

Sexual and Reproductive Health Information and Counselling Services for Youth through information Communication Tools: A descriptive analysis of the clientele

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Happy Life (HL) contact centre was established by FPA Sri Lanka in 2009 to increase access to reliable SRH information especially to the young population in a secure space using ICT as the platform. The project capitalized on the high level of mobile phone use (>95% usage), increasing ICT literacy (estimated at 35%) in the country and web access/PC throughout the island. Multiple ICT tools including phone, short message services (SMS), interactive voice calls (IVR), web based solution -online chat/email, forums were introduced.

This study was conducted to analyse the client profile, type of queries made and modes of communication by youth clients who contacted the Hotline (HL) in 2015. Data of all young persons (aged less than 25 years) contacting HL during 1st January to 31st December 2015 had been entered into the to a predetermined electronic database, by the Service providers without personal identity information and this information was analysed descriptively.

Results revealed that, 3,915 services (34% of total services) had been provided to 1,083 youth clients. Highlighting the effect of culture and gender values prevalent in the country, around three fourth of the queries were made by boys. Majority (97.20%) accessed services over the phone, followed by SMS (1.67%) and E-mail (0.71%). Most (97%) of the queries were on SRH. The commonest questions raised were on contraception (48%) of which most were regarding Eemergency Ccontraceptives (31%) and Oral Contraceptives (29%). Around one third (35%) of the total queries raised by the youth were on Sexuality concerns such as Sexual intercourse (31%) menstruation (14%), penis size (11%), masturbation (10%), ejaculation (7%), virginity (1%) and etc. Minor but important proportion of queries

(8%) of the total queries raised by youth were on sexual problems such as premature ejaculation (44%), vaginismus (23%) erectile dysfunction (13%), and concerns regarding desire (19%). There were also a few queries on STI/HIV, abortion, gender orientation and gender based violence.

In conclusion, there is a vacuum and an emerging demand in Sri Lankan community to create a safe and confidential space for youth to access reliable information and services on SRH. ICT is one of the best approaches to reach the youth community.

Key words: Sexual & Reproductive Health (SRH), *Information* Communication Tools (ICT), Youth, *Information and Counselling*.