Access Report

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

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Scaling up the Implementation of Sexuality Education

Access to sexuality education remains one of the vital approaches to mitigating negative health outcomes for young people. Several research studies have shown that young people typically go through the challenging process of growing up with little or no sexual and reproductive health information. Much of what they know is mainly received from peers who are often ignorant about these issues and provide either erroneous or inadequate information.

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in 1994 set the goal of ensuring universal voluntary access to a full range of reproductive health information and services by 2015. One objective of the Programme of Action adopted by 179 governments is "to promote adequate development of responsible sexuality."

It recommends that full attention be given to meeting the educational and service needs of adolescents to enable them to deal in a positive and responsible way with their sexuality.

"Support should be given to integral sexual education and services for young people, with the support and guidance of their parents and in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child…" "Educational efforts should begin within the family unit, in the community and in the schools at an appropriate age, but must also reach adults, in particular men, through non-formal education and a variety of community-based efforts. "

-ICPD Programme of Action, para. 7.37.

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In line with the ICPD Programme of Action, the United Nations Population Fund, UNFPA, has decades of experience in educating young people about various aspects of sexual and reproductive health, family life, interpersonal relationships and gender issues. UNFPA is the world's largest international source of funding for population and reproductive health programmes. The agency works with governments and non-governmental organizations in over 140 countries to support programmes that help women, men and young people protect their sexual and reproductive health.

In the past, Population Family Life Education (POP/FLE) curricula and programmes were primarily focused on the biology of reproduction with emphasis on fertility reduction. The interplay between gender relations and socio-cultural contexts of the individual's life was given little or no recognition. The curricula also tended to approach sexuality from a pregnancy and disease-mitigation standpoint thus reinforcing a somewhat negative view of sexuality.

However, sexuality education addresses the biological, socio-cultural, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of sexuality from the cognitive domain (information); the affective domain (feelings, values, and attitudes); and the behavioral domain (communication and decision-making skills). (Guidlines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education \ in Nigeria).

The ICPD Programme of Action recognizes that *"Human sexuality and gender relations are closely interrelated and together affect the ability of men and women to achieve and maintain sexual health and manage their reproductive lives. Responsible sexual behaviour, sensitivity and equity in gender relations, particularly when instilled during the formative years, enhance and promote respectful and harmonious partnerships between men and women"*

ICPD Programme of Action, para. 7.34.

In line with this paradigm shift and following the National Council on Education's approval of the Family Life and HIV Education (FLHE) curriculum (formerly National Sexuality Education Curriculum), the UNFPA office in Nigeria has supported the State Ministry of Education in 12 of the UNFPA focal states across Nigeria to organize the Training of Master Trainers for the new FLHE curriculum and programme. These states include Abia, Anambra, Bauchi, Borno, Delta, Edo, Gombe, Nasarawa, Ogun, Osun, Plateau and Rivers.

These trainings are part of UNFPA's contributions to the improvement of the sexual and reproductive health status of young people in Nigeria, particularly in view of the increased incidence of HIV infection among this segment of the population.

UNFPA Adviser, Edo State (3rd right), training facilitators and some participants at the training for Anambra, Delta and Edo States

Participants from Nasarawa and Plateau States with training facilitators

Cross section of state trainers from Ogun, Osun and Oyo States

Participants from Bauchi, Borno and Gombe States

A Core Of Master Trainers Across Nigeria

Over 100 State Master Trainers of the UNFPA-supported POP/FLE programme drawn from tertiary institutions, youth-serving organizations and government ministries/ parastatals participated in the Training of Master Trainers on Family Life and HIV Education which held in consecutive batches from May to June 2004. The training which was facilitated by Action Health Incorporated was conducted in five zones consisting of various cluster states for each zone. The training in each zone was of a one-week duration including two days of teaching practicum.

The overall goal of the training was to facilitate the implementation of the FLHE curriculum in secondary schools in the 12 focal states by:

1. Increasing master trainers' comfort level in human sexuality through the exploration of values and attitudes regarding a range of sexuality topics

2. Improving master trainers' teaching methodologies and facilitation skills to ensure age-appropriate, student –oriented classroom activities

The training was geared towards enhancing the capacity of participants to implement the sexuality component of the curriculum. Emphasis was placed on building the sexuality comfort level and motivation of teachers, which have been identified as major constraints in the past.

