

PART 3

CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING YOUR PROGRAM FOR URBAN ADOLESCENTS



By working through each of the Essential Elements, you have been able to focus on some of the most essential and effective strategies for designing an SBCC program specifically targeted at improving the SRH of urban adolescents. It is in this design process that many of the unique challenges and opportunities of working with urban adolescents are important to address. Now you may be asking, “What next?”

Once you have explored all of the Essential Elements, it is time to put your design into action. The first step is to create an implementation plan, which details the “who,” “what,” “when,” “where” and “how much” of your SBCC program. The plan covers partner roles and responsibilities, activities, timeline, budget and management considerations. The implementation plan should include input and commitments from team members who helped with program research and design, and who will help implement moving forward.

In SBCC programs, an important consideration for your implementation plan is making sure that your key message points are integrated into your selected channels in a way that will ensure you reach urban adolescents and other intended audiences at the right time.

Key questions to consider include:

- What are the activities that need to be planned and implemented?
- Which stakeholders’ involvement do you need to implement?
- Where will you implement them?
- What are the intermediate steps necessary for each activity?
- What is the necessary sequence of activities? How are they linked?
- When will each activity be implemented? Will staff, resources and intended audiences all be available then?
- How will you measure project performance against your behavioral indicators and program goal? At what stages of the project?
- Who will be responsible for activity design? Funding? Roll-out? Monitoring?
- Does everyone know their roles?
- What if something goes wrong? Are you allowing room for delays in funding, implementation, approvals, etc.? Make your implementation plan SMART, too!



Reminder!

If your efforts are tied to service delivery or training, be sure to consider this in your timeline. For example, demand creation activities for SRH services may need to wait until the capacity of service providers to provide youth-friendly counseling is strengthened.

Challenges and Strategies for Implementation

Implementing SRH SBCC programs for urban adolescents can be challenging. Here are some common challenges that you might face and suggested strategies for dealing with them.

CHALLENGE:	STRATEGY:
<p>Resistance from parents/adults to your SRH SBCC program with urban adolescents. SRH programs for young people are not always welcome by parents and other adults. Some believe that talking about SRH with youth or making contraceptives available encourages youth to have sex.</p>	<p>There are several approaches that you could try to address any resistance, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Including parents and other adults in interviews or focus groups to learn more about their perspective from the beginning.• Assuring them that your program is protecting and empowering young people to take control of their health and make responsible decisions.• Presenting the facts and research to support your strategy, including evidence that talking to youth about SRH does not increase their sexual activity.• Involving these adults in the development of your messages and programs.• Reaching adults during community engagement, so that accurate information about the program is presented and supportive parents can be recruited to your advisory group. Advisory group parents can become credible spokespeople and discuss with concerned parents and/or adults.• Integrating a component of your program that specifically targets parents and/or other supportive adults. Messages may focus on being a supportive adult by talking about sexual health with your child.• Training parent peer-educators to work with resistant parents.• Organizing community dialogue to discuss openly with adults, leaders and parents about the program and resistant behaviors.• Partnering with responsive leaders to promote messages and to talk with resistant parents.

CHALLENGE:	STRATEGY:
<p>Particularly vulnerable youth can be very hard to reach. In some communities, reaching girls can be harder than reaching boys. You may go to a youth center and find that it is frequented mostly by boys as girls have less time to spend in leisure activities. Youth that are marginalized, such as LGBTQ youth and homeless youth, are very hard to find.</p>	<p>If you are finding it hard to reach youth on your own, there may be other organizations that are already reaching them for another program (e.g., immunizations for their children, faith-based groups, income generation programs) and it might be possible to combine efforts.</p> <p>Consider ways to access young women. Though they may not attend leisure activities, they may have places where they gather regularly, perhaps water points or the market for example.</p> <p>Other strategies to try and include particularly vulnerable youth include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite members of vulnerable groups in your team of peer educators. • Talk to vulnerable groups and asking them how they would like to be approached and engaged. • Work through existing youth structures such as local and national youth associations or committees. • Partner with psychologists and social workers who have the expertise of working with very vulnerable youth. • Create a network of particular vulnerable groups, for example, LGBTQ youth. • Attract some of the vulnerable youth through income generating activities or by organizing activities that appeal to them.

