Reproductive health amongst adolescents

A UK Aid Direct learning product
Young people living in developing countries have **limited access** to sexual and reproductive health resources, information and services.
Health and development during adolescence have a significant impact on longer term health outcomes.
unintended adolescent pregnancies are recorded each year and most of these women have no access to modern contraceptive methods.
From harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation practiced across the world...
...to stigma surrounding menstruation..
and the silence surrounding female sexuality...
Young women bear a disproportionate burden of ill-health.
Why do we think it is important to consider adolescent sexual health?

- giving young women the opportunity to understand their sexual health rights allows them to make informed choices about their own bodies and increases their empowerment
Why do we think it is important to consider adolescent sexual health?

preventing unwanted pregnancies and promoting young people’s sexual health is critical to breaking cycles of poverty and enabling young women and girls to pursue their education.
Why do we think it is important to consider adolescent sexual health?

- better informed sexual health knowledge among adolescents results in STI and HIV prevention
Why do we think it is important to consider adolescent sexual health?

- girls forced into an early marriage have a diminished chance of completing their education and are at a higher risk of being physically abused, contracting HIV and other diseases, and dying while pregnant or giving birth.
Why do we think it is important to consider adolescent sexual health?

• adolescence is a perfect time to engage young men and boys and help shape their attitudes to women
What are the key challenges?

• many governments fail to give sufficient priority and support to help address adolescent sexual reproductive health and rights
• social, legal and cultural barriers can lead to restrictions in young people’s access to comprehensive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health services
• even where mandated by law, or committed to UN agreements, sexuality education is often lacking both in and out of schools
What are the key challenges?

• where they exist, sexuality education curricula is not comprehensive enough, often omitting topics relating to human rights, gender, sexuality and menstruation

• both education and health institutions are often not coordinated enough to support comprehensive sexuality education programmes

• health systems rarely offer young people sexual and reproductive health services designed to meet their needs and to respect their rights to dignity and privacy
What are the key challenges?

- young people face particular challenges to access services, due to stigma from health
- cost can also be a barrier for young people, who are likely to be financially dependent on their parents or another adult
- transport, location and inconvenient opening hours may also prevent young people from accessing the services they need in a timely manner
Approaches to consider

There are 4 key areas for change that can be considered in programmes targeting adolescent sexual health:

1) increase individual awareness of sexual and reproductive rights as a human right
2) increase access to sexual and reproductive rights resources, information and services
3) adopt a youth-centred approach to changing social norms, processes and policies, youth as agents of change
4) strengthen the enabling environment to support access, quality and delivery of SRH services for adolescents
Approaches to consider in detail:

1. Increase individual awareness of sexual and reproductive rights as human rights

   • innovation is key
   • consider the research - what has worked and not worked
   • work with youth as agents of change – using participatory and dynamic approaches
   • be creative with different mediums, such as technology, social media, music, drama or sport
   • strengthen links with schools on comprehensive sexuality education
   • work with community leaders and parents to support awareness approaches
Approaches to consider in detail:

1. Increase individual awareness continued.

**RTL** – AmplifyChange grantee Rugby Tackling Life has chosen rugby as their tool to empower girls and women in Uganda. They currently have around 2000 girls playing rugby with them.

As well as developing women’s skills and confidence in sport, they also

- encourage and support their players to continue their education
- provide health education from qualified health professionals with the aim to reduce teenage / unplanned pregnancies and transmissions of STD’s
- offer career guidance so that girls can make the best decisions for their future

Before or after each weekly training session a RUGBY or TACKLING or LIFE topic will be discussed. This can be anything from how to do a good tackle or better scrum to issues around sexual violence. The upbeat team atmosphere builds an environment of trust and support where girls and women feel comfortable and confident to raise sensitive issues.
Approaches to consider in detail:

2. Increase access to sexual and reproductive rights resources, information and services

• involve youth in the governance and monitoring of SRH services, to promote youth-friendly standards
• create a youth-led rating system for youth-friendliness amongst service providers
• strengthen service quality and accessibility for young people through partnerships in social marketing and social franchising
2. Increase access to sexual and reproductive rights resources, information and services continued.

