

Youth-to-youth social franchising at work in Africa

The German Foundation for World Population's (DSW) successful youth-to-youth approach to preventing HIV/AIDS among young people started in disease-ravaged Ethiopia about 10 years ago. Since then, the Youth-2-Youth (Y2Y) programme has been providing sex education and information programmes to prevent HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies among young people aged 10 to 24.

The programme is catching on. Today, the Y2Y model is working in Kenya, Uganda, Soweto, Burkina Faso, and in Tanzania's Arusha/Kilimanjaro region.

Responding to a serious situation

Since HIV/AIDS swept across the African continent in the early 1980s, Ethiopia has become one of the most seriously affected countries in terms of infection rates and total numbers of people living with AIDS. People younger than 25 account for half of all new HIV infections. Approximately 90% of the reported cases involve 20 to 49 year olds; the highest infection rate occurs among young people aged 15 to 24.

With 63% – 24 million – of the country's population under the age of 25, and youth aged 10 to 24 making up 35% of the total population, young people's health is key to social and economic development.

The issues of cultural and social norms, gender inequality, and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation, are exacerbated by lack of access to information about HIV/AIDS. The result is devastating, with corresponding high rates of maternal and child mortality.

A simple, highly effective approach

The Y2Y approach, developed and tested over more than five years with both government agencies and NGOs, is simple and highly effective. Young people are trained as peer educators. They establish youth clubs, train peer educators, organise edutainment events, run social marketing and condom programmes and develop messages on HIV/AIDS prevention, testing and treatment.

All Y2Y clubs use the same training materials in local languages. The clubs share the same statutes and decision-making structures and are constantly monitored and evaluated by DSW and professional evaluators. Existing club members help start new clubs, a methodology DSW calls social franchising. As a result, new clubs are mushrooming across the country.

In less than four years, more than 210 Y2Y clubs have been established in cooperation with 15 NGOs, 20 schools, and four universities and polytechnic institutes. Every month, five new clubs are born. Since 2002, 180,000 young people have received intensive counselling in sexuality and HIV/AIDS in 17,600 peer learning group sessions.

Mass edutainment events have reached 1.3 million young people and 3.5 million condoms have been distributed.

Young people taking control

Because of the successful and easy to replicate model of Y2Y-youth clubs, governments and NGOs are trying to address the health problems of young people. Their efforts are complemented by the emergence of a growing number of youth initiatives and clubs engaged in tackling



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German Foundation for World Population

German Foundation for World Population (DSW) supports programmes in developing countries that improve the lives of young people, particularly in the field of sexual and reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS.

DSW strongly believes that it can only succeed in its efforts by joining forces and working with other organisations. To this end, DSW helped initiate the HIV/AIDS Funders Group to build programme and policy networks with other European and international foundations to support HIV/AIDS projects worldwide. DSW is always interested to hear about other organisations with similar interest and focus.

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the increasing problems of young people's health, particularly sexual and reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS.

Recently, the Ethiopian Youth Network has reported more than 3,200 youth initiatives operating across the country, with more than 70% of them in Amhara, Oromia and the Addis Ababa regions.

Youth clubs adopting Y2Y model

Several national and international organisations are now providing sex education to young people following DSW's Y2Y approach, including the Ethiopian Red Cross Society, Pact Ethiopia, Save the Children Fund, Pathfinder, Foundation François-Xavier Bagnoud, GTZ and the African Medical Research Foundation.

More than 650 Y2Y clubs are running in Kenya and 340 in Uganda. South African NGOs have adopted the model and started Y2Y clubs in Soweto. A Y2Y network has just been launched in the Arusha/Kilimanjaro region, and in Burkina Faso 15 Jeunes-à-Jeunes clubs have been created.

Support is growing

Y2Y networks are increasingly gaining support from other donors including European governments, the EU, the World Bank, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Gates and Packard foundations, German foundations, companies and private European sponsors.