CHALLENGE:	STRATEGY:
<p>Teachers often do not have the time or the interest in delivering your program. Teachers are often busy enough with their mandated curriculum and may not see SRH information as important or relevant to what they teach. Equally, many teachers do not feel comfortable talking about sex and sexuality with their students. Some may even find it immoral.</p>	<p>If teachers are unable or unwilling to execute the activities required due to competing demands on their time or resistance to talking about sex, try and find ways to integrate the program activities into existing systems and lessons to increase the likelihood that activities will be delivered and contribute to the sustainability of the intervention. Opportunities for mainstreaming can be found by working with school administrators, health workers, teachers and parents to design curricula that teachers are equipped and comfortable to teach or bring outside educators into schools to deliver this information.</p> <p>Other actions that you can take to obtain more teach engagement include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobbying with the Ministry of Education and partnering with education institutions to develop training of trainers on how to teach SRH. • Setting up an inter-ministerial committee where all relevant parties discuss how best to incorporate SRH in the school curriculum. • Engaging teachers from the beginning when you are designing your program.
<p>Young people, particularly in urban environments, are very mobile. Trying to access them more than once can be difficult.</p>	<p>Highly mobile populations in urban areas may be difficult to keep track of if the program requires repeated interaction (i.e., multiple IPC sessions and follow-up on whether implementing skills learned) and evaluation. If there is a chance that you will only have one chance to reach an individual, then structure the activity differently for one-time sessions verses multiple sessions. If using a pre-/post-survey for activities, consider a format for collecting data before and after each session. For mass media evaluations reaching larger populations, a representative sample is fine and it is not necessary to match the pre- and post-surveys to the same individual. Also consider other channels to reinforce your messages, such as radio or mobile phone interventions, which may be more accessible to mobile youth and not reliant on personal contact at set times and places.</p> <p>Develop brochures and flyers with key information that can be distributed during sessions so that mobile youth can take with them.</p>

CHALLENGE:	STRATEGY:
<p>It can be difficult to get young people to trust you.</p>	<p>Developing instantaneous trust between you and young people is not always possible. Given the vastness of the neighborhoods, workplaces and urban environment, IPC activities can be beneficial if they allow for building trust and rapport among the participants and increasing their comfort in talking about personal issues with one another and with adults, before beginning the SRH messaging. Urban youth may feel alone in the big city in more ways than one, however, social support can come through SBCC activities. Adults who are supportive can find ways to let urban adolescents know that they are available for them. Peer support is also a very important opportunity that your program can encourage and promote.</p> <p>Other strategies to increase the trust youth have in you and your program could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making sure you use trusted peer educators to help build the confidence of other youth. • Creating a “youth-friendly” section across services, including health services, the police and the city council. • Developing social activities to attract youth and gain their trust. • Developing activities in partnership with young people and in places where youth and adults work together.
<p>Transportation can be a barrier. Some young people may not be able to get to your program if they live or work in a different part of the city. In many major cities, traffic is a huge problem. It can take hours to move just a few kilometers. Equally challenging, at times, is finding money to pay for transport to attend your program.</p>	<p>If the geographic area is large and transportation limited, consider conducting IPC activities in several areas of the city where your intended audience lives instead of requiring that they travel to a central location. Consider providing transport reimbursement. Also consider other communication channels, such as radio or SMS, which may be more accessible for young people that cannot travel to you, or to whom you cannot travel.</p> <p>To limit travel and transportation costs, you can rely on focal points to act as a link between youth in the community and the program. Make sure you run meetings and activities from youth centers where young people already attend and ask young people to suggest solutions to the transport challenges.</p>

CHALLENGE:	STRATEGY:
<p>Urban youth peer educators can be difficult to manage. It may be unrealistic to expect young people who are going through physical, emotional and sexual changes to guide and inform others on such a private, sensitive and often taboo topic. These are youth, as well, and they have their own needs.</p>	<p>Peer educators should be part of a more comprehensive behavior change strategy and need to be properly trained and feel confident to discuss sexual health matters with their peers. A support system should also be in place for referral should the peer or near peer educators be unable to answer specific questions or demands. Peer educators need to be carefully selected, since their efforts may be rejected if the intended audience does not see them as true “peers.”</p> <p>When selecting peer educators refer to the selection criteria described in national reference documents if these are available. Alternatively, develop clear criteria to guide your selection of peer educators and share this criteria with the educators themselves. Developing a list of expectations for the peer educators and a list of what they can expect from your program can also help.</p>
<p>Motivating peer educators or IPC facilitators can be challenging. Some IPC and peer education programs compensate their facilitators with salaries or stipends; other programs rely on volunteer support.</p>	<p>If you rely on volunteers, consider ways to motivate and reward them without relying on monetary compensation. Paying volunteers may be expensive and may attract helpers for the wrong reasons. Sometimes certificates, ID cards displaying the volunteers’ roles, regular meetings to celebrate their good work, t-shirts and/or regular training can all motivate volunteers and make them feel valued.</p> <p>Other strategies that can keep volunteers motivated include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reimbursing travel expenses. • Organizing competitions between groups of volunteers to motivate them to succeed in their activities. • Asking volunteers what would motivate them.

