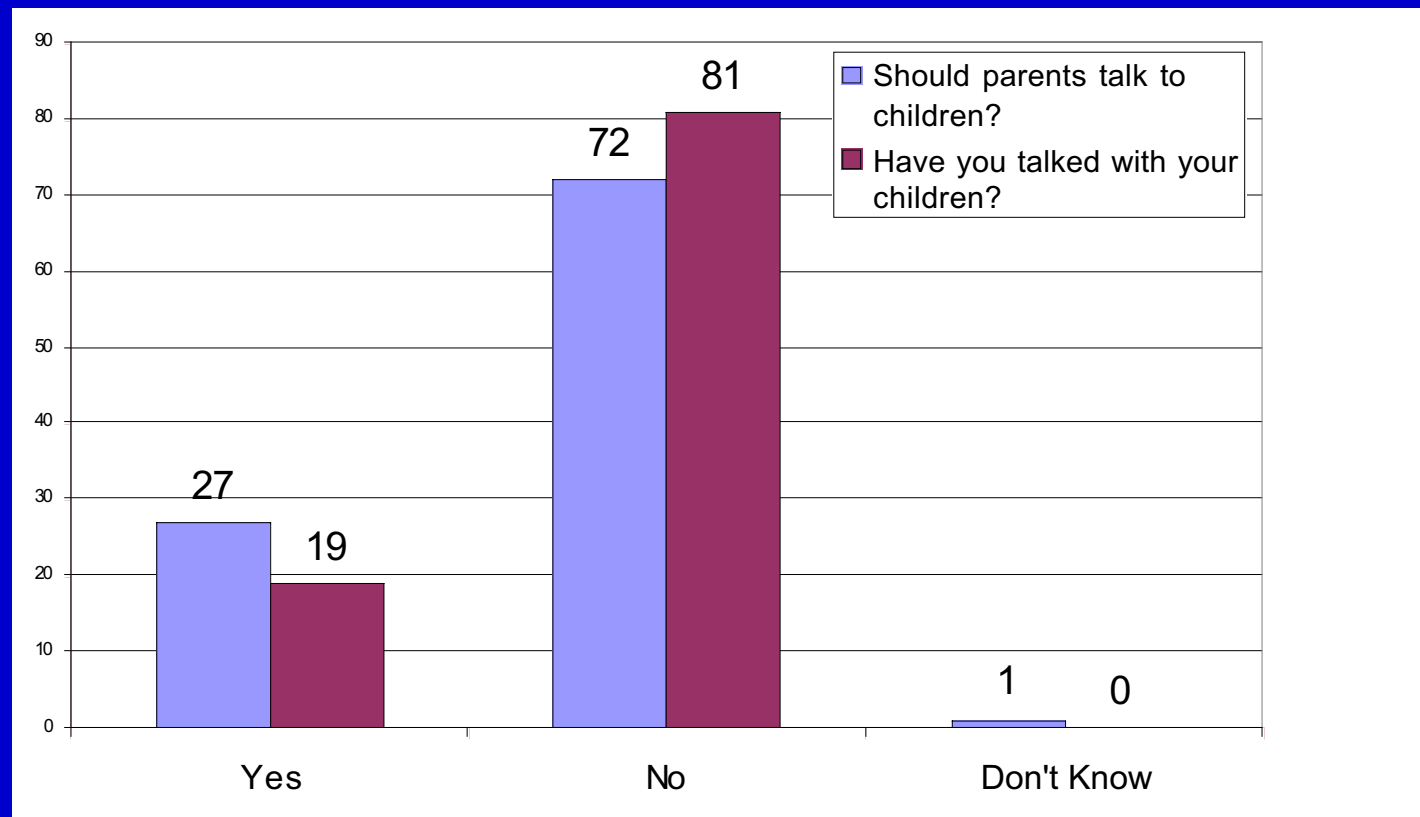
# Results:

