

Presenting Author: Emmanuel Boadi

Mailing Address:

Pathfinder International/Ghana
c/o Pathfinder International Headquarters
Attn: Tayla Colton
9 Galen Street, Suite 217
Watertown, MA 02472 USA

Telephone: +1 617.924.7200 x206

Fax: +1 617.924.3833

Email: tcolton@pathfind.org

Abstract Option: 2

Abstract Title: Ensuring the Meaningful Involvement of Youth in HIV Prevention Programs: Lessons from Ghana

Issues: Youth involvement in sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and HIV prevention programs is a critical principle of development and a pre-requisite to program success. However, youth involvement in program development, implementation and evaluation remains fraught with tokenism. In many peer education programs, youth involvement is limited to training and deploying young people to provide basic information and services, without adequate attention to sustainability, program effectiveness and capacity building.

Description: The African Youth Alliance (AYA) is a partnership between the UNFPA, PATH and Pathfinder International, which seeks to improve the SRH of young people and prevent the spread of HIV in Ghana, Botswana, Uganda and Tanzania. As part of its strategy to mainstream youth-friendly services (YFS) and reach a broad spectrum of adolescents, the YFS component of the project has built in strategies to maximize youth involvement and ensure skill transfer and sustainability of program interventions. Youth are actively involved in:

- ❑ Assessing the youth-friendliness of health facilities and developing action plans for clinic improvements.
- ❑ Peer education, which enhances the skills, self-esteem and leadership potential of the young people who are trained as peer educators and advocates.
- ❑ Participating on clinic management boards/committees to ensure that programs are relevant to young people's actual needs.
- ❑ Evaluating the project, through mystery client visits and exit interviews to ensure continuous quality improvement.

Lessons learned: The active involvement of youth in programs ensures opportunities for young people to make meaningful contributions to various phases of the project cycle and helps sustain program interventions.

Recommendations: The delicate nature and complexity of the HIV/AIDS pandemic necessitates that youth are trained and empowered to ensure meaningful involvement in SRH and HIV program interventions.

Applied for conference scholarship: Yes

Track category: E16