Sex, stigma, and young people: challenging social norms to reach adolescents

The Spotlight Webinar Series,
4th June 2020

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Today’s speakers:

Inonge Wina-Chinyama, Senior Advisor – Youth and Disability, Marie Stopes Zambia

Mary Phillips, Technical Advisor, Adolescents 360, PSI

Lydia Murithi, Project Director, Beyond Bias, Pathfinder International

Moderator:
Jennifer Gassner, Global Marketing Director, MSI

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Welcome:

Enabling young people to determine their own futures

Jennifer Gassner
Global Marketing Director
Marie Stopes International

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Young people have the right to determine their own futures

We know that when young people have access to sexual & reproductive healthcare it leads to:

✓ Fewer unplanned teenage pregnancies
✓ Lower unsafe abortion and maternal mortality rates
✓ Young people supported to pursue education and futures

An estimated **20 million adolescents** face an unmet need for contraception, which will be exacerbated by COVID-19

**How can we disrupt the social taboos that prevent young people from accessing reproductive healthcare and owning their futures?**

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The behaviour of the community and the individual together create the norms we seek to influence.
Social norms impact adolescent SRH access in many ways

Increasing adolescent access to relevant service provision and products

Removing barriers for adolescent access at a policy and community level

Building awareness of adolescent-friendly services and challenging stigma

Referral systems connect adolescents with services

Satisfied clients build awareness with friends/family and normalise SRH use

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Today’s Aim:
Sharing how social norms and stigma can prevent adolescents from accessing reproductive care and the strategies we can use to disrupt these norms and taboos.

Please feel free to submit questions throughout

The webinar recording will be shared

Agenda:

1. Welcome: Why we must enable young people to determine their own futures Jennifer Gassner

2. Disrupting stigma: How can we engage community gatekeepers to support SRH access for young people? Inonge Wina-Chinyama

3. Smart start: How can we support couples to reframe fertility expectations and plan stronger futures? Mary Phillips

4. Truly inclusive care: How can we best address provider attitudes to achieve more quality, non-judgemental services? Lydia Murithi

5. Discussion and Audience Q&A
Disrupting Stigma: How can we engage communities to build enabling environments for young people?

Inonge Wina-Chinyama Senior Advisor – Youth and Disability
Marie Stopes Zambia
To gain gatekeeper acceptance, we first need to identify aspirations that align with community needs

- Gender and social norms can limit girls’ roles in their family and community
- Need to understand the aspirations of family and community gatekeepers to develop messaging that resonates:
  - Access to contraception is key to keeping teenage girls and young women in education – Sierra Leone
  - Reproductive autonomy is central to family economic stability and community growth - Zambia
  - Awareness of sexual health builds rapport between parents and teens and safeguards futures - Kenya
Showing community gatekeepers how contraception can enable girls to stay in school – Sierra Leone

• National concern over high teenage pregnancy rates, via the media and political commitments, building awareness and community buy-in
  ➢ Needed to translate this into sexual and reproductive healthcare and rights for adolescents

• Education is viewed as a route out of poverty and to future leadership
  ➢ Girls forced to leave school seen as a loss of a bright future for the girl, her family, her community, and her nation
  ➢ Key messaging for challenging stigma
“These [girls] are the future leaders… and if they drop out of school, we will not have future leaders.”

Matilda, Marie Stopes Sierra Leone nurse
Marie Stopes Sierra Leone's approach to community sensitisation has led to high adolescent reach at 31%

Community sensitisation is ongoing, first approaching community structures and then mobilising adolescents

1. Meet with gatekeeper (e.g. chief) to discuss benefits of contraception with tailored message (e.g. link to education)
2. Gatekeepers sensitise wider community, supported by community-based mobilisers, nurses or volunteers
3. Marie Stopes Sierra Leone work one-on-one with adolescents. This approach builds an enabling environment to access

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Working with community headmen to build empathy, align with values and drive social change - Zambia

- Smart Choices Strong Families intervention with rural adolescents

- Partnering with community influencers to make our **positive contribution** and show how SRH enables economic development

- Engaged headmen, using roleplay and a “path game”:
  - Build empathy with girls' experiences and challenges
  - Demonstrate alignment with values
  - Enable headmen to take ownership and champion change for sustainability

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"I feel relieved that as parents we are getting an extra hand to help our teenagers. I have a daughter... She became pregnant at 14 years. These things happen even in the chief's home. I promise to be in the forefront to mobilise Headmen and my people."

