



Young People Control the Future of the Response!

WEAE02

Type: Oral abstract session
Venue: Session Room 5
Interpretation: None
Time: 16:15 - 17:45
Code: WEAE02
Co-Chair: Kanjoo Mbaindjikua, Namibia

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Youth Programme report by **Suzanne Fournier**

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Suzanne Fournier, Youth Rapporteur

Successful youth-focused and youth-led HIV/AIDS community activities were the theme for this session, and in the spirit of youth controlling the future, the position of session chair was relinquished to volunteer youth delegate Shamin Mohamed Jr. (Children's AIDS Health Program).

Hang Can introduced the China Youth Network (CYP), an organization founded in 2004 to build youth-adult partnerships and develop peer-based sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education programs for youth. Two years since its inception, CYP has been built to 30 representatives across China each with a network of peer-volunteers conducting SRH education programs in their communities. "Solid youth-adult partnerships are crucial to give a response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic", said Hang, "to stand hand in hand with adults and play a remarkable role in the fight against HIV/AIDS".

In the poor Mindanao region of the Philippines, Mark Vincent Datoy is the leader of his village's youth council, the official representation of youth in local government. The youth council represents the voice of local youth and has decision-making power in policy development. Through the youth organization Kartada Tres, Mark and other young people have changed policy to allow youth in Mindanao access to condoms and SRH education.

Marija Vasileva-Blazev (UNFPA) presented the results of a youth-adult partnership-building project in Thailand and Botswana. Six to nine youth were each paired with an adult mentor to conduct country assessments and make recommendations based on key informant interviews. In Botswana the project was named 'Jwa Phala', for youth leading the way. Recommendations included creating youth call centres for SRH and HIV, youth friendly clinics and increasing access to condoms.

Panellists were questioned on the number of HIV positive members in their youth organizations. Mark responded that HIV testing is not available in his community and even he is not aware of his status. UNFPA's partnership-building project was criticized for a lack of cohesion with previous activities and it was suggested that youth-led HIV/AIDS organizations develop strategies to facilitate a dialogue on SRH within families where talk of sex is taboo.