An effective teaching style that has been proven to aid learning of sexuality concepts is the participatory facilitation style. This style of teaching recognizes that knowledge gain alone does not necessarily translate to behaviour change and thus provides participants with an opportunity to reflect on information received, share life experiences, build and practice skills acquired.

The training was structured around three focal areas: teachers' sexuality comfort level, teaching styles/ methodology and technical content. Affective, behavioural and cognitive (ABC) teaching methodologies were employed for the training in recognition of the need to practice skills and not just focus on cognitive learning. The affective teaching method was employed to assist participants understand their feelings and values about their sexuality. The master trainers were able to clarify their values through forced choice and values voting exercises. There were also several group-centered discussions on factors that hinder sexuality comfort level. This presented an opportunity to explore the range of opinions on adolescent sexuality issues. The values clarification exercises underlined the need to adopt a non-judgmental approach in addressing the concerns of young people and appreciate the differences in individual life circumstances.

Students involved in a group assignment during the teaching practicum

TEACHING METHODOLOGIES THAT WORK

"Research has shown that sexuality education programmes targeted at young people are most effective when they:

- give a clear, consistent message based on accurate information
- focus on reducing sexual behaviours that lead to unintended pregnancy and infection
- are specific to age and culture
- are based on a theoretical framework proven to change health behaviours
- use teaching methods that involve students
- are skill-based and address social pressures
- motivate and train teachers to participate"

- Douglas Kirby, UNFPA State of World Population 2003

Participants left the training with a better understanding of adolescent sexuality and young people's health and development needs through the cognitive teaching method used. This method was useful for teaching topics such as the key concepts in human sexuality. It encouraged experience sharing and self-reflection on the part of trainees, enabling them to learn from one another. Participants were challenged to explore the realities of young people's lives and thus see the relevance of providing information in a non-judgmental and supportive manner. The important positive changes that result from young people's access to sexuality education were highlighted by examining the goals of sexuality education as well as sharing the results of documented studies by organizations such as UNAIDS and World Health Organization (WHO).

The behavioural learning domain was addressed through sessions on facilitation techniques and the teaching practice. Participants were exposed to a variety of facilitation styles and techniques that could be adapted for classroom teaching. The teaching practicum provided an

opportunity for trainees to acquire hands-on experience in appropriate classroom teaching methodologies as well as test their knowledge in key content areas of the FLHE curriculum. The emphasis was on adopting a participatory learning approach and involving students in class activities to facilitate learning. Guidelines were provided for the teaching practice including tips on how to develop lesson notes.

The Comprehensive Sexuality Educators Trainers' Resource Manual was used for the training. The Manual provides comprehensive content, relevant diagrams, charts and posters as well as step-by-step lesson plans for over 40 topics within the six key concepts of sexuality education. It is therefore a very useful reference text for sexuality educators and other youth workers and can complement the scheme of work developed by individual schools. Each participant was given a copy of the manual in addition to session handouts and other reference materials.

Training Evaluation

The training evaluation indicated that the content covered was relevant and well presented, training activities were participatory and appropriate for learning objectives. Participants attested to its value in preparing them for their roles as master trainers. Specific comments included the following:

"I will be more tolerant of other people's values and not judge them"

" The training exposed me to a lot of information I never knew. It has improved my level of knowledge on teaching methodologies. I feel better equipped for the tasks ahead. I also have a better understanding of adolescent behaviour"

" I've learnt the value of providing factual information to young people".

Photo: Andrea Lynch, IWHC

UNFPA's Renewed Agenda For Action

The partnership between UNFPA and the State Ministry of Education in the focal states is a particularly exciting development in view of the widespread coverage across the country. The focal states that participated in the training represent almost 50 percent of the total number of states in Nigeria. National coverage is further enhanced by the number of schools that are likely to be covered after the step-down training in each state. This is thus, a very significant step in scaling up the implementation of sexuality education and ensuring young people's access to life-enhancing information and skills. With the trained teachers adequately prepared for classroom activities, UNFPA has identified several action steps to facilitate the implementation process:

1. Advocacy for and planning with key stakeholders and collaborating partners including Parent-Teacher Associations, media, religious leaders, community leaders, association of school principals and Nigerian Union of Teachers.
2. Baseline survey on the current sexual and reproductive health status of young people to facilitate post-implementation evaluation
3. development of other monitoring mechanisms for classroom implementation
4. Building technical capacity of school teachers to teach FLHE in Project schools (step-down training)
5. Development, production and distribution of the school scheme of work which serves as the framework for subject integration
6. Development of students' textbooks and other teaching aids such as posters and charts