Participatory envisioning workshops: an innovative methodology for engaging young people in challenging health conversations

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Intergenerational teen pregnancy, increased HIV infection, as well as high rates of sexually transmitted diseases and sex-related stigmatisation remain pertinent issues for young people’s sexual wellbeing across Sub-Saharan Africa. The most popular route for exchanging sexual wellness knowledge in Ghana and Kenya occurs through informal communication via local non-governmental organisation (NGO’s) outreach activities and educational community programmes. These activities are often carried out in tandem with international organisational partners, resulting in complicated education settings which risk translating sexual health knowledge through a Global North lens, not always responsive to local contextual issues. To mitigate this, research partners facilitated an innovative Participatory Envisioning Workshop [PEW] methodology adapted from Participatory Pattern Workshops and trialed its viability with two groups of young people from Ghana and Kenya.

These workshops were used by Ghanaian young people from an informal street school run by social workers analysed their sexual and reproductive health narratives to envision ways for improving service provision’s friendliness and cultural responsiveness. In Kenya, youth organisation volunteers followed the same process. They used their sexual learning and exposure narratives to envision how their skills as community health promoters might be enhanced to serve communities better.

This presentation will share how collective wisdom was used in each case to envisage youth-friendly and culturally responsive health provision for young people. As a multi-method data collection methodology, PEW proposes using creative exercises to generate collective insights to inform the design of health resources and services by and for young people. The two cases in this presentation offer powerful examples of a methodology that can shape health research and service provision through local knowledge, ensuring those in health and social care settings practise in culturally responsive ways with communities.