

**EMPOWERING THE ADOLESCENT THROUGH
SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH**

BY

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**IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MARY
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BACKGROUND

- I am registered midwife with eleven (11) years' work experience, I developed the passion to start this project after series of encounters with adolescent girls in the communities I served.
- I got more rejuvenated when I was transferred to work at Immaculate conception of Mary health Centre, Kongo-Logre in the Nabdam district of the Upper East region of Ghana. Data from the end of year performance review for 2021 and 2022, indicated Nabdam is among the districts leading in teenage pregnancy and most of these teenage girls refused to return back to school because of low self-esteem and some forced into early marriages.

BACKGROUND CONT'D

- I also encountered most teenage girls who reported to my facility with profuse bleeding per vagina as a result of unsafe abortions, of which one of them lost their uterus in the process due to uterine rupture. One female senior high school student also confided in me, of not having an orifice for her vagina (Unperforated hymen) and was advised by her peers to have sex for it to open.
- This got me thinking of how to give back to my community with the knowledge I have in midwifery on adolescent sexual and reproductive health. This birthed the project 'Empowering the Adolescent through Sexual and Reproductive Health'.

VISION AND MISSION

- **Vision:** It is anticipated that all adolescents in the Nabdam District of the Upper East Region will get equal access to high quality sexual and reproductive healthcare services at all levels.
- **Mission:** To create a pathway for adolescents in the Nabdam District in the Upper East Region to access sexual and reproductive health services through education, sensitization, provision of support and empowerment to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health in collaboration with local partners.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Creation of adolescent friendly health corner in my facility.
- Promote reproductive health education in Junior and Senior High Schools
- Identify students with sexual and reproductive health needs through awareness creation.
- Collaborate with relevant institutions to enhance sexual and reproductive health services.
- Raise funds to supply free sanitary pads, provide free reproductive health screening and treatment for reproductive health diseases for needy adolescents.

- Establish a dedicated unit to provide support to pregnant adolescents to safe delivery and aftercare and conducting refresher training for staff.
- Conduct research in sexual and reproductive health

PROJECT TARGET

- Junior High School Students
- Senior High School Students
- Out of school adolescents
- Pregnant Adolescents
- Adolescents with Sexual and reproductive Health Needs
- Marginalized Adolescents

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- School health visits
- Focused antenatal care for pregnant adolescents
- Support pregnant adolescent towards skilled delivery
- Provide mobile STI clinics for adolescents
- Counseling
- Provision of free sanitary pads to adolescents in need
- Home visiting
- Screening for and treatment of STDs and reproductive health conditions
- Conducting refresher training for staff on adolescent sexual and reproductive health.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

- Reproductive and sexual health education conducted for 15 JHS in the year 2022, 14 JHS 2023 and 15 JHS in 2024 in the Nabdam District of the in Upper East Region.
- A total of over 700 students reached at the level of JHS
- Reproductive and sexual health education conducted for the only SHS in the district in 2022, 2023, and 2024 respectively.
- A total of over 900 students reached at the level of SHS.

- 700 students screened for vaginal wax, breast lumps and STIs, 25 were having vaginal candidiasis which was treated at the facility level, 4 with vaginal wax were referred to the Bolgatanga Regional Hospital and no cases of breast lumps were detected.
- 80 young adolescents have been screened for cervical cancer for free at the facility level, 5 with precancerous lesions were treated.

PROJECT IMPACT

- Setting up of adolescent friendly health corner and full operationalization of adolescent and reproductive health services in my facility.
- Conducting monthly quiz competitions for adolescents and giving the winners award such as learning materials, story books among others and yet to come out with a book addressing the questions that they raised concerning their sexual and reproductive health.
- Distribution of over 1000 free sanitary pads to needy adolescents.
- Identified and supported 5 pregnant adolescent in school to safe delivery and without much disruption to their education
- Provided free treatment for adolescents diagnosed with STDs such as vaginal candidiasis, bacterial vaginitis among others after screening.
- The district witness a significant reduction in teenage pregnancy rate from 20% in 2022, 16% in 2023 and 14% in 2024 of which my activities have contributed to this achievement.
- 1 adolescent successfully put on anti-retroviral medications after confirmation of diagnosis

PROJECT CHALLENGES

- Inadequate logistics
- Transportation (no fuel for movement).
- Financial constraints
- Consent and acceptance of SRH activities
- Lack interest by family/community members
- Inadequate human resource
- Facility not providing modern contraceptives methods

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

- Set up project management team of which the facility in charge is part.
- Involvement of community organizations and local government units such as department of social welfare, gender department etc.
- Linkage with existing related programs and projects such as safety net programme (GHS) etc.
- A strong network of support will be established with the school systems
- Establish an effective training programme for mentors that will increase their ability to be successful trainers.
- Establish an effective monitoring system to protect both the youth and the mentor.
- Replicate this project in other deprived communities.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Adolescents have a lot of unmet health needs.
- A comprehensive history taking shines the light on adolescents' health needs and problems to be able to intervene and help them promptly.
- Clinical presentation helps to refresh staff knowledge and skills.

RECOMMENDATION

- Referral of adolescents seeking for modern contraceptives to nearby health facilities for such services.
- Expanding the sexual health services to include HPV vaccination, increasing access to sanitary products and involving parents and communities in adolescent health education.

PROJECTS YET TO IMPLEMENT

- Integrating STIs Prevention and Menstrual Hygiene education: a holistic approach to improve adolescent health in the Nabdam district.
- Preventing of cervical cancer in the Nabdam district through early detection by establishing a cervical screening Centre in the Nabdam district.

CONCLUSION

- Investing in adolescent health is key to unlocking lifelong health, productivity and national prosperity (Stephen Peterson, Chief of health UNICEF).

PICTURE GALLERY



DISTRIBUTION OF FREE SANITARY PADS TO ADOLESCENTS

SENSITIZATION OF ADOLESCENTS ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AT KONGO SHS



SUPPORTING ADOLESCENTS WITH SANITARY PART AND LEARNING MATERIALS



SUPPORTING ADOLESCENTS WITH SANITARY PART AND LEARNING MATERIALS



INTRODUCTION OF FOCAL PERSONS TO ADOLESCENTS



MEETING THE ADOLESCENTS WITH THE I/C



ANGELUS PRAYERS AT 12: 00PM



ADOLESCENT FRIENDLY HEALTH CORNER



