

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

FOCUS: Sexual Reproductive Health Services

More than 16 million people live in Malawi and about 40 percent of the population is made up of young people – under the age of 24.

For most of these young people, the adolescent stage, does not only bring changes to their bodies, but new challenges regarding sexuality, childbearing and marriage.

When some girls reach the adolescent stage, they are forced into unwanted sex or marriage. This can put them at risk of unplanned pregnancies, unsafe abortions, HIV and other sexual transmitted diseases (STD's). Boys are also at risk of contracting HIV and STD's.

Yet, most young people face challenges in getting reproductive health information.

There is a need for Malawi to have effective youth friendly health service to ease these challenges.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To educate listeners about the importance equipping the youth with Sexual Reproductive Health-SRH knowledge
- To help create a positive attitude towards planning births, having smaller families and using the modern family planning methods
- To promote discussion and dialogue between listeners and other community members about the importance of Youth Friendly Health Services to the young people

The Problem: Lack of Information on Youth-Friendly Reproductive Health Services

Young people are at risk to a broad range of health problems. Sexual and reproductive health behavior are among the main causes of death, disability and disease among young people.

Youth are important to the development of this country. As such, they need proper care and guidance to ensure that they remain healthy and productive.

When most young people reach the adolescent stage; however, they are not given enough information about sexual and reproductive health issues especially by their parents.

Young people are increasingly left to learn about sexual issues

from their peers or from mass media.

Since nearly half of the country's population is made up of young people, their sexual and reproductive health needs cannot be ignored. Young people are, after all, the future of the nation.

Health care facilities can play an important role in promoting the sexual and reproductive health of young people.

This can be achieved by health care providers maintaining a friendly and open attitude as they offer accurate information and advice to young people.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community understand what youth-friendly health service is and its benefits.

Make the following points;

Malawi is in the process of developing a youth-friendly health service strategy and it is being developed by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Health Policy Project (HPP).

The strategy will be helpful considering that:

Young people in the country are engaged in sexual activities and if proper information on family planning is not given to them, many girls will be at risk of having unintended pregnancies.

Youth are at the center of the HIV/AIDS crisis in the country. Although most have heard about HIV/AIDS, some still don't believe they themselves are at risk. Even those who do possess information about HIV often do not protect themselves, because they lack adequate decision-making skills, social support, or the ability to adopt safer sexual behaviors.

Therefore, there is a need to provide services that are specific and youth-focused to help young people make informed decisions that will help them to stay healthy.

This is why the youth-friendly health services strategy is important.

Youth-friendly service delivery is about providing health services based on a wide understanding of what young people want and need. It is also based on an understanding of, and respect for, the realities of young people's diversity and sexual rights.

Youth-friendly health services offer a wide range of sexual and reproductive health services to young people including:

- Sexual and reproductive health counseling
- Contraceptive counseling (including emergency contraception)
- Information about sexually transmitted infection (including HIV) prevention, testing and counselling services
- Sexual abuse counseling
- Relationship and sexuality counseling

Do a vox pop with young people, ask them about what they think about youth-friendly health services in the country.

Are youth health services available in your community? If not, find out why. Are there plans for youth health services?

- Sandra Mapemba -Population Reference Bureau-PRB- Contact person+265-99-921-9789
- Barwani Msiska:Health Policy Project+265(0)999 367 903
- Jean Mwalabu; Department of Reproductive Health: +265993210392
- <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Reports/2014/malawi-youth-report.aspx>



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