

Access Report

Bulletin on Promoting Access to Information and Services for Young People in Nigeria

2003-2004

VOLUME I

Youth-Friendly Services Gather Momentum

Over the last twelve months, the “Expanded Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Information and Services for Youth in Northern Nigeria” Project, with support from the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, recorded several remarkable achievements in spite of the various challenges faced by implementing partners. To date over 22,000 young people have been reached with information and services through activities carried out implementing partners. NGO partners were involved in organizing community sensitization and advocacy seminars, renovation of youth-friendly centres, peer educators training and ground work to establish school health clubs. Youth centre activities were ongoing at the NGO sites while outreach activities were also conducted to selected schools and communities.

A few more of the government referral health facilities commenced the provision of youth-friendly health services while others engaged in renovating the spaces designated for



youth clinics, assigning clinic staff and procuring necessary equipment and supplies for service delivery.

In 2004, implementing partners focused on strengthening service provision. To this end, two of the government referral facilities namely—Specialist Hospital, Misau, Bauchi State and Specialist Hospital, Bama, Borno State commenced service provision. This development increased the number of fully functional public youth-friendly clinics to four out of the total of seven designated service delivery points. Both hospitals conducted sensitization and mobilization activities for hospital staff to address issues such as negative labeling of youth clinics and disinterest on the part of staff not directly assigned to the youth clinic.

The second batch of Peer Educators Training was completed by NGO partners, in some cases in collaboration with the government referral centre for the project site. To date a total of

about 336 peer health educators have been trained by various implementing partners to provide health education, counseling and referrals for young people.

The groundwork to establish school health clubs in secondary schools also yielded results. In Keffi, Nasarawa state, Government Secondary School, Yelwa established a school health club with a membership of about 40 students. The activities of the club were so visible in the project site that it attracted interest from various quarters. As a result, the club entered an agreement with the Anti-AIDS club established by the National Youth Service Corps in the school and is able to reach a wider audience. The NGO partner in Zonkwa, Kaduna State—Youth Team in Action Supporting Community Initiated Development has also facilitated the establishment of anti-AIDS clubs in three secondary schools with the

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Programming Support for Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Issues

Several activities were undertaken to create an enabling environment for project implementation in the different states. Emphasis was placed on building a sense of community ownership and encouraging service utilization among young people.

Community Sensitization

Sensitization seminars targeted at community and opinion leaders, key education officers and young people were organized by implementing NGOs during the year. These seminars were aimed at sensitizing community members on the relevance of the project and creating a sense of ownership. Opinion leaders had the opportunity to affirm adolescent sexuality as a healthy and natural part of the



Dr. Shettima Ali Monguno at the sensitization seminar in Maiduguri, Borno State

development process. This was a significant step in breaking the culture of silence with regard to issues of sexuality and facilitating young people's access to information and skills required to promote their sexual and reproductive health.

During the sensitization seminar organized by the Community Health and Youth Friendly Association, CHAYFA, in Maiduguri, Borno State, Dr. Shettima Ali Monguno, an elder statesman who served as the Special Guest of Honour at the occasion, emphasized the importance of creating awareness on adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues,

especially HIV/AIDS. He exhorted religious leaders and parents to take up the responsibility of educating young people, saying that the discussion of sexuality issues should no longer be seen as a taboo.

New IEC Materials to Increase Service Utilization

As part of efforts to improve client recruitment at youth centres and clinics, new IEC materials were developed to create awareness of the services offered by all the implementing partners. Following the IEC Materials Development Workshop organized for implementing partners, five different types of IEC materials were developed. These included posters targeting adolescent boys and girls respectively, calendars and pamphlets. The materials were further field-tested among young people in the various project sites before copies of each type were printed and distributed to the various implementing partners.



Project Sites Attract Media Coverage

The Guardian, one of Nigeria's prominent and widely-read daily newspapers, beamed its searchlight on the activities of implementing partners across the Northern States of Nigeria. The Guardian's interest generated a three-part human interest feature story which covered a total of six full centre-fold pages of the Newspaper. The reports focused on the prevalent adolescent sexual and reproductive health concerns in each project community and the targeted responses of both government and civil society groups to address them. The focus on project communities highlighted the importance of sensitization and community involvement. In the words of Engineer Mohammed Ajiya, Coordinator, Pioneers Youth Association, Misau, Bauchi State: "we

found it easy convincing people on the need to talk about reproductive health problems among youths because from the very beginning we involved everybody...When everybody appeared to have appreciated the situation they now asked 'how do we go about solving this problem?'"

CHAYFA staff in Borno State also had this to say—"... change comes gradually and is sometimes difficult to measure. Nevertheless, we have succeeded in creating awareness. It is only when people are aware that they can change their behavior. The fact that people come to us for counseling and training shows that we are making progress"

Partners Linked to New Resources

In the area of capacity building, four NGO directors from among the implementing partners (NACWYCA, Lafia, CaRE-NGO, Kaduna, YOTASCID, Zonkwa and RHISA, Bauchi participated in the Visionary Leadership Programme organised by the Centre for African Studies, Kenya.

