

ABSTRACTS

Scaling up, Sustaining, and Enhancing School-Based Sexuality Education Programmes in Resource Constrained and Conservative Contexts: Replicable Lessons from Six Positive-deviant Countries – India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Senegal, Mexico and Uruguay. by V. Chandra-Mouli, former WHO

I will cover the following issues in my presentation:

1. Definitions
2. My experiences of getting sexuality education in India, & those of my son & daughter in Switzerland – Two very contrasting tales
3. Thirty years after the International Conference on Population and Development, where are we with sexuality education?
4. Thirty years after the ICPD, what lessons have we learned on scaling up, sustaining & enhancing school-based sexuality education from ‘positive-deviant’ countries in resource-constrained & conservative contexts?
5. Looking ahead, what do we need to do to better/differently to move the agenda forward?

Game Changer Squared: Empowering Youth for Reproductive Health Innovation by Violet Chifunda, Zambia

In this presentation, I will be talking about a project called “Game Changer Squared” which presents a ground-breaking initiative aimed at fostering entrepreneurship, capacity building, and youth-led start-ups to spearhead innovative solutions in reproductive health. Focused on guiding school children in recognizing and honing their talents and abilities, our mission is to ensure their engagement in endeavours beneficial to both themselves and the broader community. Through targeted talent growth and skills development programs, we prioritize five key areas: personal branding, financial literacy, leadership, moral knowledge, and mentorship. By equipping young individuals with the tools to leverage their talents into income-generating opportunities, our project seeks to mitigate financial barriers and reduce the sexual reproductive risks associated with economic challenges. This holistic approach not only empowers youth but also drives societal progress through innovative, sustainable solutions in reproductive health.

Adolescents’ Health in Adolescents’ Hands. Interactive and Contextualized Pedagogy as a New Approach for Sexual and Reproductive Health Education in Rural Tanzania. By Nutsa Chikvaidze Enfants du Monde & Karolin Pfeiffer, SolidarMed

Adolescents’ Health in Adolescents’ Hands is a joint project by Enfants du Monde (EdM) and SolidarMed (SM). The project aims to enhance the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) of adolescents in Ulanga, a rural district of Tanzania, where SM has been working since 2018. Our presentation will focus on the introduction of an interactive and contextualised approach to SRH education, which is led by trained adolescent peer educators in schools and communities. In 2022, the project carried out an initial assessment of the local SRH education sessions to measure the quality of education (SDG 4), through the integration of key principles promoted by EdM and generally acknowledged in Education sciences: contextualisation of knowledge and active pedagogy. These two principles contribute to putting the adolescents at the centre of the pedagogical process, starting from their needs and interests and the sociocultural context. The assessment showed that the national guidelines used by peer educators did not provide sufficiently concrete orientations and that peer educators’ facilitation practices were expository and needed to be strengthened in terms of mobilizing adolescents’ prior knowledge/practices and active involvement. The approach includes an evaluation of the knowledge acquired by the adolescents, as well as the creation of health messages by them, based on the content of the session.

These health messages are then introduced in low-cost mini pedagogical projects for the dissemination into communities so that the adolescents can be actors of change.

Our method is currently undergoing a trial phase involving a group of adolescent peer educators. During the upcoming MMS conference, we will present initial findings regarding how effectively adolescents have incorporated educational materials into their sessions. We anticipate that providing SRH knowledge tailored to their needs and context through an enhanced training chain will motivate adolescents to utilize SRH services. The project equally aims to strengthen the availability and quality of SRH services.