## Would you agree to condom use if your partner asked?



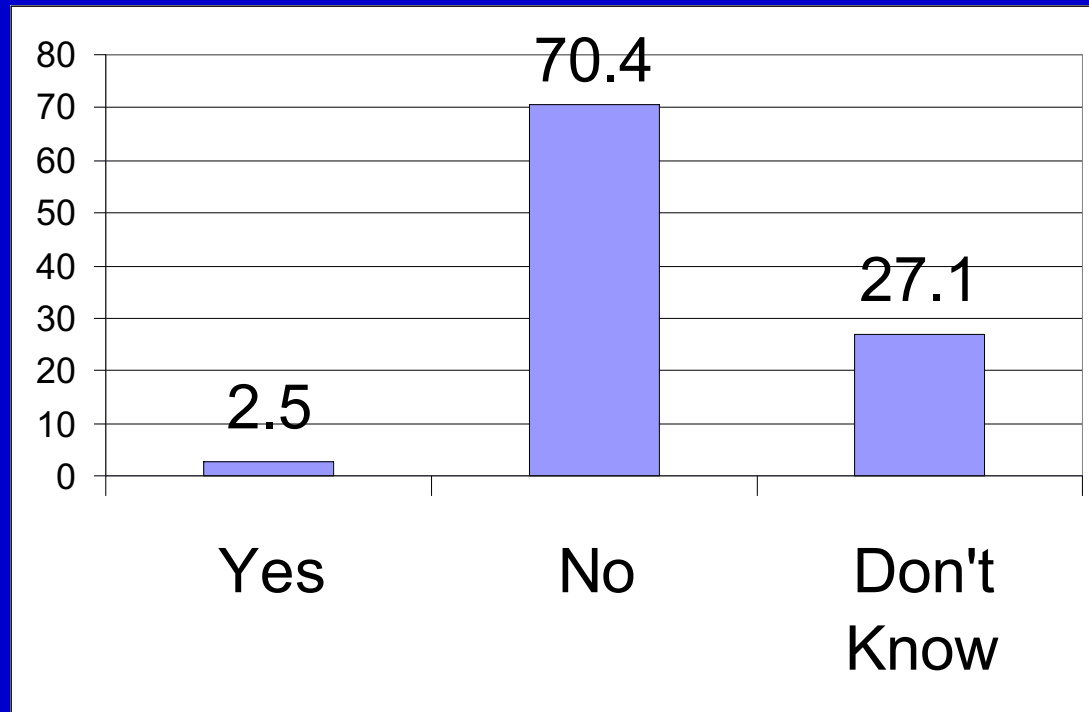
# Family Communication:

- Should parents talk to children about sexual issues?
- Have you discussed sexual issues with your children in the last 3 months?



