



What kind of messages does youth listen to?

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- **Brief description of Cyprus Family Planning Association**
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Cyprus Youth Council

- It is the **National Youth Council of Cyprus**.
- Founded in **1996**.
- Full **active member of the European Youth Forum**.
- Currently **hosts 51 Member Organizations, political and non-political NGYO** from both communities of Cyprus, all religious minorities, and foreign students living in Cyprus.

Aims

- Empowerment of active participation of youth.
- The promotion of active citizenship and European citizenship.
- Consultation between member organizations for the formulation of policies;
- Encouragement of dialogue among member organizations through this platform and the empowerment of the voice of youth in Cyprus.

Cyprus Family Planning Association

- Founded in 1971.
- Non – Governmental, Non- Profit, Volunteer organization.
- Accredited Member Association (MA) of International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network (IPPF EN).
- Vision: A society where the Rights in regards to Sexual and Reproductive Health of all people, especially of young people and women are ensured in the basis of Human Rights based approach.

Cyprus Family Planning Association (CFPA)

Programmes & services provided

- Clinical services
- Counselling services
- Educational services
- Informational services
- Advocacy and networking with other organizations.
- Volunteers programme (youth & 30+)

Networking with other Organizations

National Level:

1. NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON HIV/AIDS
2. NATIONAL MACHINERY ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS – EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE
3. CYPRUS WOMEN'S LOBBY
4. NON – GOVERNMENTAL PLATFORM ON DEVELOPMENT
5. PAN CYPRIAN COORDINATIVE COUNCIL ON VOLUNTEERISM
6. FULL MEMBER OF CYPRUS YOUTH COUNCIL

Networking with European Organizations

1. EuroNGO'S
2. AIDS ACTION EUROPE EUROPEAN NETWORK
3. AIDS & MOBILITY
4. YSAFE – EUROPEAN YOUTH SRHR NETWORK OF IPPF EN
5. ASTRA YOUTH – EASTERN EUROPEAN YOUTH SRHR NETWORK
6. YOUACT – EUROPEAN YOUTH NETWORK ON SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS.

Role & participation of Young people in CFPA

- **“Youth for Youth”** group.
- Founded in **1996**.
- Young people aged **16 – 30** years old.
- Coordinated by the **Youth coordinating committee** in close collaboration with the **Youth program officer**.
- Implements its own projects in regards to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Young people in the local and national level.
- Networking with other Youth Organizations such as the **Cyprus Youth Council, YSAFE, ASTRA youth, YouAct**.
- Participation of young people in the **Board of Directors of the CFPA** through the Constitution (20%)

Young people and messaging on Sexual Health in Cyprus

Cultural and social norms still appear to play a very significant role in shaping beliefs and attitudes about sexuality and sexual behavior (Kouta, 2003).

Conservatism and taboos are well rooted in the Cyprus society with sexuality regarded as a very 'sensitive' and 'private' issue which is seldom discussed and understood.

Young people have limited access to useful & accurate information in regards to SRHR.

Young people usually receive information from their peers and the media in regards to SRHR (ASTRA, 2006).

But the information they receive is often limited, confusing the incomplete (Lesta et al., 2006).

As a result young people make uninformed choices and expose themselves to unperceived risks (STI's, unwanted pregnancies).

SAFE project

Mini-Action project Cyprus

Awareness raising through Entertainment

- **SAFE (Sexual Awareness for Europe) project.**
- **Funded by the European Commission.**
- **Project of the IPPF EN in collaboration of the WHO European region office and the University of Lund, Sweden.**

- **4 main components of the project:**
 - Research and documentation
 - Advocacy and dissemination of information
 - Testing best practices
 - Youth participation

Awareness raising through entertainment

Cyprus Mini – Action project through the SAFE project

Objectives:

- To improve the knowledge of young people on SRH and Rights in 2 selected high schools in Nicosia
- To increase awareness of the general public on the SRH and Rights of young people and
- To increase support of policy makers for the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education in schools.

Main activities

- **Two workshops**
- **The staging of a theatrical play created and prepared by the youth participants of the workshop**
- **Focus group discussions with young people who were involved in all stages of the project & with young people who watched only the play. Aim to assess the impact of the project to young people in regards to SRHR.**

Aiming to provide knowledge & create awareness on SRHR through innovation and entertainment.

Awareness raising through entertainment

The **three major achievements** of the project were the following:

- The concept of “***Awareness through Entertainment***” was enthusiastically saluted by the young people who actively participated in the project and those who just watched the play. They found the play entertaining, fun, innovative, unique, interesting and expressive. According to a young girl she described the project as follows ***«It is an innovative way; in 20 minutes of a play you pass messages that you would need an hour and a half in a lecture to convey. It is a more creative way that is engaging and draws the attention»***
- The **knowledge** of a group of young people on SRHR issues has **improved, mainly those pupils who participated in the workshop and in the play** now feel very **comfortable talking to their friends about their sexuality**, and are **able and willing to act as peer educators for others**.
- The consideration of the school to provide sexuality education lectures to pupils at the 1st and 2nd Grade.

The **active involvement** of the pupils through the whole project proved **vital** in **engaging their interest** and **stimulating their desire to learn**. This would suggest that **involvement** goes hand in hand with **awareness**: the **more involved young people are**, the **greater their desire to learn**, thus the **greater their knowledge**.

Some Quotes by young people who participated in the focus groups discussions past the project....

‘The play was a **smart** and **effective way** to convey messages. Even though you may know a lot of the stuff, it is the best way for these issues to be imprinted in your **memory**’ (Female, FGD2)

‘When something is **entertaining it stays more prominently in your mind because you have experienced it**; it is an experience and it stays with you’. (Female, FGD1)

‘Watching the play, I understood that I was not alone...That **all adolescents face the same relationship problems.**’ (Male, FGD2)

‘The message was to **talk openly about sexual issues** and not hesitate because of **shyness or embarrassment.**’ (Male, FGD2)

‘The fact that we stood up there on stage and discussed these issues that are **seldom discussed** was a very innovative thing...I think it gave the message or it was aimed to give the message that **these issues are not secretive and you should be talking about them...**’(Female, FGD1)

Conclusions

Young people need messages that are...

...Innovative

...Creative (use of theatre, photography, dance, painting etc)

...Fun

....Created with the meaningful participation of young people so they respond to their needs and worries towards sexual health issues

.....Specific and clear

.....Use as much new technologies (web-games, sms, sites etc)

Most importantly,

Messages for young people should focus on the **positive sides of sexuality**. It should be messages that would help young people **open up** and **talk about sex, sexuality, relationships without fear, shyness or taboo**.

By establishing **clear & honest communication channels** with young people throughout a sexual health strategy using **a positive approach**, that's the first and most important step in promoting Sexual Health and in creating a context where young people can make **informed choices in regards to their Sexual Health**.

‘Sometimes young people are ashamed to talk about sexuality or sex, but they are not ashamed to practice it. I would like to change that’.

Peer educator, Youth Centre “In Corpore”, Lithuania.

No question shall remain in secrecy in regards to Sexuality of young people... It is Human Right of all people to be able to enjoy a safe and pleasurable sexual life based on informed choices & consent.

Thank you!

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