BAR TALK "Addressing Early Marriage and Gender Inequality in Rural Tanzania: The 'Our Girl' Initiative" with Michael A. Hobbins, SolidarMed and Carine Weiss, MMS

From birth, girls in rural Tanzania confront a possible downward spiral caused by factors related poverty and lack of opportunities, which are further exacerbated by entrenched patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes. This results in alarming rates of early marriage, adolescent fertility, and intimate partner violence: 1/3 of the 20-24-year-old women were married before the age of 18 years, the Adolescent fertility rate is high at 139/1000 girls (15-19 years old) and half of ever married women have suffered physical/or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetime and 30% in the last 12 months. The "Our Girl" pilot initiative, implemented from 2022 to 2023 (18 months), sought to disrupt this cycle in the village of Gombe. By alleviating economic pressures that push parents to take radical decisions about school drop-out and early marriages, the project introduced five community-based, social, women-led businesses. By the end of the project, all 24 schoolgirls (aged 9 to 18 years) in Gombe remained in school, lived with their parents and no pregnancy occurred. Both school attendance and performance showed improvements over time, while community awareness of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) increased significantly. The end evaluation revealed a marked shift in community perceptions, with 99% of Gombe's population viewing early pregnancy unfavorably. Moreover, the community exhibited a 9-times greater engagement with adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) sessions than a neighboring village and knowledge on SRHR was almost 20% higher than the other village. However, challenges were encountered in establishing sustainable businesses. This was attributed to unclear accountability mechanisms, inadequate financial returns, community dynamics, and the lack of business and entrepreneurial skills and experience. The "Our Girl" initiative offers valuable lessons for future endeavors. Its widespread support, including financial engagement from local government social services and political authorities, underscores its potential to address entrenched societal issues. Community-led, incentive-based interventions like this hold promise for mitigating complex health and societal challenges. However, addressing gaps and challenges in business management and sustainability is crucial for long-term effectiveness. Such innovative approaches to address young peoples' SRHR need, warrant further attention and support.

O3+: A Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Programme for Tertiary Students in Zambia and Zimbabwe by Selina Baumberger, SDC

The project O3+ Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future uses targeted interventions in post-secondary educational institutions in Zambia and Zimbabwe to improve access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) among 18-24 year-olds. Working with UNESCO and Ministries of Higher and Tertiary Education, the project brings Switzerland's lengthy experience in the HIV/SRHR field to bear by targeting an often neglected cohort of young people with tailored interventions to reduce HIV infections, unintended pregnancies, and gender-based violence.

Teen Health Information and Innovation Spaces (THIIS) in Rural Zimbabwe: Fostering Adolescent Ownership and Engagement in SRHR by Laura Ruckstuhl SolidarMed

In rural Zimbabwe, SolidarMed's Teen Health Information and Innovation Spaces (THIIS) aim to overcome barriers to adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Launched in

January 2023, the new adolescent health project began with an extensive survey involving 272 adolescents and 231 health facility staff which identified the need for adolescent-friendly services and spaces for quality care and information. THIS, developed with adolescent input, offers SRHR and mental health care, alongside activities like sports, to foster engagement and well-being. The initiative, supported by peer educators and health care workers, successfully held its first event in Chiredzi, drawing over 2,200 attendees. Results included SRHR consultations, STI screenings and treatment, and mental health referrals, highlighting the value of accessible, participatory health services for adolescents. THIS demonstrates significant potential in improving health outcomes and will expand to include a digital hub for feedback and information, further empowering adolescents to make informed health decisions.

Delivering Systematic and Comprehensive interventions: Lessons Learnt from our Work in Southern Africa by Tayson Mudarikiri terre des hommes schweiz in Zimbabwe

In this presentation we share three key insights learnt from our experience delivering interventions aimed at improving access to SRHR services for young people in southern Africa. First, based on existing research evidence, we have modelled our youth SRHR interventions on the socio-ecological model for improving access to health, acknowledging that improving such access requires addressing barriers that exist at the individual youth level, the relationship, community, and institutional/policy levels. Second, experience has taught us that effective youth SRHR interventions need to also build individual life skills as well as address other systematic factors such as poverty which features prominently as a driver for negative SRHR outcomes. Lastly, we have learnt that it is important to help coordinate and consolidate different locally led interventions to address these multiple and intersecting issues considering that there is no one organisation that can deliver a comprehensive intervention to address the complex and interweaving factors at play in the health of young people. In this presentation, we share examples and results from our projects while capturing lessons that hold potential to improve programming for young people in SRHR.

