



Investing in Young People's Health and Development: Research that Improves Policies and Programs

International Conference
Abuja, Nigeria
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The Shifting Realities

- A generation ago AIDS was unknown; today it is the second leading cause of mortality in the second decade
- More than a generation ago infectious diseases were the major killers of youth; today, except for HIV, social, behavioral and environmental factors predominate;
- A generation ago many more young people lived in rural areas, fewer went to school, and most married earlier than today.



Trends

- 87% of the world's youth population lives in developing countries
- In a number of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa there are 5 times the number of people <15 years than over 55;
- More than three-fourths of the world's HIV positive youth live in Sub-Saharan Africa
- The youth population of SSA with increase by more than 25 percent over the next generation



Youth in Nigeria

- Age specific fertility was 126 per 1000 for adolescents 15 to 19 years of age in 2003
- Adolescents contribute 55% of all clandestine abortions
- Sero-prevalence for HIV positive adolescents 15 to 19 years in Nigeria is 3.6%
- Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and thus have the largest cohort of young people on the continent



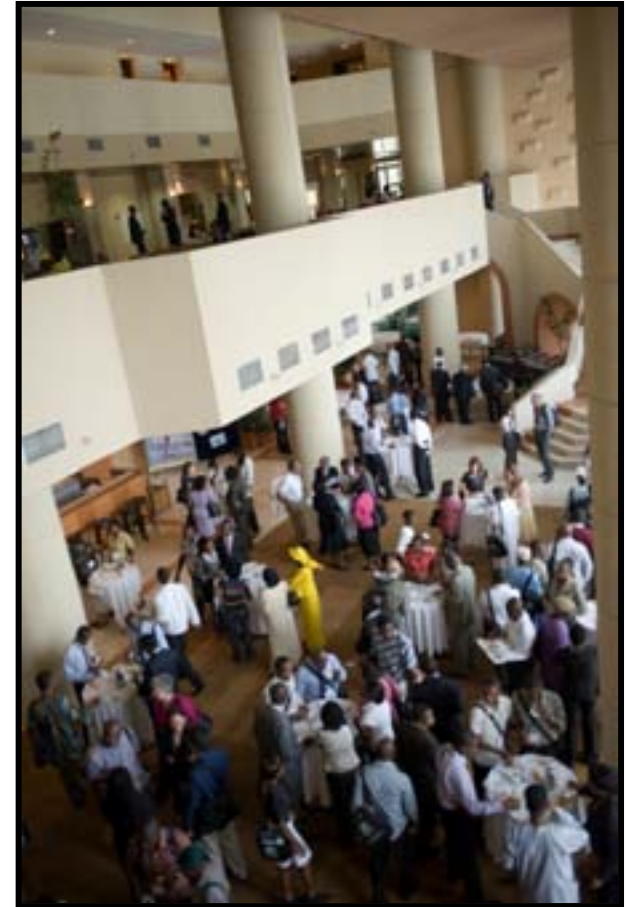
Objectives of the Conference

- Provide an international forum for exchanging research and programmatically generated evidence on how to meet the health and developmental needs of young people in low - resource settings.
- Provide a forum for the international research and development community to reach and communicate consensus on policy, program and research priorities for youth development.
- Increase resources and commitment to youth-directed investments in health and development at the international, national and local levels.



The Conference Participants

- 551 of 665 registrants presented in Abuja
 - Age range from 10 to 82
 - ~**200 < 25 years (36%)**
 - 40% from outside Nigeria
- Represented **36 countries** and every major region
- Students, researchers, educators, practitioners, and parliamentarians
- Significant national and international partner support and participation
 - \$100K travel support from MacArthur, USAID, Packard and Summit





Research Presentations

- 32 sessions, including 7 panels and 4 poster sessions
 - 120 oral presentations and 40 posters
- 5 preformed panels presented by IYWG/FHI, Population Council, and FHI
- Luncheon roundtables with international experts





Key Message#1: Health and Development of Youth are intertwined

- There is a diverse age range when talking about youth from 24 to over 35 years of age;
- There is a concern about the lack of youth voice globally and especially in SSA– the conference provided an opportunity for young people to be heard
- Youth need to be viewed as resources and not problems
- There is a cross-cutting concern about *healthy transitions* into adulthood
- Youth development today takes place within a context of rapidly changing social and economic environments



Key Message #2: Gender Security is Critical

- Priority needs to be given to girls' security and development
- Economic development and social capital need to be considered as important strategies to improving adolescent sexual and reproductive health
- Attention needs to be paid to marginalized populations e.g., those who have been trafficked and/or involved with commercial sex
- We must continually examine our own assumptions and biases



Key Message #3: Development occurs within social contexts

- Attention to contextual factors and relationships that mentor positive growth is critical
 - Parental, family, friends, school, legal protections, social norms
 - Multiplicity of supportive networks and whole/secure environment for young person
 - Parent-child communication (especially regarding sex) is critical and challenging



Key Message #4: Education and Health are intertwined

- Schooling is everything
 - “Education should be a promise, not a dream.”
 - Schools as gateways for exposure and absorption of life-protecting information and curricula
 - Debate over when sexuality education should be introduced
 - Linking educational programs to national youth development strategies



Key Message #5: While improving, access to information and services remains quite limited



- Girls still receive limited education about menstruation or reproductive health
- While knowledge about contraceptive alternatives has increased significantly, there remains multiple barriers to accessing services
- Youth friendly services are critical if young people are to use them



Key Message #6: Innovative Programs and Policies are needed

- Strategies to reach newlyweds
- Use of mass media and internet
- Strengthen intersectoral ministry involvement
- Engage faith-based organizations and leadership as catalysts of ideational and behavioral change
 - Introducing information of reproductive cancer risks, obstetric risks of early pregnancy, HIV prevention



Personal Reflections

- The strong youth participation sent a clear message that this conference was not just about youth but *for* and *with* them;
- The number of papers from young investigators was exciting;
- The data-sets that were the basis for research presentations often appeared to be far richer than the papers presented;
- Presentations tended to be primarily descriptive;
- While behavior heavily influences health outcomes, research disproportionately focuses on demographic factors.



FOR YOUTH...

...THEIR FUTURE
IS NOW!