

Module 2: Evidence based approaches to sexuality education for adolescents - Adolescent health and development with a particular focus on sexual and reproductive health - Assignment

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Barriers to expanding or improving sexuality education in Kenya

Cultural sensitivity of the matter

There are specific cultural and traditional orientations on matters of sexuality. Most communities are conservative on matters regarding sexuality. Most consider sex and sexuality a taboo and not a matter to be discussed openly, especially with the youth. There is a feeling and a concern that providing such information may encourage sexual activity among the youth.

Religion

Religion plays a major role in Kenya on matters relating to morality. The dominant religions are the Christians and Muslim. For a long time both were against the provision of sexuality education among the school going youth. Other than schools, churches and mosques are the only other places where youth can be guided. Unfortunately, most have shied away from providing the information. The fear is more imagined than real as some churches have started recognizing the youth as a special group.

Lack of inter-sectoral collaboration

There are more than three ministries involved with the youth. These include ministry of health, ministry of youth and sports and ministry of education. There are also various national and international non-governmental organizations involved with youth. There are currently no formal collaborations at national level as regards youth activities. There are negotiations however ongoing to create this forum. Discussions are currently on how to integrate sexual reproductive health in the youth empowerment centers, which are run by ministry of youth and sports.

Lack of funds

Funding in many sectors depend on the political will. When it comes to youth activities in Kenya, more money is invested in job creation activities. Less money has been invested in sexuality education. Other partners involved are also overwhelmed due to the numbers because this is a neglected group when it comes to priorities.

Lack of clear strategies to address adolescent issues

The government through the ministry of health has developed manual, national guidelines on provision of adolescent youth friendly services in Kenya 2005. This manual is still predominantly with the policy makers and not yet fully rolled to the service providers. It has not been agreed on whether the approach should be formal, non-formal or youth led.

Lack of support structures

The ministry of youth was created seven years ago. In its bid to recognize the youth, it planned to build youth empowerment centers in all the constituencies. This is yet to be realized. The youth centers provide the best atmosphere to offer sexuality education as the environment is conducive. In the districts where these structures are, it has been easy to reach the youth. Sexuality education should be a key component in the youth centers.

Neglect of the field for a long time

There are very few youth organizations in Kenya compared to the youth population. The area of reproductive health was neglected in favor of fighting the HIV pandemic. There is need for more advocacies on youth issues and to encourage partners to participate. There is need to hold stakeholders meetings.

Negative attitude from providers

In Kenya, this has been cited to be a major factor. Attitude of the providers is influenced by religious and cultural backgrounds, professional training and orientation. Assessing the needs of the providers helps determine training needs and other operational and structural changes. The attitude of the staff makes the youth shy away from visiting the health facilities to receive information.

Inadequate trained personnel on adolescent sexual reproductive health

Few service providers have undergone specific trainings on adolescent sexual reproductive health. In addition, the trainings have to also involve teachers, church leaders, community leaders among others. Youth have special needs and lack of training of people who handle them will make sexuality education hard to achieve.

Lack of information on youth and adolescent sexual reproductive health

The government has been trying to integrate sexuality education in to the school curriculum. This is only one way but it is not adequate. There is need for circulation of IEC materials targeting youth in and out of school. There are currently no specific strategies by the government on how to ensure that information reaches the youth especially through print media.

Lack of recognition of the youth as special group

The government has not recognized the youth as special group especially as regards sexuality education. This has led to lack of recognition by many other players.

Overcoming the barriers

Improvement of sexuality education in the country's education system

Teacher training courses in sexuality education should be improved. The teachers should be taken through the teaching and learning methods. In-service programs for teachers should be encouraged. There should be establishment of a national unified formal curriculum taking into

consideration sexuality education. The curriculum should be developed with important messages on sexuality. There is need for a compilation of national unified textbooks and teaching reference books. Scientific research in the area of sexuality education should be strengthened. There is need for use of new technologies in teaching the adolescents e.g. through internet.

Technical support

There is need for the government to support the program by offering the necessary support. There should be combined efforts of government, multilateral and bilateral partnerships and national and international organizations efforts in promoting adolescent sexual reproductive health. The government should hold meetings with the partners on the way forward. The gaps should be identified collectively once needs assessments have been done and responsibilities shared based on strengths.

Policy change

The government needs to change its policy as regards adolescent health. Through the ministry of education, relevant programs should be put in schools. For example, the Kenya school curriculum should incorporate aspects of growing up and sexual maturation. Sexuality education should be fully introduced in school. Provide an institutional basis for the implementation of sexuality education. There should be a relevant policy framework. Set standards on confidentiality, standards for appropriate behavior protect and support teaches responsible for delivery of sexuality education. A national action plan should in place to spearhead sexual reproductive health through political and budgetary support. There is need to strengthen the links between schools and communities.

Avail learning materials

The main problem has been the availability of these materials. There should be universal accessibility of the learning materials for both teachers and students. More materials need to be designed. The materials should take into consideration both the school and non-school going youth, and various cultural backgrounds in order to meet their needs. Once materials are developed at national level, all efforts need to be made to ensure the materials reach the grassroots levels. Distribution of these materials should be orderly.

Political will

Sufficient political will is required since sexuality education is very sensitive. Most of the activities are usually politically linked. By educating the leaders, it will be easier to push for policies at national level. It will also be easier to penetrate the communities and manage to introduce sexuality education in socially and culturally conservative settings. The political environment should be conducive for working and also encouraging other partners to participate.

Advocacy

There is need to sensitize communities through mass media, community groups, public meetings, youth groups and politicians. Large-scale sensitization programs should be put in place. There should be involvement of groups that advocate for the needs of young people and the civil society organizations. There should be close collaboration between religious and local

communities. Promote participation of young people in sensitizing parents, teachers and leaders to the importance and urgency of sexuality education. Acknowledge the importance of culture in framing discussions about sexuality, gender and sexuality education.

Assignment documents

1. [IPPF. From evidence to action: Advocating for comprehensive sexuality education. London: IPPF; 2009.](#)
2. [UNESCO. International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education. Volume I. The rationale for sexuality education. Paris: UNESCO; 2009.](#)
3. [UNESCO. International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education. Volume II. Topics and learning objectives. Paris: UNESCO; 2009.](#)
4. [UNESCO. Levers of Success. Case studies of national sexuality education programmes. Paris: UNESCO; 2010.](#)