

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

What is Youth-Friendly? Adolescents' Preferences for Reproductive Health Services in Kenya and Zimbabwe

Annabel S Erulkar^{1*}, Charles J Onoka² and Alford Phiri³

Program Associate, Population Council, Accra, Ghana¹; Programme Officer for Research and Evaluation, Family Planning Association of Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya²; Assistant Director, Evaluation and Research Unit, Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council, Harare, Zimbabwe³

*For Correspondence: E-mail: aerulkar@pcaccra.org

Abstract

While there has been increased attention to youth-friendly reproductive health services, little research has been conducted among adolescents in developing countries to assess what characteristics of reproductive health services are most important to them. Large scale population-based surveys were carried out among youth in Kenya and Zimbabwe. A list of characteristics that programmers often think of as youth-friendly was read to respondents, after which they were asked to assess the importance of those characteristics in choosing their reproductive health services. Adolescents rated confidentiality, short waiting time, low cost and friendly staff as the most important characteristics. The least important characteristics included youth-only service, youth involvement and young staff, suggesting that adolescents do not prioritise stand-alone youth services such as youth centres, or necessarily need arrangements particular to youth such as youth involvement. The findings imply that most existing clinical services, even in the most resource-poor settings, are in a position to improve their level of youth friendliness. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 2005; 9[3]:51-58)

Keywords: Adolescence, Youth friendliness, Kenya, Zimbabwe

References

1. Hughes Jane and Ann McCauley. Improving the fit: adolescents' needs and future programs for sexual and reproductive health in developing countries. *Stud FamPlann* 1998; 29(2): 233-245.
2. Senderowitz Judith. Reproductive health outreach programs for young adults. FOCUS on Young Adults. Unpublished, 1997.
3. FOCUS on Young Adults. Do youthfriendly services make a difference? Focus December 1997.
4. MfonoZanele. Teenage contraceptive needs in urban South Africa: a case study. *IntFamPlannPersp* 1998; 24(3): 180-183.
5. Olowu Folarin. Quality and costs of family planning as elicited by an adolescent mystery client trial in Nigeria. *Afr J Reprod Health* 1998; 2(1): 49-61.
6. Kim YM, C Marangwanda and AKols. Quality of counseling of young clients in Zimbabwe. *E Afr Med J* 1997; 74(8): 514-518.
7. Huntington Dale, Cheryl Lettenmaier and Isaac Obeng-Quaidoo. User's perspective of counseling training in Ghana: the mystery client trial. *Stud FamPlann* 1990; 21(3): 171-177.
8. Speizer Ilene S, Davi Hotchkiss, Robert J Magnani, Brian Hubbard and Kristen Nelson. Do service providers in Tanzania unnecessarily restrict clients' access to contraceptive methods? *IntFamPlannPersp* 2000; 26(1): 13-20.
9. Miller Kate, Robert Miller, Ian Askew, Marjorie Horn and Lewis Ndhlovu (Eds.). *Clinic-Based Family Planning and Reproductive Health Services in Africa: Findings from Situation Analysis Studies*. New York: Population Council, 1998.
10. CERPOD. *Youth in Danger: Results of a Regional Survey in Five West African Countries*. Bamako: Center for Applied Research on Population and Development, 1997.
11. Bohmer Lisa and Edward Kirumira. *Access to Reproductive Health Services: Participatory Research with Ugandan Adolescents*. Pacific Institute for Women's Health Working Paper, December 1997.
12. Temin Miriam J, Friday Okonofua, Francesca Omorodion, Elisha Renne, Paul Coplan, Kris Heggenhougen and Joan Kaufman. Perceptions of sexual behaviour and knowledge about sexually transmitted diseases among adolescents in Benin City, Nigeria. *IntFamPlannPersp* 1999; 25(4): 186-190.
13. WHO. Programming for adolescent health and development. *Technical Report Series* No 886. Geneva: World Health Organization, 1999.
14. Senderowitz Judith. Making reproductive health services youth friendly. FOCUS on Young Adults, Research, Program and Policy Series. Unpublished, February 1999.
15. Bender Soley S. Attitudes of Icelandic young people toward sexual and reproductive health services. *FamPlannPersp* 1999; 31(6): 294-301.
16. Chamie Mary, Susan Eisman, Jacqueline D. Forrest, Margaret Terry Orr and Aida Torres. Factors affecting adolescents' use of family planning clinics. *FamPlannPersp* 1982; 14(3): 126-139.

17. Mafurirano L. Developing effective reproductive health service delivery models for youth in Zimbabwe project: a summary of activities carried out during the project planning phase, Harare, Zimbabwe. Unpublished, 1995.
18. Family Planning Association of Kenya (FPAK). A report of qualitative research among community leaders and youth in Nairobi, Nyeri and Mombasa. Unpublished report, May 1995.
19. Mmari Kristin and Robert Magnani. Does making clinic-based reproductive health services more youth friendly increase service use by adolescents? Evidence from Lusaka, Zambia. *J Adolesc Health* 2003; 33: 259-270.