In Maiduguri, Borno state, the Community Health and Youth Friendly Association (CHAYFA) worked in partnership with POLICY Project/Futures Group International on efforts to create an enabling environment for promoting adolescent sexual and reproductive health. This partnership built on interventions commenced under the "Expanded Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Information and Services for youth in Northern Nigeria" Project. The core outcomes of the collaboration included the sensitization of 50 indigenes of Borno State as policy champions and a Borno State Advocacy Action Plan for ASRH programming developed by key stakeholders, which was subsequently funded by POLICY Project/Futures Group International. The state government, through its Ministries of Health, Education, Women Affairs and Youth and Sports, has accepted to work with CHAYFA as a leading NGO advocating for improvement of the health and well being of young people in Borno State. With this recognition, CHAYFA has been able to attract the support of key players in sexual and reproductive health including Action Aid/Society for Family Health, Pathfinder International and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

In Bauchi State, the State government has recognized the contributions of the NGO partners, Reproductive Health Initiative and Support Association (RHISA) and Pioneer's Youth Association towards the promotion of the health and development of young people in the state to the extent that it provided grants to the organizations to facilitate the

implementation of youth-targeted interventions.

In Kaduna State, the two implementing partner NGOs, CaRE-NGO and YOTASCID, made appreciable progress. CaRE-NGO got a substantial grant from the World Bank-assisted National HIV/AIDS Fund (HAF) to implement some HIV/AIDS related interventions in North Central Zone of Nigeria. CaRE-NGO also received increasing support from UNICEF, Pathfinder International and Save the Child UK. YOTASCID has been designated by Action Aid as a core partner in programming and has received support from the agency in this regard. The Reproductive Health Coordinator and Child/Adolescent Health Coordinator of the State Ministry of Health were also briefed and took active interest in project activities.

In Nasarawa State, the Dalhatu Araf Specialist Hospital, Lafia which commenced the provision of youth-friendly health services in October, 2002 is now at the point of receiving major support from UNICEF. The implementing NGO, NACWYCA is doing quite well both as a strategic UNICEF partner as well as in positioning itself for providing leadership to other NGOs in the state. It is representing the NGOs at the State Action Committee on HIV/AIDS (SACA). NACWYCA is also collaborating with POLICY Project on the National Adolescent Reproductive Health Partnership.

As part of the concerted efforts to link partners with key stakeholders and donor agencies, field officers from UNICEF were briefed on project activities so that they could identify programming areas in which they could be of assistance. Several partners received computers, audiovisual aids and other recreational equipment from UNICEF. Key government officials from relevant line ministries also made commitments to assist project implementation in the various states.

NAME OF ORGANISATION	SOURCE OF SUPPORT	CAPACITY BUILDING OPPORTUNITY
Centre for Women, Youth and Community Action, Lafia	United Nations Children's Fund POLICY Project	Visionary Leadership Programme
Care and Action Research Non-Governmental Organisation, Kaduna	United Nations Children's Fund Pathfinder International, National HIV/AIDS Fund, HAF, (World Bank)	Visionary Leadership Programme
Youth Team in Action Supporting Community Initiated Development, Zonkwa	Action Aid, Pathfinder International,	Visionary Leadership Programme
Dalhatu Araf Specialist Hospital, Lafia	United Nations Children's Fund	
Specialist Hospital, Bauchi	United Nations Children's Fund	
Reproductive Health Initiative and Support Association, Bauchi	State Government Grant	Visionary Leadership Programme
Pioneer's Youth Association	State Government Grant	
Community Health and Youth Friendly Association, Borno	Pathfinder International, Action Aid, Society for Family Health, POLICY Project	

Recommendations for Programming

Promoting the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people remains a challenging and controversial issue. To facilitate the success of the project, a mid-project review meeting was held to take stock of programming strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities. From 8th-10th December, 2003, all project implementing partners as well as representatives of the Federal Ministry of Health, State Ministry of Health, Action Health Incorporated, UNICEF and other civil society groups convened at the Halal Fountain Hotel, Kaduna State. Participants had the opportunity to share progress in project implementation as well as constraints in programming.

An important outcome of the mid-project review was the articulation of several recommendations to improve project performance and sustainability. These recommendations are grouped under different programming components:

Partnership

- Utilize existing opportunities and support bases in the various states. For instance is there a possibility of assigning UNFPA trained nurses in Bauchi and Nasarawa to the youth clinics in order to address staffing needs?
- Identify existing networks addressing adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues and explore possibilities for networking and support
- Implementing partners should engage and develop a structured relationship with relevant line ministries such as the Ministries of Education, Health, Youth and Sport, Women Affairs and Youth Development.
- Project partners operating in the same state should explore ways of merging outreach and awareness creation activities in order to maximize the use of funds
- Orientation for hospital staff should be conducted before the commencement of youth friendly health



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Dr. Adenike Adeyemi, Reproductive Health Divisional Head, Federal Ministry of Health, Addressing Participants at the Mid-Project Review Meeting.

services to address conflicts of interest and negative labeling of the youth clinic

Project Sustainability/Relevance

- Organizations should establish viable structures that are flexible, open and allow room for staff growth and evolution.
- Institutional programming should be streamlined and focused on areas of strength instead of taking on several activities.
- Implementing partners should identify their vision, mission and core values as individual organizations as this has an impact on the effectiveness of programming
- Implementing partners, in their programming, must begin to create space for married adolescents who form a substantial proportion of adolescent girls in Northern Nigeria. This group of adolescents may not necessarily have the same interests or concerns as other youth clients.
- Incentives for peer educators could be given in the form of transportation allowances, letters of commendation and opportunities to represent the organisation at various events.
- Selection criteria for peer educators should include endorsement by community members and an alternative source of livelihood for the peer educator
- Develop IEC materials to create awareness of services offered by NGOs and service delivery points

Youth Participation

- Ensure increased youth participation in youth center and outreach activities
- Organizational structures should be modified to ensure a more participatory approach to programming and decision-making processes among staff and youth.