Empowering Youth Through Cost-Effective Innovation: A Journey with Taboobreaker and Love Land by Karin Stierlin Taboobreaker Association

The Taboobreaker Association is dedicated to developing cost-effective, gamified multi-channel education programs aimed at empowering the mental and sexual health of young individuals. In her presentation, founder Karin Stierlin will delve into the insights of the LEAN concept and its pivotal role in crafting *Love Land*. LEAN, defined as a mindset for creating value with fewer resources and less waste, is the guiding philosophy. Karin will detail strategic collaborations with academic institutions, such as the University of Cape Town, fostering a synergy between practice and science. Additionally, she will explore the potential of cost-effective pro bono grants for scientific support. The LEAN methodology begins with a cost-effective minimal viable product, rigorously tested with end users. Karin will emphasize the repeating process of cost-effective analysis, improvement, and testing, actively involving the young end user group. Key components include the selective recruitment of like-minded organizations with visionary skills and creativity, and emphasizing pragmatism. Karin's presentation promises valuable insights into a cost-effective approach that includes both, cost-effective partnerships with academic institutions and the cost-effective development of impactful, scientifically supported, and user-tested solutions for the global empowerment of youth.

Video Message by Vithika Yadav, Love Matters India

Women and girls, minorities and the marginalized are most likely to have their images abused online. India has emerged as the third biggest victim of digital violence in the world and the biggest in the Asia-Pacific region.

Women and Girls in the Digital Age: Strategies to Combat Technology-Facilitated Violence by Ejnxh Pepa, Counselling for Women and Girls Albania (CLWG)

Since 2008, the IAMANEH Switzerland and Counselling for Women and Girls (CLWG) have established a powerful partnership dedicated to eliminating entrenched obstacles to the health and rights of women and girls in Albania. Together, they have been steadfastly committed to breaking down systemic barriers that hinder gender equality, envisioning a world where all individuals, particularly women and girls, can access sexual and reproductive health services, and rights thrive autonomously in good health, free from violence and exploitation. This groundbreaking intervention seeks to combat VAWG in Albania by empowering institutions, supporting survivors, and raising awareness among the general public, with a particular emphasis on the experiences of young girls. At the heart of this initiative lies a commitment to safeguarding the rights, health and well-being of young women and girls who are disproportionately affected by digital violence. Acts such as “revenge porn”, stalking and harassment through technology are still not properly regulated by law in Albania. Through strategic advocacy efforts, CLWG is working closely with stakeholders, including legal experts, government bodies, and civil society organisations, to advocate for recognising digital violence as a distinct form of VAWG within Albanian legislation. By amplifying the voices of young girls and survivors, CLWG aims to ensure that their experiences are acknowledged and addressed at the highest levels of decision-making, and that accountability is achieved for perpetrators, by drafting and advocating for the approval of a new legislation on digital violence and hate speech in online mediums. When approved in 2024, this law would be the first one of its kind in Europe. In addition to advocacy, CLWG is conducting capacity-building initiatives to equip frontline responders, such as police officers, judges, and healthcare providers, with the necessary skills and resources to respond to digital violence effectively. Furthermore, CLWG is providing specialised counselling and support services to young women and girls who have experienced digital violence, utilising online platforms to reach those in need. By offering mentorship and coaching sessions, CLWG empowers young girls to navigate the digital world safely and confidently while fostering resilience and self-empowerment. Finally, CLWG is raising awareness among the general public, specifically focusing on marginalised communities and the unique challenges young girls face. Through these concerted efforts, CLWG is striving to create a safer and more equitable society for young girls in Albania, where they can exercise their rights and thrive free from violence.