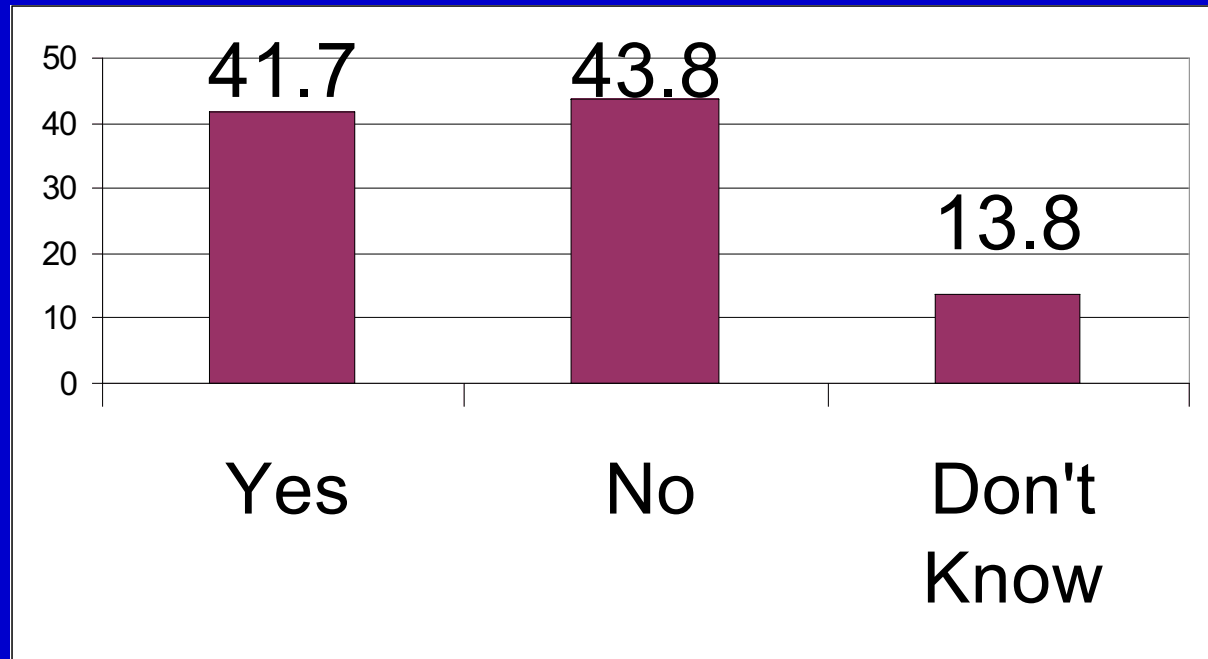
# HIV Stigma

Have you  
cared for or  
helped  
someone  
who has  
HIV/AIDS?



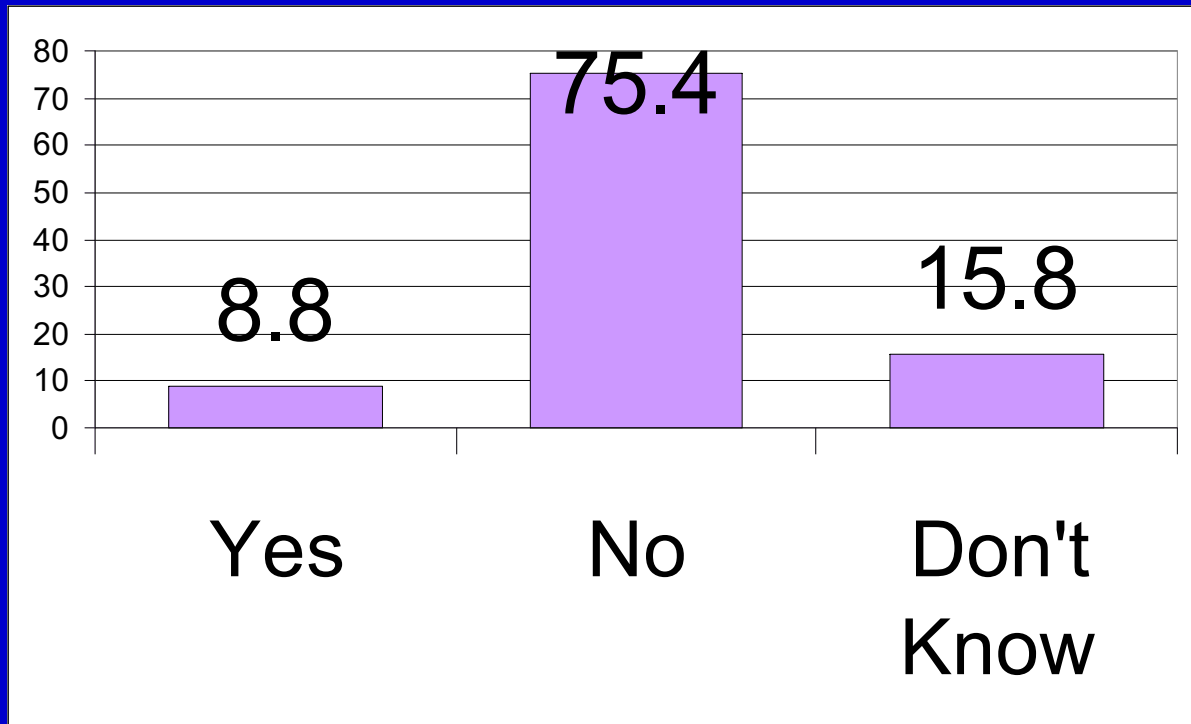
# HIV Stigma

Do you think that people with AIDS should be cared for?



