



## CASE STUDY: A Coordinated Multi-Sectoral Approach to ASRHR Service Delivery and Demand Generation

### The challenge

South Africa is home to the world's largest and fastest growing HIV epidemic with a rate of approximately 288,400 new infections a year. 2,363 young people are newly infected with HIV every week. Teenage pregnancy remains a serious concern, with 99 000 South African teenage girls falling pregnant in 2013. (UNAIDS)

Nzululwazi Senior Secondary School (NSSS) in Alfred Nzo district, Eastern Cape Province, reported 45 learner pregnancies in 2013 and at least 21 in 2014 – one of the highest incidence rates of learner pregnancies in South Africa. Restless Development's baseline research in Nzululwazi SSS revealed that 82% of learners surveyed were 'in a relationship', 61% had experienced sexual intercourse, and less than 2% of learners had a good understanding of HIV transmission. Learners reported the unaffordability of transport to the clinic and lack of confidentiality at the clinic as significant barriers to uptake of health services. (Restless Development: SYP Baseline Survey, 2015)

"...having sex is the priority – (preventing pregnancy) is not my business."  
Male Learner, NSSS,  
SYP Baseline Survey

*Learner 3: a 16-year old female student in grade 11 at NSS, lives alone in a rented home near the school because her family home is some distance away in the town. She is sexually active and has been in a relationship for over a year. Within the relationship she seeks, "...prestige, all my friends are in relationships and I don't want to miss out...." She does not conduct sexual relations outside the relationship but is open to the idea of more than one partner because "...one does not necessarily have to have one partner. If my partner cannot limit themselves to one partner, then why should I have one?" She first had sexual intercourse at the age of 15 and the reason she cited was that she wanted to share the experience with her 'lifelong partner' but "... my peers also pressured me." She uses contraception in the form of an injection but is unsure of whose responsibility it should be to prevent pregnancy. She is not concerned about the high rate of unplanned pregnancy among young women, "Pregnancy among young women is no longer a cause of concern, it is like the norm now..." When such pregnancies do occur, she believes it is the girl who is mostly held responsible. She could not explain the basis for this view but firmly insisted it was the reality.*

### The intervention

The challenges at Nzululwazi SSS presented an opportunity for government and civil society stakeholders to work together to practically implement the East and Southern Africa (ESA) Commitment to Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in schools, which includes CSE and delivery of SRHR services through the Integrated School Health Program (ISHP). Nzululwazi was confirmed as the site to develop and implement a model of good practice for the Integrated School Health Programme for potential replication and scale-up across South Africa.

In response to the challenges in Nzululwazi, Restless Development and its partners developed a series of interventions that took into consideration the three major determinants of effective ASRHR interventions, namely:

1. knowledge and understanding of ASRHR by young people and adult gatekeepers (parents, teachers, SGB members, community leaders);
2. awareness of and demand generation for ASRH services amongst young people, especially adolescent girls and young women;
3. provision of adolescent friendly SRH services.

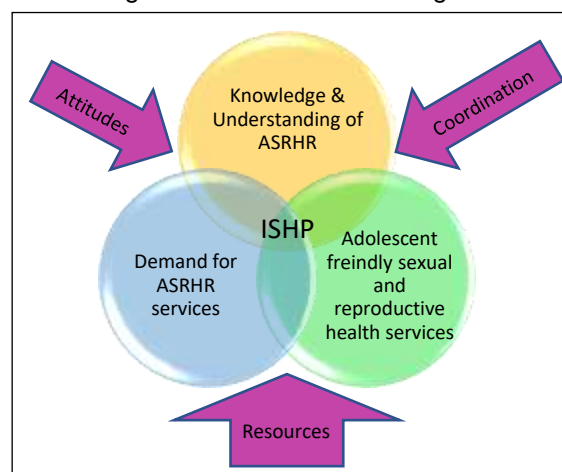
The intervention had to address lack of coordination between service providers and other stakeholders, limited resources, the remote location with no health facility, and conservative attitudes amongst teachers, parents and service providers.

