



HOW TO IMPROVE YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO SAFE ABORTION:

Partnering with educational institutions

STRATEGY:

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MEMBER ASSOCIATION:

The Cameroon National Association for Family Welfare (CAMNAFAW)



STRATEGY OVERVIEW:

Schools, universities and other educational institutions are in a unique position to provide young people with specifically targeted health education. Organizations that have expertise in sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and youth programming work with these institutions to implement a range of interventions including on-site service delivery, referral mechanisms, and education sessions on SRH topics.

BENEFITS OF WORKING WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

PARTNERSHIPS WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS CAN:

- Target underserved, young populations with accurate SRH information and quality services.
- Reach large numbers of young people at one time.
- Improve access to SRH services by increasing awareness and trust in youth friendly services.
- Increase young people's uptake of a broad range of SRH services, including safe abortion.
- Provide young people with accurate and comprehensive information, empowering them to make informed decisions regarding their SRH.

BARRIERS TO ACCESS

In Cameroon, 63% of sexually active women have an unmet need for contraception.¹ Approximately 40% of all pregnancies in the country are unintended, and 36% of these unintended pregnancies end in abortion. Abortion in Cameroon is legally highly restricted, being permitted only to save a woman from grave danger to her health, or in cases of rape or incest.²

As a result, the vast majority of abortions are unsafe and are a major cause of maternal mortality and obstetric complications.³ Abortion is heavily stigmatised making it difficult to talk about openly and to access accurate information. Due to poor sexuality education at school young people enter higher education with very limited SRH information and many lack the confidence and knowledge

1 Guttmacher Institute Fact Sheet: Cost and benefits of investing in contraceptive service in Cameroon. July 2014. Guttmacher Institute, USA. (<https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/factsheet/fb-cameroon.pdf>)

2 The World's abortion laws 2014, Centre for Reproductive Rights. (http://www.reproductiverights.org/node/3447/map_popup)

3 Guttmacher Institute Fact Sheet: Cost and benefits of investing in contraceptive service in Cameroon. July 2014. Guttmacher Institute, USA. (<https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/factsheet/fb-cameroon.pdf>)





to negotiate safer sex or plan ahead for contraceptive needs. Young people face barriers to accessing SRH services due to fear of being judged and mistreated by service providers, long distances to facilities and high cost of services.

“The key to this strategy has been the signed partnerships and effective collaboration between CAMNAFAW and the education centres. Formalising an agreement has enabled us to reach out to many young women in need of our services who otherwise would not have come to our clinics.”

Youth Centre Manager, CAMNAFAW

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

1. It is important to invest time to identify educational institutions that are well attended and to negotiate a formal agreement for working together. This planning phase can take considerable time to discuss the benefits of the partnership for both parties, and may require substantial advocacy efforts, engagement and sensitisation with the heads of institutions, particularly in the context of safe abortion services.
2. Outreach activities enable some services to be taken to where young people are located and if planned effectively can overcome barriers such as distance, cost, and fear or apprehension of a formal clinic setting by providing a convenient and confidential youth friendly service.
3. While outreach work can be a highly effective approach to reach particular groups such as students, it can be more expensive in terms of resources and materials compared to static-based activities. Co-financing between projects with the same objectives can be a way to ensure outreach activities are sustainable.

PARTNERING WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN CAMEROON

CAMNAFAW provides comprehensive abortion care services to the full extent of the law, as part of an integrated package of SRH services. CAMNAFAW's partnership with educational institutions is one part of its wider outreach strategy to take services and information to where young people are located and work with communities, government youth centres and other institutions to change attitudes about young people's SRH. CAMNAFAW has improved its service provision through training providers in youth friendly care, positioning satellite clinics in the community near to large student populations and extending its opening hours so services are more convenient for young people to access. It has also formalised partnerships with educational institutions with high numbers of female students to target its outreach activities with a particular focus on safe abortion and contraceptive services. CAMNAFAW's service providers visit partner educational institutions to offer a selection of services such as HIV testing and contraception. Trained peer educators carry out a range of awareness-raising activities such as targeted health campaigns, screening of educational films, one-to-one advice sessions and referrals to CAMNAFAW clinics.





HOW TO DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Step 1:

Conduct an assessment of your target group and potential partners. It is essential to identify institutions where you can best reach your target population by carrying out a mapping exercise. Ensure a good understanding of your target population needs, likes and limitations, and involve young people in the design of appropriate communication strategies.

Step 2:

Negotiate and sign partnership agreements. Invest time to discuss with educational institutions the objectives, types of activities to be conducted on site and services provided, as well as agreement on the mutual benefits of the partnership to both agencies.

Step 3:

Identify a contact point-person at the education institution. It is beneficial to select one person at each partner site, to be a dedicated contact for your outreach work (e.g. university medical centre nurse) and to champion the programme within the institution.

Step 4:

Maintain strong relationships with partners. Invest time in building and maintaining good working relationships with the education institutions and be flexible to adapt the activities to the needs of the university or training centre.

Step 5:

Deliver training. Conduct training with all service providers and staff to ensure everyone has a full understanding of the SRH needs of young people in the community and non-judgemental and confidential care is provided (e.g. values clarification).



Step 6:

Design appropriate awareness-raising activities. Identify what information, education and communication approaches and materials are most effective in reaching young people in these settings. Consider using vouchers or promotional offers on services to encourage young people to visit the service delivery point.

Step 7:

Launch activities at the institution. Ensure activities are held at a well-attended time of day and do not coincide with other educational activities. Consider combining this with a wider campaign or national / international health awareness day or event.

Step 8:

Monitor and regularly review the partnership. It is important that systems are in place to constantly monitor the effectiveness of the partnership for example through regular meetings with educational partners to gain feedback on their experience.

Cameroon National Association for Family Welfare 2015 SERVICE DATA



	Number of SRH services provided in 2015	2,680,951
	Proportion of SRH services provided to young people	54%
	Proportion of abortion related services provided to young people	62%
	Proportion of contraceptive services provided to young people	52%



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