Evaluating programs reaching very young adolescents

Experiences and lessons from *My Changing Body*, a body literacy and fertility awareness course

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Remaining gaps in ASRH programs and research

- ASRH recognized as critically important issue worldwide but little progress yet on programs for very young adolescents

- Ages 10 to 14 a critical developmental period
  - solidifying sexual and gender identities,
  - developing attitudes and skills that lay the foundation for future sexual and reproductive health and well being

- Better program practices and research/evaluation tools and methodologies are nascent
My Changing Body

• Addresses gaps in life skills and materials for use in VYA programs

• Centered on
  • **Fertility awareness** - the basis of understanding SRH
  • **Body literacy** - Enabling young people to recognize physical /emotional change plus how gender and social norms influence their sexual and reproductive selves
  • **Self care**
Themes relevant to this age group

**PARENTS**
- Sexuality & gender
  - Why talk about it?
- Are you an ‘askable’ parent?
- Fertility awareness

**YOUTH AND PARENTS**
- Take home activities to encourage communication

**YOUTH**
- Puberty: My Body, My Self, Others
- Female and Male Fertility
- Concerns about my fertility
LOGIC MODEL

INTERVENTION

SKILL BUILDING

KNOWLEDGE

OPPORTUNITY FOR DIALOGUE

• Inter-generational
• Within/across sexes

MCB/MCCB

THEMATIC FOCUS

PUBERTY

Changes
Acceptance
Self-care (track cycle, hygiene)

Self
Other

REPRODUCTIVE PROCESSES

SEXUALITY AND GENDER

OUTCOMES

KNOWLEDGE

ATTITUDES

BEHAVIOR

GENDER

AWARENESS

Self-Efficacy
Body Comfort/Acceptance
Acceptance of others
Seeking help/Self advocacy
Self-care

Communication

Acceptance of others
Formative research to contextualize MCB to Guatemala, Madagascar, and Rwanda

- Participatory research with 440 boys and girls (10-14 year olds) and their parents and teachers

- Tools included community and body mapping, story telling, video clips, and collages

- Findings helped contextualize exercises including gender focus found in MCB
Formative Research
10-12 year old male & female adols - body mapping
Formative Research
13 - 14 year old boys & girls - Collages
Findings from Formative Research

**Poor fertility awareness and body literacy**

“If you haven’t ejaculated by the time you are 25, the sperm enters your head and you could become crazy or die”.

10-12 year old boy, Madagascar

Parents and older youth recognize that masturbation is a common way to deal with sexual desire, but disagree on whether it is moral or healthy.

Madagascar and Guatemala

**Gender and sexual norms influence responses to changes during puberty**

“I almost fainted when I saw the blood.”

13-14 year old girl, Guatemala

“If you ejaculate and you don’t know what it is, you’re wondering what is this?”

10-12 year old boy, Madagascar
Parents want to teach their children about reproduction and puberty but they…

don’t have enough time, due to long work hours

lack knowledge and preparation

lack models because

are uncomfortable with some topics

are bewildered by changing gender and sexual norms

don’t know how to adjust to their changing pre-teen
Concerns of parents

When they were little, they didn’t need clear information, they didn’t ask for explanations, they didn’t give opinions. Now they ask more, they want to know more.”

Mother, Guatemala

Girls and boys have the same desires, but girls are taught not to express them.

Mother, Guatemala
Evaluation of
My Changing Body Sessions
Sample Evaluation tools

- Card game
- My universe
- Living with my changing body
Quantitative evaluation – Card game and pile sort (BOYS! GIRLS! GENDER! GAME)
Qualitative evaluation – My Universe
CHANGES IN FERTILITY AWARENESS
Knowledge of menstrual cycle among youth and parents before and after MCB

Bar chart showing the percentage of knowledge about the menstrual cycle and fertile days for parents and youth before (Pre) and after (Post) MCB. The chart indicates a significant increase in knowledge post-MCB with p<.01.
Knowledge of male fertility among youth and parents before and after MCB

- Nocturnal ejaculation normal
- Fertile every day

p < .01
Sexuality attitudes among youth and parents before and after MCB

- Romantic feelings normal
- Masturbation not dangerous

p<.01
CHANGES IN PARENT-CHILD COMMUNICATION
Who do you talk with about the changes you are experiencing as you grow up?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PRE (n=57)</th>
<th>POST (n=57)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parent-child communication before and after MCB

- Talked about crushes last month
- Talked about changes in body last month

p<.01
Degree of comfort with changes in child’s/own body during puberty

* p < .01
CHANGES IN GENDER NORMS
Parents hold less stereotyped gender norms than youth

(n=52)
Parents shift towards less stereotyped gender norms

- Feminine
- Masc / Fem
- Masculine

(n=52)
Youth shift towards less stereotyped gender attitudes after MCB

- **Feminine**
- **Masc / Fem**
- **Masculine**

(n=57)
Have you noticed any changes in your relationship with your children since participating in these sessions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better able to communicate, more confidence</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good/happy</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More accepting/try to understand and help</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Have you noticed any changes in your relationship with your parents since participating in MCB?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater communication</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More confidence/less shy to talk</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get along better</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents explain more/ask questions</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happier</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do you feel about your body after participating in MCB?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learned a lot/new things</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel good about my body</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More prepared</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand my body now</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy/content</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More confident</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to care for my body</td>
<td>5%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

• Similar levels of poor fertility awareness among youth and parents at baseline

• Core gender stereotypes based on physical traits, parents less likely to classify based on traditional gender roles

• VYA identify parents as key resource for puberty information
After participating in MCB…

• Fertility awareness increases among youth and parents

• More accepting attitudes towards youth sexuality

• Parents consider themselves more accepting and knowledgeable (but no significant changes seen by youth)

• Trend towards greater parent-child communication, but only significant among parents
• Parents and youth report greater confidence and ability to communicate

• Shift towards more equitable gender attitudes among both

• Parents more comfortable with changes in children during puberty, but no significant changes among youth
Next steps

• Further analysis (statistical tests, composite indicators, scales)

• Analysis of qualitative data

• Testing in Rwanda
Final thoughts on programs reaching VYAs

• **CONTENT:** Six sessions can provoke significant changes in some areas and not others – VYA-serving programs may need to revisit certain themes and engage VYAs and parents again in discussions.

• **GENDER:** Gender awareness critical for health and well being – challenge is how to make discussions relevant and practical.