

Voices from Morocco



“I want everyone to benefit from and know about this Association. I want to get a megaphone, go out in the street and let everyone know!”
17-year old male

Association Marocaine Planification Familiale: Provision of youth-friendly services

This case study is one of a series of qualitative reviews called “IPPF Changing lives” which capture the stories of IPPF’s beneficiaries and clients from around the world. A rapid PEER (participatory ethnographic evaluation and research) approach was used to train project beneficiaries to interview people in their social network. These voices provide us with powerful testimonies on lives changed - in some cases, lives saved - and illustrate how IPPF is making a difference.

The Association Marocaine de Planification Familiale (AMPF) is improving young people’s access to sexual and reproductive health services in Morocco, and giving them a newfound sense of confidence. AMPF was one of 18 Member Associations that received funding from the Dutch government to improve young people’s sexual and reproductive health and their access to services.

Through its ‘Provision of youth-friendly services’ project, AMPF refurbished five of its clinics to make them more youth friendly, including in Casablanca where this review took place. The Association consulted youth volunteers and clients on how to design the premises and on what materials and amenities would meet young people’s needs. Service providers in these five clinics were (re-)trained on the provision of youth-friendly services and on common institutional values related to young people’s sexual health and rights. AMPF also provided training to young people on youth sexual and reproductive health; some of the trainees went on to become qualified peer educators.

For many young people, involvement with AMPF’s youth friendly clinics and youth clubs has been empowering. In Morocco, issues relating to sex and HIV are highly taboo, particularly among young people. AMPF is helping young people develop to their full potential by giving them opportunities to learn, interact and become passionate about issues that affect everyone.

“When she came to AMPF and was trained, she felt that these courses were a ‘eureka moment’ in her life. Now, she can even talk with boys about sexual matters, including condoms and contraception.”
17-year old female



“He used to just have unsafe sex, now he always carries a condom in his pocket.”
19-year old male

Achievements

Participating in AMPF’s youth clubs has enabled many young people, especially young women, to overcome shyness, timidity and feelings of isolation. In general, young women find it difficult to make new friends, particularly male friends, and to talk about issues related to sex. At AMPF, however, they have been given the space to make new friends and openly discuss topics that are otherwise considered shameful and taboo in their society. These topics include sex, contraception, HIV and sexually transmitted infections.

The space also gives young people something meaningful to do in their spare time. This, coupled with being able to make friends and discuss and learn about sex, has given many young people confidence and the ability to express themselves.

The confidence and knowledge that young people gain as a result of their involvement with AMPF and the training they receive is also having an impact on families. Some parents even started opening up to discuss the topics that had once been considered too taboo or shameful to discuss at home.

Mothers in particular have been encouraged by their children’s, particularly their daughters’, participation with AMPF. Many of them expressed a desire to have had the opportunities that AMPF now provides their sons or daughters. One mother of an AMPF youth volunteer said, “If only I were in the place of my daughter; now I am a woman and I still feel shy and have this fear. My daughter is different from me.”

Some young people have started to use condoms for the first time, as a result of information received in the training sessions.

A significant portion of AMPF’s peer education programme is centred on HIV and AIDS. The Association uses talks and campaigns about HIV transmission to get its ‘foot in the door’, which then allows discussion of other sexual health topics. Although discrimination against people living with HIV and myths about transmission abound, AMPF is working

steadily to combat stigma, including dispelling myths among young people. Young people who used to be scared of people living with HIV are now informed and no longer stigmatize these people. They are also more open to discussing HIV with each other and with their parents, a major achievement in a culture and environment where HIV is not discussed.

The ‘Provision of youth-friendly services’ project in AMPF has reinvigorated the organization’s commitment to young people and has taken youth leadership to the next level. Young people feel empowered and know that their voices are being heard by the organization and by other youth.

Another achievement was young people’s newfound sense of volunteerism. Participation in the project has given them a strong desire to help other young people and raise awareness about sexually transmitted infections, HIV and AIDS, contraception and drug and alcohol abuse.

There is no better testament to the work that AMPF is doing than the fact that young project volunteers and beneficiaries want more young people to experience what they’ve experienced. Young people crave knowledge and the opportunities for personal development that AMPF offers.

Challenges

Talking about issues related to sex and HIV are still considered highly taboo in Moroccan culture, particularly among the older generation which received very little information when they were young. Young people, therefore, cannot easily discuss sex and sexuality with their parents, which makes it difficult to reinforce what they have learned at AMPF at home.

One young person explained why the nature of the content discussed at AMPF poses a challenge: "Talking about sex outside of marriage is the most taboo/shameful. In sharia law, it's illegal to have sex outside of marriage... Because of religion, even if they [young people] have sex they cannot talk about it. It is forbidden, and they will be judged; it will be a sin."

Lessons

This project has reinvigorated AMPF's commitment to young people and has taken youth leadership within the organization to the next level. Young people feel empowered and know that their voices are being heard both by the organization and by other youth. By involving young people at every step of the project, the organization has taken great strides toward fulfilling its commitment to youth sexual and reproductive health and rights.

AMPF believes that through this project it has discovered the missing ingredient in previous national youth sexual and reproductive health programmes – youth participation and leadership. They are willing to share their experiences with partners and Ministry of Health colleagues going forward, which will further establish the Association's position as leaders in the field of adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health.

The Youth Coordinator explained: "The Ministry of Health had everything – the right equipment, trained staff and the location – but they didn't succeed because they didn't allow young people to have a say. Now, the Ministry is wondering what they did wrong, and how we're doing it successfully."

Young people involved in the project have indicated that AMPF should expand this work into rural areas. Only young people in the vicinity of AMPF's Casablanca youth centre are able to benefit. One PEER interviewer said, "She hopes that AMPF will spread more into rural areas because there are some people there who don't know anything about the diseases that exist."

***"AMPF is doing good work, spreading good information, so why not spread it everywhere?"
Mother of young volunteer***

***"Without the young people who are working here, the Association wouldn't be here at all or be able to progress to the best things... the youth are the most important thing in the Association."
23-year old female***



“She was so pleased because she was going to spread this information to other people.”
 15-year old female

“She wants to sacrifice for the association since she got so much help from it.”
 17-year old female

Morocco ¹	
Country context	
Population (millions), 2011	32.3
Public expenditure on health (% of GDP), 2011	1.7
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP), 2011	5.6
Adult literacy rate (% aged 15 and above), 2011	56.1
Maternal mortality ratio (deaths of women per 100,000 live births), 2011	110
Female seats in parliament (%), 2011	6.7
Context for young people	
Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women aged 15-19), 2011	15.1
Combined gross enrollment in education (both sexes) (%)	61.0

¹ UNDP (2011) International Human Development Indicators: Morocco. Available at: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MAR.html>.



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The International Planned Parenthood Federation is global service provider and a leading advocate of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. We are a worldwide movement of national organizations working with and for communities and individuals.

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