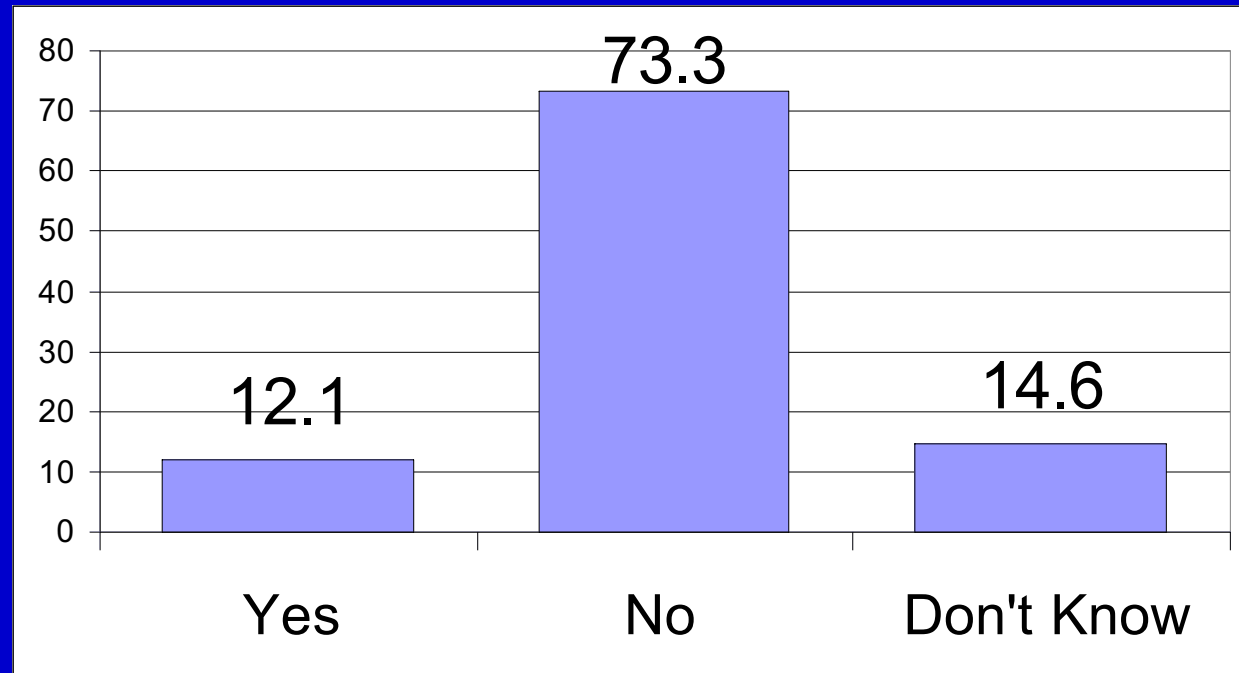
# HIV Stigma

Is it possible for someone with HIV to live a normal life?



# HIV Stigma

Should someone who is sick with AIDS still be involved in community life?



Was the program successful?

# Comparing Intervention and Non-Intervention Sites

People in intervention sites discussed issues of condoms, sexuality, relationships, gender equity much more freely and easily than non-intervention sites

# Project Observations

- Participatory, discussion-oriented methods worked well
- Participants liked discussions in peer groups, but...
- Need to find ways to work with both parts of a couple
- Assurance of confidentiality

# Project Observations

- Young people dropped out of program more often
  - Young men travel extensively to find work
  - Young women spending much time looking for food

# Project Observations

- AIDS is not yet a reality for most people: most did not know anyone personally with HIV or AIDS
- The component of the Stepping Stones material that focuses on dying from AIDS needs to be adapted in a post-conflict setting

# Conclusions

- Access to condoms is a significant issue!
- Family communication issues about sexual issues and especially condom use is critical
  - Parents with children
  - Between partners

# Conclusions

- Economic recovery in rural Sierra Leone is an issue – agricultural work takes up significant time
- Young people in rural Sierra Leone are at high risk for HIV and AIDs, and difficult to reach.
- Stigma of HIV should be addressed.

# Recommendations

- Facilitate improved condom access
- Dealing with sexuality and sexual issues is hard, but we have to improve people's skills and comfort in communicating about this
- Need to be creative in reaching young people, consider micro-credit, skills training, other economic activities
- Prevention of HIV stigma