

Letter to Editor

Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancies in School Adolescents: A Collaborative Approach

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Keywords: Adolescent pregnancy , peer education program , high school

Dear Editor,

We write to share the achievements made in the existing structural partnership between the University of Rwanda (UR) and the University Colleges Leuven-Limburg (UCLL)-Belgium. In December 2017, both institutions signed a Memorandum of Understanding establishing this partnership. The aim of the partnership is to enhance the local capacity for education, research, and outreach. Through this partnership, staff from the UR and UCLL exchanged ideas to develop an intervention, a peer educational manual, to prevent adolescent pregnancies in Rwandan high schools.[1] This project aimed to empower Kirehe in-school adolescents to prevent adolescent pregnancy by making better and more effective use of the available means.

Our first goal was to strengthen the Midwifery programs in Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) education to produce well-trained and equipped Midwifery and Nursing students as trained facilitators. In the second step, educate and train the selected peer educators who could exchange accurate knowledge and skills about SRH with other secondary school students. This three-year project was funded by VLIR-UOS, an official platform to support partnerships between university colleges in Flanders and the South. As a result, it focuses primarily on supporting innovative solutions to global

and local problems with 254 ongoing projects in 17 partner countries.[2]

The project was implemented in three phases. To inform the development phase of the manual, we conducted a networking event with the different stakeholders (educators, healthcare professionals, and local authorities) to gain their input and explore adolescents' knowledge and attitudes toward sexual and reproductive health using a mixed-methods study design. Concerning SRH, these consultation meetings were designed to ensure that the research and developed manual are used as effectively as possible within young adolescents' daily lives and that the manual can be implemented smoothly alongside numerous educational programs and activities.

The results from this implementation showed that peer educators were well equipped with enough knowledge and skills about SRH and contributed to reducing teenage pregnancies, according to the school's authorities. Students' knowledge and behaviors have also changed. Therefore, a collaborative approach is a winning strategy to prevent adolescent pregnancies in schools. A manual has also been distributed to the schools to be used in the future, has been translated into the midwifery curriculum and 50 midwifery students have also been trained.

Conflicts of interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Rwanda J Med Health Sci 2023;6(1):7-8

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