



Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: Generating Evidence and Strengthening Country Capacity Lab

Status Update

May 2020

Lead Partners:

University of Manitoba

Plan International Canada

PROGRESS TO DATE:

- **Multi-country data workshop:**
 - **September 2019:** Facilitated technical capacity-building workshop in Ethiopia with participants representing 10 African countries to build evidence base for country specific adolescent sexual reproductive health and rights (ASRHR) profiles. The workshop strengthened the analytical capacity of analysts and academic participants through joint work on large national database analyses focused on major relevant ASRHR and gender dimensions.
 - **March 2020:** A synthesis paper on adolescent sexual and reproductive health in sub-Saharan Africa, based on analyses conducted for this workshop, was published in [BMJ Global Health](#) as part of a special series sponsored by the *Countdown to 2030 for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health*.
- **Evidence review** conducted to identify: i) best practice methodologies for collecting quantitative ASRHR data, and ii) critical variables to understanding ASRHR - leading the Lab to test innovative mixed method approaches.
- **Data collection strategies and instruments:** Created and designed for implementation in Tanzania to integrate multiple mixed methods to measure ASRHR programming, such as:
 - **Facility Assessment Surveys:** Developed using [SARA](#) (Service Availability Readiness Assessment), combined with questions on sexual and gender-based violence and the gender-responsiveness of services that adolescents use (adapted from JHPIEGO and partners). This registry information will be collected for a year.
 - **Survey:** Project team experimented with testing diverse, short question formats by including indirect questioning of SRH behavior and sensitive issues with lists and vignettes (e.g., sexual violence, abortion). Focus was placed on crucial indicators to reduce resource-intensive surveys where data remains under-analyzed. The survey was sampled across 2,000 adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19 from the Kisesa cohort.
 - **Quantitative:** Designed a tablet-based and self-completed questionnaire to cater to different literacy levels. The text is accompanied by audio, relaying the questions, instructions and response options through headphones.
 - **Qualitative:** Trained peer researchers in thematic areas of (to conduct peer ethnography with participatory focus in qualitative data methodologies): ASRHR knowledge; service use and barriers to accessing services; and how to reach adolescents with services or research, enabling adolescents to participate in data production rather than being researched.



NEXT STEPS:

- **Finalizing a data set:** Data collection and implementation in Kisesa, Tanzania was completed in 2019 and the Lab is now finalizing the data set and beginning initial analyses.
- **Convening learning spaces:** Planning is ongoing to deliver workshops to share and discuss research findings completed across ten sites. This will advance current work and best practices among partners on measurement and monitoring of ASRHR, gender equity and related reproductive, maternal and child health and nutrition issues.
- **Reaching consensus:** Ongoing partner touchpoints support the selection of a core suite of indicators, methods and tools for measurement and monitoring of ASRHR programs and projects and how to refine and package these for use by non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- **Implementation of qualitative strategy method:** A qualitative strategy method was developed based on peer ethnography and it will now be implemented in Rukwa, Tanzania in partnership with Plan Tanzania.

INSIGHTS SHARED:

- **Centering confidentiality:** Partners identified concerns of protecting the confidentiality of sensitive information disclosed by adolescents. This concern guided the decision to develop a literacy-accessible, tablet-based self-completed questionnaire to enable safe, confidential methods for disclosing critical gender-sensitive issues, such as abortion and sexual violence.
- **Community sampling:** Qualitative peer ethnography reflects targeted purposive sampling across implementation states, including: socio-economic profile (town centre, roadside and rural), and working with schools and community leaders, to include in-school and out-of-school adolescents across the different age groups.
- **Regular communication:** Multiple organizational partners influenced well-informed priority settings and action areas and mitigated the risk of activity duplication with emphasis on established roles and responsibilities early on in project design.
- **Rigour and relevance:** Tanzania field work will combine:
 - i) established research infrastructure in Mwanza and the National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR) of large sample size (2000+ cohort) to strengthen the analytical rigor of data collected; and,
 - ii) tool testing refinement within the context of Plan Tanzania's Uzazi Salama project in Rukwa county, enabling data instruments which are scientifically sound and program relevant.



REFLECTION:

“While providing support and feedback, it has also allowed us the space and flexibility to pursue the project activities in a manner that works for the partners involved. Awareness of the other Labs and their activities has helped narrow and define the scope of our work as well and other Labs will be invited to participate in the final workshop. In addition, visits by the [CanWaCH team to the study site in Mwanza](#) ensured that the study team felt their valuable contribution was recognized.”

- *Partner from University of Manitoba*

RESOURCES:

- [Melesse DY, Mutua MK, Choudhury A, et al Adolescent sexual and reproductive health in sub-Saharan Africa: who is left behind? BMJ Global Health 2020;5:e002231](#)
- [Service availability and readiness assessment \(SARA\)](#)
- [JHPEIGO](#)
- Countdown to 2030: [Country Dashboards](#)
- Countdown to 2030: [September 2019 Brief](#) and [country equity profiles](#)
- [Countdown to 2030 - List of Publications](#)

