

Section 1:

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Section 2:

Title of Abstract: Botswana Family Welfare Association's Experience with Male-Only Hour

Designated Presenter: Sophia Ladha

Type of Session Preferred: Panel

Theme and Topics: Health Risks for Youth, Sexual/Reproductive Health Behaviors: STD/HIV infection, early pregnancy

Key Health Issue Area: HIV/AIDS

Learning Objectives:

Participants attending this session will be able to:

- Describe the Botswana Family Welfare Association's (BOFWA) experience with increasing access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services for young males.
- Relate BOFWA's successes and challenges to their own experiences in increasing access to youth-friendly services (YFS) for similar vulnerable groups.
- Suggest ways in which to increase the program's success rate.

Background:

The African Youth Alliance (AYA), a partnership between UNFPA, Pathfinder International, and PATH, seeks to improve the SRH of young people aged 10-24, in part by increasing access to YFS. Under AYA, Pathfinder International partnered with BOFWA, which has been running Youth Centers since 1997, in Gaborone, Mochudi, Kanye, Ghanzi and Maun. The Centers offer clinical reproductive health services, peer education programs, recreational activities, and life skills training. Experience has shown that female clients utilize the clinical services almost exclusively, and male clients participate mainly in recreational activities, due in part to their initial exclusion from MCH/FP programs. In 2001, as part of its effort to promote gender balance in service utilization, BOFWA introduced the **Male-Only Hour**, which:

- Encourages them to utilize services that specifically address their SRH needs.
- Educates them on the general and age-specific SRH issues that affect both males and females.
- Sensitizes them on the need to respect women, taking into consideration the socio-economic, cultural and religious dimensions that influence behavior.

Male-only sessions are pre-arranged, and participants are invited during home visits and other community mobilization activities implemented by the Youth Community-Based Service Providers (YCBSPs) and BOFWA youth. Topics include: i) sexuality, and male and female anatomy; ii) wet dreams, menstruation and mood swings; iii) personal hygiene; iv) being in love and making love; v) negotiating safer sex; vi) pregnancy, what it means and what it takes; vii) pap smears, breast exams; and, viii) the traditional versus the modern man.

In 2002, the program had successfully reached only 67% of the targeted 700 males (mostly those in the 10–14 and 15–19 age groups).

Partners: Men Sex and AIDS project, the Botswana National Youth Council.

Conclusions:

- Despite constant reminders and invitations, young males did not attend sessions as expected. Transforming the perception that services are only for females is difficult.
- Males aged 20-29 years were reached through work-based outreach activities at the police stations, fire brigades and vocational training institutions.
- Males need incentives to use services (e.g. combining football competitions with sessions on reproductive health).
- Focus group discussions should be used to determine how best to serve young men.
- Young males need to be reached in settings such as schools by linking the youth centers with school-based programs.
- Young male service providers could possibly attract the target audience.
- Need for additional collaboration with other programs targeting males, such as Men As Partners.

Additional Authors: Cally Ramelefo, Executive Director, BOFWA