- Chief Mabumba, Mansa, Zambia
Engaging parents on the role of SRH in safeguarding, enabling adolescent access to services - Kenya

• Future Fab recognised key role parents play in teenager's decision-making process

• 'Parent Meet Ups' for parents to share questions with a trusted Community Health Volunteer

• Built trust and solidarity, tapping into parental instinct by showing role SRH can play in safeguarding

• Empowered parents to communicate with adolescents on SRH and built buy-in for Future Fab services

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Learnings: Strengthening community engagement can step change adolescent reach

Community influencers and gatekeepers should be engaged at the beginning and throughout any intervention, and success requires:

➢ A strong understanding of their priorities and values

➢ Empathy-building exercises and persuasive storytelling to show how access aligns with community priorities

➢ Adolescent outreach

How can we apply these learning to scale up adolescent access and rights?

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Smart Start:
How can we support couples to reframe fertility expectations and plan stronger futures?

Mary Phillips
Technical Advisor, Adolescents 360
Population Services International

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A360 Process | 2016-2020

**INQUIRY**
Design research to learn more about girls’ lives, motivations, and challenges

**INSIGHT SYNTHESIS & PROTOTYPING**
Iterative process to make sense of the design research and identify opportunities for design by testing concepts with girls and community members to get real-time feedback

**IMPLEMENTATION**
Adaptive implementation to serve girls while continuously improving program outcomes and operations

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Teenage pregnancy in Ethiopia

- Nearly 1 in 5 adolescent girls in Ethiopia are currently married
- 4 out of 5 of adolescent pregnancies occur in the context of marriage
- More than 1 in 4 rural women aged 20-24 gave birth by age 18

**Median Age at Reproductive Events**

Young rural women initiate sex earlier and start using contraceptive later than young urban women.

The gap between first sex and first contraceptive use among rural women is 8.3 years and that of urban women is 3.6 years.

**Median ages are calculated among women age 25-49 to reduce censoring.**
Proving fertility and having children is culturally revered, yet couples are beginning to desire smaller families.

Contraception is at odds with a girl’s identity and what is expected of her.

Girls and the community feel anxiety and uncertainty about how to secure a stable future.

Proving fertility and having children is culturally revered, yet couples are beginning to desire smaller families.

Couples often desire joint decision-making in contraceptive use, yet in reality knowledge and agency continue to be a barrier.
“I’m Intrigued”
Mobilizing Girls

Smart Start navigators, Health Extension Workers and volunteers from the women’s Development Army go door-to-door to find young, married girls and couples in the community.
“I Feel Inspired and Motivated”
Aspirational Engagement

Using culturally relevant images, we support couples to understand the cost-savings of delaying pregnancy.

The Smart Start goal card delivers girls and their partners a consistent reference point to track their progress against their life goals.

Smart Start prompts joint decisions between couples around their lives, and desired family.

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“I Feel Safe and Respected” Serving Girls

Smart Start becomes the entry point for Health Extension Workers to establish life-long relationships with adolescents.
Thanks to the implant she took, they - together - are saving the resources they need to raise the healthy family they want.

