

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights



Supporting the sexual and reproductive health and rights of adolescents and young people living with HIV

Adolescents and young people living with HIV have the same sexual and reproductive health rights and needs as other adolescents and young people (AYP), yet like so many AYP, they face challenges accessing the information and services they require to make informed and safe decisions which promote their sexual and reproductive health. In addition, these normal challenges faced by AYP are further compounded for young people living with HIV who experience stigma and discrimination, fears associated with disclosure to partners, and service providers with limited capacity to respond to their needs and experiences.

Africaid works together with national health, education and protection services to ensure that the SRH needs and experiences of AYPLHIV are addressed within national strategies, guidelines and service delivery in order to:

- **Ensure CAYPHIV have access to age and developmentally appropriate SRHR information in a way they can understand**
- **Promote their capacity to make informed, healthy, safe decisions about their SRH**
- **Promote the uptake of SRHR services among AYPLHIV from skilled, adolescent-friendly health care providers**

Strengthening the Evidence

Two studies were conducted with adolescents in Zimbabwe and South Africa to explore their experiences around accessing SRH services:^{1,2}

- Adolescents and young people living with HIV **struggle to engage their clinic nurses** on discussions around sexual and reproductive health, compounded by:
 - **Long standing relationships** with their clinic nurses since childhood
 - **Negative characterisations** of sex and sexual behaviour by health care workers with messaging that 'sex is bad', perilous and shameful
 - **Short stature and delayed puberty** leading health care workers to treat young people as younger children not 'ready' for SRH information and services
- **Negative attitudes** from health care workers can have a devastating impact
 - *'I knew the nurse at my clinic was very rough. So when I got pregnant, I didn't go to the clinic and I ended up aborting my pregnancy. An elderly woman in my community helped me abort'*
- Adolescents will **go out of their way to attend a clinic where they know they 'will be treated well'** and able to request SRH information.
 - *'The staff are very friendly. My nurse is a free person. I can ask anything and she does not stigmatize me if I ask anything about contraceptives. She just answers me without judging me'*
- Young people living with HIV:
 - Face significant concerns, fears and challenges related to **disclosure to partners**
 - Desire to receive **appropriately tailored services** that respond to their specific needs and enable them to take control of their health and well-being
 - Are **concerned about protecting others** through receiving timely ART care and support and comprehensive SRH services.
 - Experienced consistently **poor treatment by health care workers during pregnancy** particularly during when giving birth.

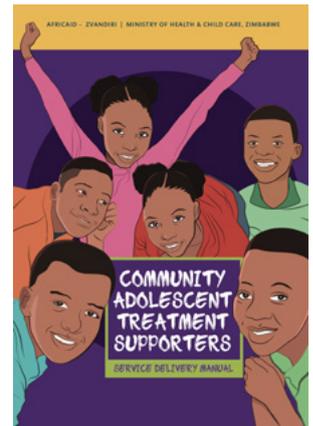
Advocacy

- Youth-led advocacy for integrated, youth-friendly HIV and SRHR services using print and social media, TV, radio, books, film, art and music
- Participation in global, national and community level dialogues on adolescent SRH
- Client-level advocacy for young people in need of sexual and reproductive health services
- Training and mentorship of Her Voice, Her Story Advocates to collect the stories of adolescent girls and young women, produce their own book and use this to advocate for the SRH needs of young women living with HIV



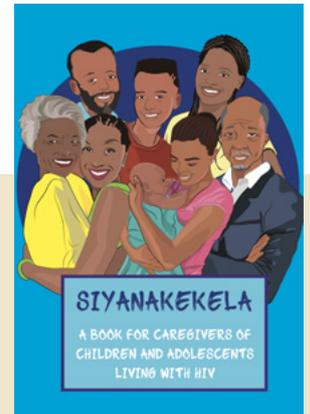
Guidelines, Training and Tool Development

- Technical assistance to:
 - The Ministry of Health and Child Care in the development of the **national training module on Sexual Reproductive Health for Adolescents living with HIV**
 - The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in the development of its **training curriculum on Life Skills, Sex and Sexuality Education**
- Development of:
 - **Zvandiri Mentor Standard Operating Procedures** to guide them in the provision of integrated HIV and SRH services for adolescents and young people living with HIV
 - **CATS Service Delivery Manual** to support CATS to identify, counsel, support and refer adolescents and young people in need of SRH services
 - Adolescent and youth friendly **SRH literacy and counselling tools**



Strengthening the workforce

- On site and virtual training and mentorship for:
 - **Health Care Workers** to provide age and developmentally appropriate sexual and reproductive health and rights services for adolescents and young people living with HIV
 - **CATS and Young Mentor Mothers** to provide SRHR information, counselling and support for adolescents and young people living with HIV
 - **Social workers and case care workers** to understand, respond and support the sexual and reproductive health and rights of adolescents and young people
 - **Guidance and counselling teachers** to provide age and developmentally appropriate SRH information, counselling and support for adolescents and young people and refer those in need of services



Strengthening families

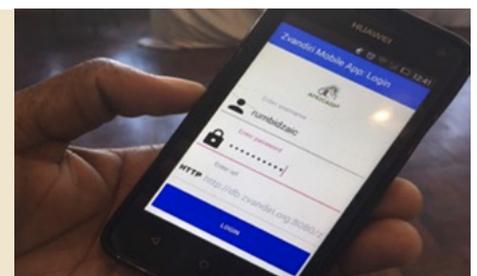
- Strengthening caregivers' **understanding of the sexual and reproductive health needs and rights of adolescents and young people and the services** available for them
- Supporting caregivers of adolescents and young people living with HIV **to provide safe, supportive environments which respect their needs for SRH services**

Service Delivery

- Provision of **youth-friendly SRH information, counselling and support** during home visits, clinic visits, support groups and mobile health
- **Identification and referral** of young people in need of SRH services, including:
 - Contraceptives
 - Condoms
 - STI screening, diagnosis and treatment
 - Cervical cancer screening
 - Pregnancy
- SRH information, counselling and support for **caregivers**
- **Referral of pregnant adolescents** to the Young Mentor Mothers
- Counselling and support for young people around HIV status **disclosure to partners**

Results

- In 2020, **1500** CATS in Zimbabwe were trained and mentored to provide SRH information, counselling and support for their adolescent and youth clients within the package of services they provide
- **803** adolescents and young people referred by CATS for sexual and reproductive health and rights services and supported, **through virtual monitoring, counselling and support during COVID-19**



References

1. Dunbar MS, Chapwanya G, Willis N, Gibbs A, Mutasa-Apollo T, Langhaug L (2016) *The missing discourse of sexual pleasure in health programmes for young people living with HIV*. Poster Presentation at 21st International AIDS Conference, Durban, South Africa
2. Chapwanya G, Langhaug L, Dunbar M, Willis N, Gomo P, Crankshaw T, Gibbs A, Mutasa-Apollo T (2016) *Is differentiated truly differentiated for adolescents living with HIV?* Poster Presentation at 21st International AIDS Conference, Durban, South Africa