- advocate to authorities to increase the range of services and products available, including emergency contraception and psycho-social counselling
- pilot innovative approaches, consider outreach, provider incentive programmes for example
- work with health professionals and facilities to reduce barriers to access
Approaches to consider in detail:

2. Increase access (continued)

Afrikids - Futures’ Freedom project supported by UK Aid Direct, is working to improve the sexual, reproductive and health rights environment for over 24,000 women and girls in northern Ghana

Lucy: “Every Friday we talk about it. Girl child education. That’s where I got to know about it.”
Interviewer: “What age were you when you heard about contraception?”
Lucy: “I was 16 years old when I heard about it.”
Interviewer: “Do you understand about your rights?”
Lucy: “I have the right to freedom. The right to sexual freedom. I have the right to have sex with the person I want. The right to sexual health care. I have the right to take good care of myself.”
Approaches to consider **in detail:**

3. **Adopt a youth-centred approach** to changing social norms, processes and policies, youth as agents of change

- pilot approaches to challenge harmful norms and support young men to identify with and adopt positive gender identities
- pilot approaches within families to support young people’s informed decision-making
- involve parents and community leaders in advocating for improved comprehensive sexuality education within schools and youth friendly services
3. Adopt a youth-centred approach to changing social norms, processes and policies, youth as agents of change (continued)

- empower teachers to provide comprehensive and accurate information on sexual and reproductive health and rights
- empower healthcare professionals to champion young people’s sexual and reproductive health and rights
Approaches to consider in detail:

3. Adopt a youth-centred approach to changing social norms, processes and policies, youth as agents of change (continued)

• facilitate dialogue between adolescents, their parents, teachers and SRH service providers around good mental health and awareness of the linkages between rigid gender norms, power imbalances, adolescent suicide and self harm

• work with traditional leaders to raise awareness of how harmful traditional practices affect young people
Approaches to consider in detail:

3. Adopt a youth-centred approach (continued)

In Ethiopia, UK Aid Direct is supporting AMREF to work with young people on changing attitudes to sexual reproductive health.

AMREF runs reproductive health youth clubs, where those participating in the clubs learn about their sexual and reproductive health rights and how best to access contraception.

These youth groups then run community dialogues to further communicate the message amongst their peer groups.
Approaches to consider in detail:

3. Adopt a youth-centred approach (continued)

- In addition to the reproductive health youth clubs, AMREF selected 10 schools (who were equipped with computers) to use the *World Start with Me curriculum (WSWM)*.

- This computer-based comprehensive sexuality education, ‘WSWM’, focuses on the SRHR for young people and provides sexual health awareness and HIV and AIDS prevention. With this programme, young children educate themselves in a full range of sexual and reproductive health issues and become computer literate at the same time.

- The curriculum provides a unique opportunity for contemporary sexuality education, human rights and a positive approach.

- The programme also offers social competencies, such as negotiation, communication and decision making skills, contraceptive use and the right to refuse sex. It addresses gender-based violence, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and its consequences, and tolerance towards youth with other behaviours.

- The technology-based approach motivated students to attend the SRH learning sessions unlike the manual paper-based sessions.

- The knowledge on SRHR issues of the youth is increasing and the children are developing positive attitudes towards sexuality. Also change has been seen in teachers, parents and the school community.

- The testimony from young people showed that their confidence, communication and self-awareness increased.

- As a result of this intervention, the number of students receiving SRH information has been increasing. For example, about 5377 (3390F, 1987M) graduated in WSWM training and each graduate trained their peers (on average 5).
Approaches to consider in detail:

4. Strengthen the enabling environment to support access, quality and delivery of SRH services for adolescents

• consider using a family planning toolkit for advocacy – use online resources such as K4Health

• advocate for the repeal of parental or spousal consent requirements for access to SRH services and products

• advocate for anti-discrimination laws and policies to be adapted
Approaches to consider in detail:

4. Strengthen the enabling environment to support access, quality and delivery of SRH services for adolescents (continued)

• canvas young people’s knowledge and experience of laws and policies in relation to SRHR to highlight gaps between law and practice
• work with lawyers and lawmakers to raise their awareness of how existing laws violate young people’s sexual and reproductive rights
• lobby relevant government departments to make comprehensive sexuality education mandatory
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Useful website links</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>young people’s sexual rights</td>
<td><a href="#">click here</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>menstrual health education</td>
<td><a href="#">click here</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRHR needs of young adolescents</td>
<td><a href="#">click here and here</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a youth centred approach</td>
<td><a href="#">click here and here</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to improve youth services and access</td>
<td><a href="#">click here and here</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>health programming for adolescents</td>
<td><a href="#">click here</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>delivering comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)</td>
<td><a href="#">click here and here</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>global overview of CSE</td>
<td><a href="#">click here</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comprehensive sexuality education</td>
<td><a href="#">click here and here</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school related gbv</td>
<td><a href="#">click here</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
500,000 young people are benefitting from reproductive health interventions from UK Aid Direct grants today.
UK Aid Direct would like to thank:

Afrikids
AMREF
FACT
Feed the Minds
Friends of Kipkelion
HPA
Rugby Tackling Life
for sharing their photographs and stories

www.ukaiddirect.org

#FP2020
#HerFuture