

Fast facts



Young Adolescents Project

Improving the Sexual and Reproductive Health of Young Adolescents in Uganda

Project Rationale

Adolescents are young people between the ages of 10 to 19 years. Currently, 23.3% of the Ugandan population are adolescents. Adolescence is a period of dramatic physical, psychological and social transformation from childhood into adulthood. This transformation is often not well understood by adults while the adolescents themselves do not have the skills to handle it easily. Although the overall disease burden may be lower among adolescents than among other age groups, there are specific health issues that may have more devastating effects on adolescents than on the other age groups. These include sexual and reproductive health (SRH) concerns and the prevention of unplanned/unwanted pregnancies, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) prevention, sexual abuse and peer pressure.

While a lot has been done to improve the access of the older adolescents (15-19) to SRH information and services, young adolescents (10-14) only have limited access due to societal prejudices and the assumptions that boys and girls under 15 are “too young” to be in the need of sexual and reproductive health information and services. These assumptions ignore the realities of life in Uganda today and deny young adolescents access to practical knowledge and skills.

Project aim and specific objectives

In 2009 Bayer HealthCare Pharmaceuticals (former Bayer Shering Pharma) and the German Foundation for World Population (DSW) developed the innovative project “Improving the Sexual and Reproductive Health of Young Adolescents in Uganda” – a unique approach to improve the sexual and reproductive health of young adolescents aged 10 to 14 years. The project aims at enhancing SRH of young adolescents by creating of a supportive environment for sexual education and for SRH-related information, communication and services in and around ten primary schools in three districts in Uganda.

The project is directly implemented by DSW Uganda in partnership with 10 selected primary schools in the Masindi, Tororo and Wakiso districts. Activities are not only targeting pupils, but also teachers, parents/guardians, community members and leaders as well as health centres in each district.

Young Adolescents Project: at a Glance

Project Duration: March 2009 – December 2011

Donor: Bayer HealthCare Pharmaceuticals



DSW

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Specific project objectives

- Improve knowledge of young adolescents (10-14 years) in primary schools regarding sexual and reproductive health (SRH), including reproductive physiology, the transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS, STIs and unwanted pregnancies as well as family planning methods.
- Create support of parent/guardians, teachers and community leaders for reproductive and sexual health of young adolescents.
- Increase access, utilisation and referral of quality youth friendly services for young adolescents.
- Develop a toolkit that illustrates the concept, methodologies and best practices of the project targeting project implementers who work with young adolescents and in the field of sexual and reproductive health.

Project activities

The project entails various activities that address the different target groups:

- Dialogue and exchange meetings with teachers, parents, pupils and district officials and specific parent-child communication workshops
- Information and awareness-raising events in the community (e.g. film shows)
- Development and distribution of SRH-related information, education and information material for young adolescents and teachers respectively
- Training of teachers in youth-friendly methods and skills to pass on SRH messages
- Adolescent SRH workshops for teachers, parents and health workers
- Creation of a conducive and youth-friendly environment (e.g. a youth corner) within local health centres and facilitation of school visits of health centres
- Family and community mobilisation and Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) for HIV/AIDS events in each school
- Establishment of in-school youth clubs with trained youth peer educators and a referral system to nearby youth-friendly health centres
- Training of youth club members in SRH and club management and outreach activities
- Regional drama competitions on the topic “Youth alive, safe and learning”
- Drawing competitions and production of a calendar with winning pictures



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- School grants e.g. to improve sanitation systems or to purchase hygienic articles
- Network meetings with other NGOs and stakeholders
- Best practice documentation and development of a project toolkit

Lessons learned so far

The innovative character of this project is based on the integration of the following aspects into one comprehensive approach:

- Establish behaviour rather than changing behaviour
- Work with a new target group: young adolescents aged 10 to 14
- Work directly with parents, teachers, community leaders and health workers to create a supportive environment
- Provide intensive and mass information, education and communication (IEC) on sexual and reproductive health
- Increase access to services and utilisation of contraceptives by youth
- Promote voluntary counselling and testing (VCT)
- Increase the uptake of youth friendly reproductive health services by youth
- Reach young people and other community members in rural areas with information on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ASRHR) through mobile services such as the DSW Youth Trucks
- Document and publish information on the target group and the outcomes of the project as well as best practices and lessons learnt

The first project phase (01.01.09-28.02.2010) concentrated on creating awareness in the communities and building capacities of young adolescents, teachers, parents, and health workers. The second phase (01.03.2010-31.12.2010) focussed on building sustainable structures, such as peer educators trainings and went deeper into topics, where knowledge and awareness gaps had been discovered during phase 1, e.g. child abuse.

The third phase (01.01.2011 until 31.12.2011) aims at increasing in-depth SRH knowledge of young adolescents and at consolidating previous achievements. Current project activities focus on strengthening ownership by parents, teachers and community, addressing identified SRH and



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HIV/AIDS knowledge gaps and child rights violations, and specifically targeting sexual harassment in the schools. Furthermore, a project toolkit will be produced that documents the innovative approach and respective activities for each project target group. It will be promoted among all stakeholders and relevant actors in order to facilitate and encourage replication and extension of the project to other schools and regions.

Project results so far

- » Young adolescents increased their knowledge about HIV/AIDS on average by 66%
- » The knowledge level of young adolescents regarding pregnancy prevention increased on average by 87%
- » The right understanding of family planning among young adolescents improved on average by 70%
- » Teachers give more reproductive health information to pupils than before (average increase by 38%)
- » Six schools reported reduced drop out rates (34% less girls and 31% less boys dropped out of school in 2010 in comparison to 2007)
- » More than 5,700 pupils have been directly reached with information on SRH, HIV/AIDS and prevention of unwanted pregnancy
- » About 2,000 parents were reached with information about children's rights and responsibilities of guardians
- » 10 school youth clubs were established and 399 teachers trained to incorporate SRH and rights topics into their classes
- » 7 new educative SRH materials for teachers and youth clubs were developed to facilitate sexual education classes
- » 10 schools were provided with grants to establish and maintain a healthy school environment

May 2011



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