

**P2.3. Focusing on Societal Structures, in order to Address the Challenges Associated with Adolescent Sexuality and Reproductive Behaviour, in Katutura, Namibia - Panduleni Hailonga- van Dijk, UNFPA**

*E-mail: hailonga@unfpa.org*

**Background/Significance:** Teenage pregnancy, baby dumping and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS continue to be a concern in Namibia. Teenage pregnancy among 19 years old is 39%, and about 15% of the girls between the ages of 15-19 year old have given birth or are pregnant (DHS, 2006). Sometimes, a number of adolescents who experienced an unwanted pregnancy have attempted to abort illegally and or dump the new born. The newspapers in the country report at least on a weekly basis of a new born either found dead or alive, as a result of being dumped by the mother. In addition, the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is estimated at 10.2% among the 15-19 year old, and 16.4% among 20-24 years.

Various organisations including Governmental, Civil and faith based organisations, have designed and implemented programmes and policies to address the situation, however, the majority of these programmes are aimed at changing knowledge, attitudes or social interaction, without taking into considerations the environment in which risk behavior occurs.

Community and environmental domains play a key role in adolescent sexuality and Reproductive behaviour, and critical in analysing the situation. It is in this context that this study was conducted in the township of Katutura Namibia, among 40 young people between the ages of 14 – 20 year olds. The aim of the study was to look at how societal structures, especially, availability or lack of extracurricular programmes, contribute to teenage pregnancy, baby dumping and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS.

**Main Question/Hypothesis:** How does the community, you are living in, protect or make you vulnerable to teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS?

The study used a qualitative approach, using both focus group discussions and the completion of a questionnaire. The study found that there are two key activities that play a key role in preventing a minority of the young people from becoming pregnant or vulnerable to HIV/AIDS i.e.' sport and church. However, the majority of the youth who did not belong to either, and living in an community, where there are no structures to keep them busy (over the weekend), found themselves being vulnerable, hence the prevalence of teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. The study suggests the need to design programmes in the community that to provide extracurricular activities, which are alternative to alcohol and exposure to sexual activities. Qualitative, 40 young people participated, and the study was conducted in the township of Katutura, Windhoek, Namibia

**Findings:** The study found that out of a population of more than 200 000, there was only one single multipurpose youth centre, which was closed over the weekends, and the nearest movie theatre was more than 10km from the township. The situation is further complicated by the economic, social and cultural environment young people are growing up. For instance, poor neighbourhood; lack of role models and easily affordability, availability and acceptability of alcohol use.

The study suggest that for any programs or policies aimed at addressing adolescent sexuality and reproductive health, should address the societal structures, which requires cooperation between different stake holders, besides Ministry of health. Thus the design and implementation of such programmes should include the active participation and contribution of Ministry of local Government and housing and the local municipalities. This is critically, especially in communities where neighborhoods seems to be none-existing and where community members seems to be powerless in helping the youth.

**Knowledge Contribution:** The key contribution of this study is that, it suggests that young people have the necessary knowledge, and that the one way to curb teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS is by addressing the socio-structural effects of the neighbourhoods.