Empowering Youth to Advance Gender-Based Violence Prevention and their Sexual Health Rights by Adila Odobasic & Selma Catibusic, Zemlja Djece Bosnia and Herzegovina

Since 2000, the Association Zemlja Djece u BiH (ZDuBiH) has forged a strong collaboration with IAMANEH Switzerland organisation, dedicated to combating gender-based violence and advancing the health rights of women and youth, particularly in marginalised communities in Tuzla Canton. Central to this collaboration is the Child Counselling and Advocacy Center, which supports the holistic development of children and youth and enhances the stability of vulnerable families, including the Romani population, internally displaced persons, and survivors of exploitation and violence. This project is grounded in empowering youth and developing healthy habits and lifestyles, aiming to incorporate Healthy Life Habits and Styles as a subject in formal education in schools nationwide. At the Children's Parliament 2023, confirmation was received from the Minister of Education of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina that this subject will be introduced into the formal education system. Young people (aged 14-19) are actively involved in addressing SRHR topics and combating GBV through community engagement and educational workshops and campaigns. The Peer-to-Peer club for youth (Be a Man Club) has created a safe space for youth in all their diversity and is leading the SRHR educational workshops in schools. The sessions cover a wide range of topics, including raising awareness and knowledge on different types of violence, developing healthy intimate relationships, awareness of sexually transmitted diseases, gender and sex, labelling, identity, and more. The aim is to actively engage participants, promote dialogue, encourage self-critical thinking, and empower youth to make informed decisions and assert their agency. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the youth club adapted to

a new format, supporting each other with computer literacy for those who had problems transitioning to virtual platforms. Several preventive campaigns on youth mental health were implemented, opening a communication channel for young people to seek help as they experienced anxiety, boredom, and fears about the future. Youth leaders developed a chatbot to provide peer-to-peer support and address any questions related to SRHR topics. Since then, youth, along with the project team, have designed interactive campaigns and videos to engage their communities on significant dates related to the fight against gender-based violence and gender inequality, such as the 8th of March, 16 Days of Activism, Day of Fighting Peer Violence, and Day of Tolerance. New peer educators are joining the network of change-makers, advocating for creating a safe environment for growth. Realising SRHR contributes to reducing inequalities and increases individuals' and communities' resilience to climate change to help ensure no one is left behind as climate impacts intensify.

Applying Photovoice Methodology to Explore SRH Among Adolescents in Rural Mozambique Mining Areas: Critical Reflections and lesson learned by Olga Cambaco, Swiss TPH

There is a recognized need for innovative methods to elicit the perspective of adolescents on public health issues, particularly when addressing sensitive topics such as the impact of mining projects on their health. Participatory approaches such as “photovoice” allow for deep engagement of vulnerable populations, including adolescents. To date, no studies was found that have used photovoice to gain insight into adolescents’ perspectives in mining areas. In this study, we discuss the application of the photovoice method to understand adolescents’ sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in rural mining areas in Mozambique. The study was conducted in northern and central Mozambique. Photovoice was successfully integrated into eight focus group discussions with adolescent girls and boys aged 15 to 17 years. Several lessons for guiding future research were learned. Photovoice promoted active engagement and interest in the study by the adolescents. Discussions guided by the photos encouraged adolescents to freely express themselves and reflect on their unique experiences about their SRH concerns. Sexual transmitted infections is the major health outcome concerning adolescents. Poverty, migration, commercial sex work were the most important health determinants associated with the health outcomes. Barriers identified for poor healthcare-seeking behaviour include cultural norms, long distances to health facilities, limitations of the health system's capacity, and insufficient health education. Programs can make use of this innovative digital/visual method to address SRH without setting adolescents’ views and priorities aside, allowing them to influence health decisions on issues that are meaningful to them.

PANEL Innovation in SRHR: How to Reach Sustainability and Scale? With V. Chandra Mouli, Karin Stierlin (Taboobreaker Association), Selina Baumberger (SDC) and Rebeca Revenga Becedas, (IAMANEH) (tbc)