

Title: Bridging VYA-parents/teachers communication gap through games

Presenter: Robert Mensah

Type of Session: Panel

Theme: Health-Related Developmental issues for youth

Topic: Access to health, information and services

Learning Objectives:

Participants attending the session will be able to:

- Understand how an HIV/AIDS game has been used to improve the parent/teacher-child communication gap to provide information to the VYA; a hidden and difficult to access group.
- Understand the principle behind the game and its application on a wider scale.

Background:

The African Youth Alliance formed by PATH, Pathfinder International and UNFPA with funding support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has been in operation since March 2000. The project, which is implemented in four African countries: Botswana, Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda aims to provide information and services to improve the sexual and reproductive health of young people aged 10-24 yrs.

The traditional settings and cultural environments in most developing countries do not allow for healthy discussion on sexuality issues. The result is that this taboo has made access to information difficult resulting in potentially preventable risky behaviours by young people. AYA Ghana, realising the difficulty encountered by programme implementers to develop appropriate messages for parents/teachers to communicate ASRH messages to the Very Young Adolescents (VYA) (10-14yrs) partnered Ministry of Education/Ghana Education Service (MOE/GES), Johns Hopkins University Centre for Communication Programme (JHU-CCP), Ghana AIDS Commission and Benson Educational Games Limited to develop an HIV AIDS game which when played helps to bridge the gap and allow open discussion on issues bordering on sexuality. VYA and parents/teachers are able to discuss sexuality issues under game setting, which tend to minimise the inertia and difficulty usually encountered when such issues are to be discussed.

Partners:

Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service, Benson Educational Games Ltd, Ghana AIDS Commission.

Conclusions:

The HIV/AIDS game provides a recreational option to the young adolescents and also provides a platform for parents/teachers to discuss sexuality issues with young people. In Africa recreational options virtually do not exist and young

people indulge in other undesired behaviours because they do not know how to deal with the 'excess' time on hand.

The HIV/AIDS game not only provides recreational option but also provides information whilst bridging the communication gap between teachers and pupils.