“I Feel Supported”
Staying with Girls to Support Continuation
More than 70% of girls accept a modern method of contraception after a Smart Start session

Source: A360 Program Monitoring Data: January 2018 – December 2019

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1 in 2 Smart Start girls have no children

50% Adopters without children
50% Adopters with children

Source: A360 Program Monitoring Data: May 2019-April 2020

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Room for improvement

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Although designed for couples, more needs to be done to reach men

- Girls counselled without husband: 70%
- Girls counselled with husband: 30%
- Acceptance rate without husband: 66%
- Acceptance rate with husband: 80%

Source: A360 Program Monitoring Data: January 2018 – April 2020

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Moving to scale
Truly Inclusive Care:
How can we best address provider attitudes to achieve more quality, non-judgemental services?

Lydia Murithi
Project Director of Beyond Bias
Pathfinder International
Beyond Bias Project

**Goal:** To design and test scalable innovative solutions to address provider bias toward serving youth ages 15-24 with family planning services in Burkina Faso, Pakistan, and Tanzania.

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Beyond Bias’ User-centered Process

RESEARCH
- Literature Review
  - Design Research Segmentation

INTERVENTION DESIGN
- Idea Generation
- Rough Prototyping
  - Design Solutions
    - Iteration
    - Identify Best Concepts
- Live Prototyping
  - Iteration
- Pilot and Evaluation
  - 3 Countries 227 Facilities

IMPLEMENTATION
- Scale Up
  - 1,000+ Facilities

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KEY INSIGHTS ABOUT BIAS

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Wanting what’s “best” for a young person can actually be a driver of bias.

“In our society, infertility is a nightmare.
- PROVIDER, TANZANIA
Providers have one foot in the community and one foot in the clinic. Their values often conflict with their training.

“We are also sisters, mothers, friends. This is where we fail as providers.”

- PROVIDER, BURKINA FASO
CROSS-CUTTING INSIGHT #3

Providers want to feel like and be seen as the expert and “decider”.

“I know what [a client’s] character is like. I have been in this position for the past 40 years, so I can tell very easily.
- PROVIDER, PAKISTAN

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INTERVENTION DESIGN OVERVIEW
User Journey

ACTIVATE

ADVOCATE

ACHIEVE

APPLY

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WHAT
A story-driven event that **activates** providers’ self-awareness of their own biases and empathy for young people’s needs.

HOW
• 4-6 hour, in-person event
• Up to 75 providers per event
• Testimonies and interactive group exercises

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WHAT
A ongoing peer support and learning forum where providers problem-solve together to **apply** unbiased practices in their daily work.

HOW
• Digital discussion group (WhatsApp) and/or in-person forum led by facility in-charges
• Facilitators require 3-hour training

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WHAT
A growth-oriented performance rewards system based on client feedback on provider behavior

HOW
• Facilities receive report cards with performance data and recommendations for improvement.
• High-improvement facilities get public recognition for their progress.

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Behavior Change Strategy

**PHASE**
- ACTIVATE: Pre-Contemplation
- APPLY: Contemplation Determination
- ACHIEVE: Action, Relapse

**EXPERIENCE**
- SUMMIT
- CONNECT
- REWARDS

**BEHAVIOR CHANGE MECHANISMS**
- Humanize bias and hold up a mirror for providers
- Improve emotional connectivity with youth
- Address providers’ fears of community backlash
- Address concerns of fertility delays
- Educate around safety of methods for youth
- Activate contextualized agency
- Create accountability for service quality
- Offer visible performance-based rewards
- Shift professional norms

**OUTCOMES**
- (6 Principles Framework)
  - Sensitive Communication
  - Safe, Welcoming Space
  - Seek Understanding and Agreement
  - Security of Information
  - Say Yes to a Safe Method
  - Simple, Comprehensive Counseling

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Any questions?

- Inonge Wina-Chinyama, Youth Advisor, Marie Stopes Zambia
- Mary Phillips, Technical Advisor, Adolescents 360, PSI
- Lydia Murithi, Project Director, Beyond Bias, Pathfinder International
Thank you!

Stay tuned for the next Spotlight webinar in July