

USAID Transform: Primary Health Care Activity Promoting Healthy Behaviors through Peer Education

Providing sexual and reproductive health information and services to young people is crucial to their transition from adolescence to adulthood. Reproductive health services that maintain the confidentiality, respect, and privacy of adolescents and youth can promote safe sex, prevent unwanted pregnancies, and curb sexually transmitted infections (including HIV). USAID Transform: Primary Health Care supports public health facilities to scale-up and create youth-friendly services (YFS) by training health providers, and equipping clinics with supplies. Peer educators are identified, trained, and linked with health facilities to promote YFS.

USAID Transform: Primary Health Care provides supportive supervision visits and mentoring to ensure health facilities and YFS clinics are providing quality services, information, and counseling to adolescents and youth. Additionally, Senbete Health Center (HC) located in Amhara region received support to construct a YFS clinic. A school-based club was also established for peer educators who work closely with Senbete HC YFS clinic. All peer educators joined the club voluntarily to educate their peers on various topics including reproductive health and the proper use of male and female condoms. Peer educators also provide counseling to their peers and refer them to the YFS clinic for health care.

Asegidew Sigegn, a health provider at the YFS clinic who coordinates the activities of peer educators said, “our YFS clinic is closely working with peer educators who meet to discuss activities accomplished and to plan for the next month.”

Hadira Mohammed, a peer educator, witnessed firsthand how the orientation on menstruation for both girls and boys helped girls start using menstrual hygiene products at school without fear or feelings of shame.



Peer Educators of Senbete town working closely with Senbete Health Center. Photo: USAID Transform: Primary Health Care Activity

“Before the establishment of the club at school for peer educators, girls used to be fearful of boys, because some of the boys insult girls when they see a spot of blood on the girl’s cloths,” said Hadira. Realizing this was a problem in school, she added, “we educated both girls and boys about menstruation and informed girls where they could access menstrual hygiene products at school.” Menstrual hygiene products were provided to the schools by USAID Transform: Primary Health Care and Senbete HC for girls to use.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, peer educators also informed the community about COVID-19 prevention and organized handwashing stations to reduce the risk of infection transmission. Peer educators mobilized resources and supported local community members who couldn’t provide for themselves. Samira Mohammed, one of the peer educators said, “when we found these helpless individuals, they were sleeping in their homes without any meal. By raising money from the community, we were able to provide them with supplies.”