### Coordination of Government Stakeholders:

In order to get government stakeholders on board and working together, Restless Development in partnership with the Provincial Department for Social Development and the National Population Unit, convenes a provincial forum in the Eastern Cape to sensitize core government stakeholders on the ESA Commitment on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), and to promote a discussion between the departments responsible for CSE in the Province (the Departments of Health, Social Development and Education) on how they can improve collaboration, coordination and identify solutions to the barriers that currently prevent young people in the Province from receiving high quality CSE and SRHR services.

"The coordination meetings and ongoing sharing and feedback increasingly made the government officials understand the reality of the ASRH need [and] keep on assisting people to have clarity about the ASRHR situation".

Eastern Cape HIV Director, Department of Basic Education



"When we started it was difficult to work across departments (coordinating ourselves) but now we work well with DoE and DSD."

*Eastern Cape Provincial Department of Health Official*

A task-team made up of key government departments, provincial leaders, community and school leaders, UNFPA and Restless Development developed a joint action plan for immediate commencement of service delivery at Nzululwazi. Quarterly provincial coordination meetings and ad-hoc meetings were held with the implementing partners to report back on implementation of the action plan, address coordination challenges, sensitise district and provincial stakeholders to national policies, and address blockages.

### School Governing Body (SGB) and Teacher Sensitisation

Restless Development facilitated a technical assistance programme for the SGB, school principal, learner support agents and educators on the Integrated School Health Programme (ISHP). Participants were trained on the necessity of sexuality education for learners and were given a clear understanding of the enabling environment provided by the ISHP, its focus the school as a hub to work with a huge variety of stakeholders and to enable learners to receive a full range of information and SRH services onsite so they can lead safe and healthy reproductive lives. This training was pivotal in getting the school leadership and management's support for CSE and SRH service provision to take place at the school.



### Youth-led intergenerational dialogues on ASRHR

A young leader from Restless Development facilitated interactive intergenerational dialogues between the parents, SGB members, teachers and learners. The discussion focused on the challenge of learner pregnancies and explored ways in which every community member can play a role in reducing learner pregnancies and supporting the needs of learners in Nzululwazi. The dialogue informed community members of the sexual and reproductive health services now available in Nzululwazi, and encouraged uptake of those services.

"Through dialogues and discussions, we are now aware of the various factors within our community that expose our children to poor sexual and reproductive health issues".

*Parent of NSSS Learner, Restless Development SYP Operations Research 2016*

### Social Worker assigned by Department of Social Development

DSD assigned a social worker to Nzululwazi and other nearby schools. The social worker visits monthly to offer counselling and support to learners, assist with access to social grants, and provide social services and referrals as required.



### Access to SRH Services

The Department of Education supports the provision of SRH services in the community centre adjacent to the school. Once a month the Department of Health provides a comprehensive package of sexual and reproductive health services on site to learners, including health promotion, voluntary teenage pregnancy testing, a full range of contraceptive methods, HIV testing and counselling, and STI testing and treatment.

### In and out of school peer education

Restless Development trains volunteer peer educators in lifeskills, comprehensive sexuality education and non-formal education techniques. Nzululwazi SSS accommodates the peer education programme in the school timetable and the Department of Basic Education Learner Support Agents support the peer education program in school and become the focal persons for the peer educators. Peer educators facilitate 4 sessions per week in school & one session/week targeting out of school youth at the youth resource centre

### The Results

In a limited resource setting, Restless Development partnered with the Departments of Health, Education and Social Development and the community to facilitate access to ASRH services in Nzululwazi. The intervention targeted the three dimensions of knowledge & understanding, demand for services and supply of services. Knowledge and understanding: Research carried out in 2016 showed increased knowledge of HIV and modes of transmission and increased knowledge of protective sexual behaviours among learners as NSSS and among parents. Demand and supply of ASRH Services: Awareness of, access to and uptake of adolescent friendly SRH services have increased significantly. Coordination amongst key government departments has led to provision of adolescent-friendly SRH services in Nzululwazi. The Department of Health have reported **XXX**. As a result of the Safeguard Young People programme, **teenage pregnancy rates at Nzululwazi Senior Secondary School have dropped from 45 pregnancies in 2013 to just 2 in 2016.**

