



DSW Kenya

Advocating for young people's sexual and reproductive health

Why focus on Kenya?

The Republic of Kenya is home to approximately 34.7 million people, 43 per cent of whom are under 15 years of age. Sexual activity among adolescents is high. Factors such as biological, social and economic hardships, urbanisation, schooling and weakening traditional structures have a negative impact on young people's sexual behaviour. As a result, young people in Kenya face a host of threats to their sexual and reproductive health. What is needed are comprehensive health programmes aimed at decreasing the risk of early and unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion and sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS.

Where it all began

DSW Kenya is a non-governmental organisation committed to addressing young people's sexual and reproductive health needs throughout the country. Youth-to-Youth (Y2Y) – a comprehensive programme designed to improve the sexual and reproductive health of young people by young people – is at the heart of all activities. Moreover, DSW Kenya provides capacity-building for a wide range of civil society organisations and promotes advocacy for sexual and reproductive health, as well as networking and collaboration amongst key players in population and development.

Incidentally, Kenya is where it all began. DSW launched its first family planning project in 1992. DSW's presence in Kenya was strengthened with the establishment of its country office in May 2000. Alongside the main office in Nairobi, the Kenyan country programme is also run by three regional offices, located in Eastern, Western and Coastal Province, respectively.



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The Y2Y programme

The Y2Y programme in Kenya spans five regions, namely Western, Nairobi/Central, Nyanza, Rift Valley and Coastal Province, and is implemented by DSW in co-operation with over a dozen partner organisations. The country-wide youth club network has continuously grown and currently comprises more than 170 active clubs, which have contributed significantly to improving young Kenyan's sexual and reproductive health, self-esteem and social participation. A particular emphasis is laid on the most vulnerable populations. Through the so-called "KOMA" network, DSW reaches out to young people living in the Korogocho and Mathare slums of Nairobi, 85 per cent of which are sexually active, but lack access to contraceptives and sexual and reproductive health education and services.

The concept of youth-friendly mobile voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) services forms a new pillar of the Y2Y programme in Kenya. Early diagnosis is key to averting HIV, so this new component of DSW's work is a valuable addition. With this service, DSW is enabled to provide mobile VCT and increase overall access to HIV/AIDS prevention and home-based care for young people.

Strengthening civil society

Developments related to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, the Paris Aid Declaration etc. mean that the Kenyan government is increasingly in charge of poverty reduction efforts and development assistance priorities, including the Poverty Reduction Strategies Papers and the European Union's Country Strategies Papers. Consequently, strengthening Kenyan civil society participation in the development of these strategies is of paramount importance. DSW's advocacy activities in Kenya therefore aim to strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations to campaign around sexual and reproductive health. Additionally, DSW's efforts are designed to establish and nurture relationships with key regional policy and decision-makers.

For more information on DSW Kenya, visit www.dsw-kenya.org.



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