

Musanze Youth Center (MYC), Rwanda

A project of the Bixby Center for Population Health and Sustainability

School of Public Health, University of California, Berkeley

The overarching goal of this project is to test a model of combining structural and health strategies to improve the health and wellbeing of adolescents and young adults in Rwanda. The model, co-designed and managed by youth, will help adolescents through the transition to adulthood by providing livelihood skills, comprehensive sexual education, general health information and linkages to high-quality youth-friendly reproductive health services.

In addition, the project will lay the foundation for the creation of adolescent transdisciplinary research that will leverage advances in developmental science to inform youth policies, programs and practices in Rwanda and other low-income countries.

Expected Results/ Potential Impact

We expect this program to generate critical information on effective strategies for adolescents and how youth centers can be sustainably revitalized. We expect that the cohorts passing through the program will have better job opportunities and will have significantly less STIs/HIV and unintended pregnancies. These cohorts will also be more likely to use high effective contraceptive methods while waiting for the right time to start their families. In addition, they will be more likely to have smaller families and young women will be more empowered in the community. Furthermore, our application of developmental science to improve the transition to adulthood within this model will develop the evidence base on how social and emotional experiences shape key developing biological systems during adolescence and inform the translation of developmental science into policy and practice.

At the end of the program we expect the following results:

1. Youth will be empowered to set goals for their futures, be able to access information and resources on sexual and reproductive health, and gain employment skills that would improve their job opportunities.
2. Youth will have improved confidence and knowledge to access sexual and reproductive health services, and seek employment.
3. Youth will receive quality health information and services from trained providers in youth-friendly facilities.

Overall the program aims to:

1. Empower youth to have a healthy transition to adulthood
2. Provide youth with skills to seek employment

3. Deliver trusted, private, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education and services that builds demand among adolescents and are accepted by parents
4. Create educational and service programming that taps into young people's aspirations and desire for entertainment
5. Link youth to sexual and reproductive health services in a safe, stigma free, cost-effective way with full choice
6. Support providers and pharmacists to deliver high quality youth-centered care
7. Establish an adolescent development monitoring, learning and evaluation plan

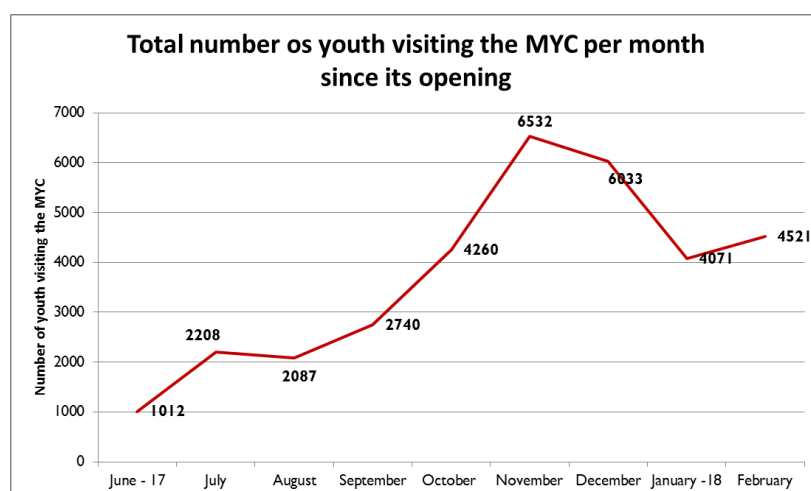
Current activities:

The MYC opened its doors in June 2017 and to date has offered the following program activities:

1. Space for youth to hang out, use free internet, games and entertainment
2. Health and sexual education sessions on variety of topics including gender-based violence
3. Comprehensive reproductive health services on site (including laboratory capacity)
4. General health monitoring
5. Computer training (Microsoft Suite, website design) – provided by Youth Employment Agency
6. Preparation for employment (CV, job searching, career advice) – provided by Youth Employment Agency

Management of the MYC activities:

MYC is managed by a group of 25 youth volunteers (15 female and 10 males), divided into the following categories: team leaders, assistant leaders and volunteers.



Data from MYC from June 2017 through February 2018 indicate the following:

- 33,464 total visits, with 20% considered unique visits
 - Of the total visits: 36% were among 15-19 years old; 17% were female; 68% have only have primary education (1% have never been to school); 61% are students; and 28% unemployed
- 14,580 youth have attended sexual and reproductive health education sessions
- 3,931 youth have used the clinical services; 121 tested for STDs/HIV; 67 pregnancy tests; 32 implants inserted