

## ABSTRACTS

### Young People as Actors in Sexual Health

#### Love matters – We matter

*Vithika Yadav, Love Matters India*

#### **Sexual Pleasure: the Missing Link between Sexual Health and Sexual Rights**

There is enough evidence to prove that the lack of effective communication around sex and sexuality often gets in the way of tackling global health concerns, with people preferring to suffer in silence and avoid shame rather than seeking advice, information and help. Talking about sex and sexuality can be difficult for people as well as for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) service providers. Discussions are often limited to a problem and solution approach. Taboos around sexuality can make it difficult to talk about sexual relationships, sexual wellbeing and pleasure. Establishing sexual pleasure as a starting point can provide a broader and positive focus on sexuality and sexual health, helping people to make informed decisions about sexual relationships and avoid risks. Love Matters was born based on a needs assessment of what young people want to know, where they are seeking information, whether the information sources are trusted and reliable, how to move away from 'fear-based approach' to sexuality and sexual health to 'pleasure based approach'. Talking about sexual pleasure is at the core of our engagement strategy. Rather than using secrecy, silence and shame to try and prevent people from having (risky) sex, we use pleasure as a hook to have difficult conversations with millions of young men and women around the globe.

*Marlon Jost, Youth Against AIDS, Germany*

#### **We are the Generation to End AIDS – But How?**

Youth against AIDS was founded in 2009 in Hamburg Germany. Students collected donations for the charity of Michael Stich because they felt the need to do something about this topic, no one was talking about at school. Michael Stich handed back the Cheque urging the young team to found their own charity and educate peers about HIV and AIDS. The students, all between the ages of 14 to 26 years, quickly learnt that HIV is not the biggest interest in German schools but students ask numerous questions related to sex and sexual health - in all directions. From there, Youth against AIDS joined up with scientists and organisations to draft up a peer to peer curriculum and nowadays trains hundreds of peer trainers who go back to their schools and facilitate sex education classes. In addition to this core activity of YAA many public awareness activations such as awareness campaigns or festival appearances worldwide help spreading the message of love, respect and condoms.

Youth against AIDS is all about making sex education fun, try new forms and technologies but also providing an easy accessible and non-judgemental platform to young people to exchange and learn - on eye level.

*Leeroy Lewis Sibanda, Million Memory Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ), terres des hommes schweiz*

### **A Buddy for Life: How Peer-to-Peer Support can Improve ARV Adherence in Young People**

The Zimbabwean youth organization Million Memory Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ) uses a peer-to-peer approach to help improve ARV adherence rates amongst HIV-positive youths. Many young people who discover their HIV-status lose all perspective on the future and often discontinue taking their medication. This can have devastating consequences on their health. It is critical for youths who undergo such a crisis situation to receive adequate counselling, psychosocial support and ongoing backing. This means home visits, invitations to youth group meetings and other youth facilitated events ensure that young people are constantly assisted and supported. This everyday assistance is provided by young MMPZ volunteers in a so-called buddy system. Buddys are young volunteers who accompany their peers through the first weeks after their positive status has been revealed or after they have been traced defaulting. They provide a helping hand on practical issues like medication or answer essential questions of their peers. The buddy system is key to let HIV-positive young people experience through a peer that positive living is possible. The approach underlines the importance of seeing young people not merely as passive consumers of interventions but as conscient and active actors of change. Some of the young people who have been supported volunteer to help others or to get involved in their communities. MMPZ trains them to become buddys. However, such approaches need a good framework to also support the buddys themselves in knowing their limits when assisting others in order to avoid the risk of retraumatization. MMPZ is a partner of terre des hommes schweiz since 2012.

*Juan Francisco Ramirez Flores, Vencer Foundation, Paraguay*

### **Love Matters – Family Matters**

In Paraguay, the teenage pregnancies as well as the number of new HIV diagnoses in adolescents is high, due to lack of knowledge and openness to talk about sexuality. The Fondation Vencer is sharing their experience in the mobilization, the participation, the involvement of the wider community, especially the young people, their parents and teachers breaking the taboos around sexuality within a conservative society in Paraguay.

*Florian Vock, Swiss Aids Federation*

### **Challenge Society with Young Queer Activists**

Young, healthy people know for themselves what's good for them. They also know what they need to be and stay healthy. This also applies to LGBT teenagers. First of all, offers and programs must always be critically reviewed for maternalism or pathologization, especially in the context of sexual health. Only an open, diverse and honest approach to sexuality allows adequate health measures to be found. A central resource for this are non-compliant young people. If they have access to the necessary resources, they can challenge a society and claim their rights. As organisations, it is our task to provide them with these resources. Florian Vock reports on his experiences as an activist and prevention expert.

*Samira Marti, member of the Swiss National Council*

### **How a Youth Movement Can Change Swiss Politics**

The climate youth strikes for climate protection since the end of last year. Over 60'000 people joined the last demonstrations in Switzerland. During the week of March 15, there were at least 1.6 million strikers on all 7 continents, in more than 125 countries and in well over 2000 places. They all follow Greta Thunberg, a Swedish student and activist, who started to go on a strike at school on Fridays in summer 2018. Until today, the movement *FridayforFuture* grows around the globe, forcing political institutions to declare a climate emergency and to save our planet. But how strong and how sustainable is their influence on politics in Switzerland? What are the conditions for young people to join the movement and to take their protest to the streets?

*Noëmi Grütter, Co – president Sexual Health Switzerland*

### **Let's Talk About Sex... Education**

Young people, children and adolescents have a right to honest, correct and comprehensive answers to their questions about sexuality. In sex education, however, the focus is often on biological facts and risks related to sexual health. Many questions about the daily reality young people are facing remain unanswered. Sex education should support the young people in understanding and discovering their sexuality and their sexual rights. Let's talk about sexual orientation, being in love, stereotypes about women and men, sexual harassment and much more. Let's talk about sex... education! The millennials and younger generations are breaking the silence and want to talk: there is a worldwide movement for gender equality and LGBTIQ+ rights, against discrimination and for a promotion of the liberty to make our own choices about our bodies and lives. This generation has a lot to say, a lot to fight for and a lot of power to give. They want to know what rights they have and how they can claim them. Because sexual rights, such as the right to education, physical integrity and privacy, are part of human rights. This young people need information, empowerment, recognition and decision making capacities to claim their rights.

The Youth Network of SEXUAL HEALTH Switzerland is an association of young people under the age of 25 who are interested and committed to sexual health and rights issues. Through the Youth Network, their ideas and opinions receive a voice. The voice of a young generation on the topic of sexual and reproductive health and rights in Switzerland. SEXUAL HEALTH Switzerland is an independent non-profit organization committed to the promotion of sexual health and sexual rights and member of IPPF.