

## Understanding the Reproductive Health Education Needs of Adolescent Girls in Uganda

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Adolescent pregnancy and motherhood have remained major health and social concerns in Uganda. The purpose of this field practicum is to identify priority unmet needs, barriers, and constraints with regard to reproductive health education for adolescent girls and young women in Uganda, and to determine the best ways to meet those needs. A needs assessment and situational analysis were conducted with Shanti Uganda, which is a non-governmental organization located in Kasana Town in the Luweero District of Uganda. They are working towards reducing adolescent pregnancy by providing a reproductive health education program.

Participatory and qualitative methods were used to collect data including semi-structured interviews with 31 main stakeholders and 9 girls, surveys with 55 young women aged 14 to 26, and direct observations. Data about accessible health facilities and services for girls were collected from secondary official data sources. The evaluation of the Teen Girls Workshop provided by Shanti Uganda was also used to provide supporting evidence of the results of the needs assessment.

The findings of the interviews and the surveys revealed that even though the main source of information for adolescents is school, the lack of sex education and limited educational resources are still crucial obstacles getting proper reproductive health information. There are also cultural, social and traditional restraints preventing young women from getting this information either in home or even in school. These barriers constrain women from making a right decision for their health. The majority of interviewees and survey respondents agreed that school is the best place to educate adolescents. Also, many girls replied they are in favor in getting reproductive health services and education from health workers.

It is concluded that Shanti's proposed services focusing on a school cooperative program and Youth-Friendly spaces for girls can improve accessibility of education and ensure that the girls attend more. If Shanti develops a cooperative program with schools, they can reach more adolescent girls and their teen girls program can be implemented over a long-time period. Moreover, the education and services can be provided by Shanti's health workers in Youth-Friendly spaces, which is a powerful way of passing knowledge to youth, allowing active participation of both service provider and youth participants