

Is the education system in Tanzania able to deliver an adolescent sexual and reproductive health programme? The experience from MEMA kwa Vijana

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Issues: High registration rates (up to 97%) make primary schools a channel to reach large numbers of youth with adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) interventions. However little is known about how school capacity and other socio-cultural issues can affect implementation and sustainability.

Description: The MEMA kwa Vijana (MkV) programme is scaling up ASRH education using government systems into 649 schools in 4 districts of Mwanza region. Between 2004–2007, 103 Ward Education Coordinators, 1611 teachers and 1500 Head, Guardian and Academic teachers were trained.

The quality and coverage was assessed by:

- a) 1611 training questionnaires;
- b) Interviews with 143 teachers and 105 class peer educators (CPEs);
- c) 35 FGDs with school committees and non MkV teachers;
- d) Observations of 1111 students books, 10 class sessions (CSOb) and 19 CPE dramas;
- e) Pupil Survey (n=9204).

Lessons learned: Successes:

- Government led training increased teachers' knowledge (88.9% to 95% p=0.001); attitudes (e.g. condoms use 46.4% to 74.4% p=0.001 and STIs 47.9% to 73.8% p=0.000.1) and participatory techniques (78% to 86% p=0.000).
- 50% of teachers reported teaching over half the sessions 6 months after the intervention; only 28.5% of student books displayed this.
- CSOb confirmed good materials use and positive pupil/teacher experiences.

Challenges:

- Lack of teachers, especially females (10.4% in rural v 59.1% in semi-urban schools).
- Sexual relations between male teachers and female pupils (reported in 11% of schools).
- Low attendance (only 42% of girls and 44% of boys registered pupils).
- Community members initially opposed teachers, stating ASRH education increases sexual activity.
- Government inspectors haven't inspected some schools since 2004.
- Some teachers view MkV as additional work, as NGO-associated.

Next steps:

- Link with community interventions to emphasize the importance of education.
- Involve village leaders to address inappropriate school relations.
- National advocacy highlighting how local government can implement such programmes.

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