

Do adolescents really want what we offer them? A needs assessment in a developing country.

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Introduction: About one-fifth of the world population are adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19. In the year 2000 approximately 86% of them is living in developing countries. There is an urgent need for the development of education and health systems tailored to better the needs of young people. There are numerous programmes for youth services available and different and sometimes confusing minimum requirements have been promoted by several organisations. A needs assessment can be an expensive and time-consuming process.

Objective: To determine services needed by local youth.

Methods: A survey conducted by two local school nurses in seven secondary schools using qualitative methods focussing on anonymous sessions using a mind-mapping method. A cross-sectional sample of approximately 50 learners per school was interviewed and a total of 324 responses were obtained.

Outcome measures: Defining youth friendly reproductive health services and whether a need for these services exists. If so, what services do they expect, where should it be and when should it be available.

Results: The survey was completed in five working days. The overwhelming response was that there is a need for these services even if it were integrated with existing local community clinics. The needs included services that did not always correspond with programmes proposed by other organisations. Valuable information regarding further improvements in existing services was also obtained.

Conclusions: Local needs by users must be kept in mind in the organisation of youth friendly services. It is therefore important to do a local needs assessment before introducing a new programme. Using mind mapping, this need not always be a lengthy and expensive process.