

Youth-friendliness of current reproductive health services and challenges towards their improvement: youth's and providers' perspectives

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Abstract

Objectives

It is widely accepted that youths need specialized RH services because of their vulnerable (high risky behaviors and lack of knowledge) and opportunistic (opportune period to learn good practice for their later life) conditions. Despite the importance of this age group, various socio-economic factors as well as provider and service factors have deterred youths from accessing available RH services. This study aimed to address youth-friendliness of current RH services and challenges as well as solutions towards their improvements in poor, suburban communities of Mandalay city, Myanmar. This is a community-based, cross-sectional study using both quantitative and qualitative methods. A total of 444 randomly selected youths and all RH care providers (N=95) from all suburban communities in Mandalay City participated in our study to rate the level of youth-friendliness of current RH services in their communities. In addition, a total of 40 in-depth interviews with youths and 26 key-informants interviews with different RH care providers were conducted to elicit challenges and solutions to tailor the current RH services according to the youths' needs. According to youths and providers, most RH services in those communities did not focus on youths. Among the three types of RH center (non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government organizations and private clinics), NGOs had the highest self-rated youth-friendliness even after adjusting the confounding factors. From qualitative results, barriers or challenges to access the current RH services among youths were lack of awareness, lack of affordability, embarrassment, guardian's negative attitudes and unfriendly providers. On the other hand, lack of manpower, multi-tasking, heavy workload, low salary, lack of resources, lack of youth-friendly trainings and low cooperation between the different RH centers were common challenges among providers to provide high quality RH care to youths. To defeat those challenges, common solutions suggested by youths and providers were peer-led RH education, making recent RH services more youth-affordable, educating parents about RH needs of youths, cooperation and collaboration among different RH care centers and enhancing the basic resources and youth-friendly trainings among providers.