Healthy Young People Project
Working towards a supportive sexual and reproductive health environment

Stories of Change from Malawi
Six stories about the results of the project, told by teachers and health care workers
Healthy Young People project:
Create a supportive environment for young people
A story by a health care worker

We held dialogue meetings with communities to get their support. We discussed the importance of visiting health services for youth.

Teachers and health care workers received training on sexual health and rights of young people.

Mother groups Parents Chiefs & Religious Leaders Teachers Health care workers

Young people are part of TUSEMÉ clubs in schools, they discuss topics such as sexuality, relationships and health.

If I want to protect this girl, I need to give her the right information. I know my community will support this.

I am happy to be taken seriously now.

Learners are encouraged to seek SRH services when needed. A referral guide is developed by and distributed to learners.

As a result of this approach 39% of the young people part of this project received counselling by a health care worker.
Healthy Young People Project:
Address the distance to services
A story by the local project coordinator in Malawi

Hospital staff discuss how they can offer the best youth friendly services.

What can we do to ensure young people reach our services?

CLINIC
Opening Hours:
Monday to Friday
8.00am – 3.00pm
After school and open on Saturdays

As a result 30% of the young people part of this project, visited the clinic on a Saturday.

And 39% of all youth part of this project were reached with the mobile clinics. When needed they received: counselling, family planning education, condoms, STI or HIV testing.
Healthy Young People project:
Health care workers understand the realities on the ground
A story told by a nurse

As I am a nurse I went to the schools to talk about sexual health.
I used to think young people were just playing soccer and having fun.

The learners had so many questions! They were very open.
Many of them were already sexually active. I didn’t know this. I was very surprised.

16.5% of young people in Malawi has sexual intercourse before the age of 15.
Only 43% of youth know how to protect themselves from HIV.

Okay, so young people are having sex. It is happening. I need to give them the right information so that they can make their choices properly.
Healthy Young People project:

Teachers learn to talk openly about sexuality

A story by a teacher of a primary school in Malawi

At first, people in my area thought it was insane and immoral to talk about anything related to sexuality. Even myself I had this mindset.

Teacher my friend told me that if I have sex once I cannot get pregnant. Is that true?

People tell me I will not grow if I don’t have sex at a young age. Is that correct?

Can I get pregnant if I have sex in water?

I felt too shy and embarrassed to talk about sensitive issues. Also I didn’t know a lot about sexual health and HIV.

We received a teacher training, which helped me to gain more skills on how to talk openly about sexuality. As well as knowledge on prevention methods.

In TUSEME clubs learners discuss topics such as: body changes, communication skills and HIV prevention. As a result 55% of youth now have comprehensive knowledge on HIV.
A supportive environment at school for young people living with HIV

A story told by a head teacher of a primary school in Malawi

This story is about a girl in our school who had lost both her parents when she was young. The girl was born with HIV. Other children at school bullied her because of her HIV-status.

One day she fell seriously ill because she stopped taking her ARVs.

After realising that she was not reporting for classes for some time I decided to make a follow up to her home where she lives with her grandmother.

When I saw her condition, I gave her a referral form from school so they could take her to the hospital.

Her grandmother took the girl to a nearby hospital where she was admitted. After two weeks she was discharged and convinced to take her ARVs.

At the same time, her fellow learners are discussing HIV and through role play and reflection learn about the consequences of stigma and discrimination.

The girl is now back in school. She looks happy and I am sure she feels more supported and will continue to take her ARVs.

We need to stop stigma and discrimination and support those who need it!
Healthy Young People project
Community- and religious leaders support young people to seek services

A story by the director of a hospital in Malawi

A 16-year-old girl was raped. She is afraid she has HIV and there is no support for her.

To ensure young people have access to health services, we need the support of community and religious leaders. We held many dialogue meetings to gain their support. We discussed sensitive issues related to the sexual health of young people.

KUTOMBANA!!!

Mmm! Nimuzilo. It's a taboo to speak about sexual issues in public when your family is present.

It is not sinful to talk about sexuality. It helps young people to make informed choices. Young people get pregnant at an early age, sometimes by forced sex.

We have a treatment called Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PeP), this is available if someone is exposed to HIV infections...for who could this be important?

Two Hours Later

While talking, many begin to understand what is meant and some start contributing points while others clapping hands, disregarding the presence of others, everybody begins to participate.

These dialogue meeting has resulted in village chiefs and religious leaders supporting young people to visit sexual and reproductive health services.
More than 30% of Malawi’s population is aged 10-24 years. These young people account for 50% of new HIV infections. The comprehensive knowledge on HIV among young people is between 33% and 43%. Although Malawi’s Ministry of Health has upgraded sexual and reproductive health services for young people, uptake remains low. 13% of youth targeted ever used youth friendly health services services

Healthy Young People project (2014-2016) coordinated by ICCO Malawi, aims at improving young people’s uptake of youth friendly health services in Embangweni and Nkhoma areas in Malawi. It has been successful in doing so. For instance 39% of young people reached by this project, received counselling by health professionals at a clinic or at the youth friendly mobile health services.

The projects’ success can be contributed to our combination of interventions to link schools to health services. We empowered not only young people, but also involved and reached out to parents, mother groups and community and religious leaders, which resulted in them supporting youth to access health services. Health care workers received training on youth friendly services and teachers increased their communication skills and knowledge on sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people.

In April 2016 we, 27 health care workers and teachers who are part of this project, shared our stories of change. Here we present to you our most important lessons learned. Wanangwa Msowoya made beautiful illustrations of our stories.

1Ministry of Health Malawi, 2014

This project was developed and implemented by dedicated staff working for: Education Expertise Development Foundation, Nkhoma Hospital, Embangweni Hospital, Mtenthera Health Centre, Nathenje Health Centre, Etchiyeni Primary School, Chizimya Primary School, Mchuchu Primary School, Mwatibu Primary School, Kalumbu Primary School and Nkhoma Primary School.

Funded by: Cordaid STOP AIDS NOW!