

October 2013

Consultation on Very Young Adolescents (VYA) UGANDA



Introduction Representing the Global *Very Young Adolescent (VYA) Alliance*, Save the Children International Uganda, Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW) and Georgetown University's Institute for Reproductive Health organized a national technical consultation meeting on VYA health in Uganda in October 2013.

Very young adolescents (VYA) are young people 10 to 14 years of age. This is a time of transition, with many changes including puberty and social, emotional and cognitive development. Tailored, age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health (SRH) or sexuality education services and opportunities are needed to help adolescents through a healthy transition to adulthood. This is true for girls—many of whom struggle to build the assets they need for later life—and boys, who are at a critical time of life when they are open to adopt more equitable attitudes and actions.

The Uganda consultation brought attention to the needs of VYAs and identified strategic priorities and action points for Uganda's National Development Agenda. Nearly 60 government, civil society, and media representatives attended. Presentations by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES), the Ministry of Health (MOH), UNESCO and civil society organizations highlighted and analyzed promising practices.

Challenges & Opportunities Participants identified challenges to addressing the health needs of VYAs in Uganda, starting with a lack of data. Similar to most countries, few data are available on this age group in Uganda. The result is that duty bearers do not understand the needs of VYAs, and leave them out of plans. Service providers do not know if these young people should be treated as children or as adults.

Opportunities for expanding VYA services include mainstreaming the agenda into the MOH's Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH) working group, and inter-ministerial coordination with Parliamentarians to support the East and Southern Africa (ESA) Commitment to Sexuality Education and SRH, and the renewed School Health Policy.

Recommendations

Research: Collect evidence of the situation and needs of VYAs including gender analyses to inform the design of services and programming.

Policy review: Review related policies and strategies to ensure age-specific recommendations and introduce the VYA agenda to legislators to create awareness on the need to target this special group and develop more conducive policies.

Programming and resource mobilization: Strengthen capacity for VYA services and programming, with clear targets and strategies. Develop a strategy for national level engagement and resource mobilization.

Judith Elsie Adokorach, SRH Program Manager for Save the Children: “*This consultation catalyzed inputs to policy and programs to do more for VYAs.*”

A follow-up meeting will be held at the end of 2014.

VYA Alliance founding members include: Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW), Georgetown University's Institute of Reproductive Health, Plan International and Save the Children.

This consultation was led by Save the Children and DSW on behalf of the VYA Alliance.