CHALLENGE:	STRATEGY:
<p>Funds are limited and evaluation is too expensive to conduct.</p>	<p>There are some low-cost options to consider. One would be to combine resources with other organizations working on the same topic. Several organizations may be able to share the expenses, expertise and staff time to conduct an evaluation that covers all programs without the paying all the costs. Another low-cost option would be to approach a university in your city. Universities can provide a wealth of evaluation expertise, as well as potential free or low-cost labor from professors and/or graduate students who are interested in the topic and opportunity. Alternatively, if you want to address the root causes of limited funding, you could lobby relevant institutions and ministries to allocate funds for evaluation.</p>
<p>Program staff are not trained in M&E.</p>	<p>Many organizations do not have staff trained to design evaluations, conduct qualitative and quantitative studies, analyze data or write reports. For some, you could hire local consultants to manage the evaluation tasks. The added advantage is that hiring outsiders to evaluate removes the potential bias from those working on the program also evaluating. For others, this could be an opportunity to strengthen staff skills with local or online M&E trainings.</p>
<p>Inaccuracies of self-reported data among youth. Self-reported data is always challenging. Some youth have difficulty remembering their behaviors, some underreport and others exaggerate their behaviors. Private behaviors, such as sexual behaviors, are not observable by researchers so surveys rely on self-reported behaviors to determine if the program has achieved its objectives, such as increased condom use or decreased sexual activity.</p>	<p>Some studies have tried to determine if youth are more honest reporting their intimate behaviors by talking with a researcher, writing responses in a survey or entering responses using a computer or personal digital assistant. The results are inconclusive on whether one is better than another. At this point, the best you can do is ask for their honest answers and assure them that their responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. Remember also to ensure that when you are collecting data with young people to seek out appropriate, private locations.</p>
<p>Lack of sustainability of your program. Funding cycles often mean that projects have a limited lifespan. We need to make sure that our SBCC program continues in some way even once the funding has stopped.</p>	<p>From the design phase of your program, ensure that you involve national stakeholders and partners. These organizations are likely to be there even after your funding has finished. Develop capacity building activities so that they can continue to implement some activities and highlight the importance of your work so that funds may be allocated to the same activities, even if it is not your organization that will implement them.</p>

CHALLENGE:	STRATEGY:
<p>Taboos linked to parent-child communication around SRH. Often parents want to help their children lead healthier sexual lives, however, they may find it difficult to talk to them about this topic. The taboo linked to communication about SRH can be a barrier to behavior change in some people, who may have incorrect knowledge and engage in unhealthy practices. It's important to support parents to talk to their children about sexual health if they wish to support them in making healthy decisions.</p>	<p>Organize parents groups where parents can share their concerns and challenges, as well as possible solutions. Develop educational materials that can help parents discuss sexual health with their children. Organize sessions between parents and their children to start having a dialogue about the topic. If there is an appropriate radio show discussing SRH, run listening groups with parents and children where questions from the show are discussed.</p>
<p>Difficulties in finding leisure activities that attract out-of school youth. Many of the activities offered by SBCC programs rely on accessing youth through the school network. Further, having activities that are mostly attended by youth who are in school may discourage out-of-school youth to participate.</p>	<p>Some strategies to encourage participation by out-of-school youth in your activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask out-of-school youth what activities they would like to attend and where. • Organize activities, for example, community engagement activities, such as mobile cinema, participatory theater, concerts or sport events, in locations where out-of-school youth tend to go. Run these activities when out-of-school youth are available. • Train some out-of-school youth to be peer educators.