



2022 News bulletin

REFLECTIONS ON 2022

We wish you a happy, prosperous and fulfilling new year. We are excited that 2023 allows us to collaborate and share evidence and findings that will protect and promote the rights of adolescent girls in Africa.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

ACTION TO EMPOWER ADOLESCENT MOTHERS IN BURKINA FASO AND MALAWI TO IMPROVE THEIR SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH (PROMOTE)

The African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), the Institut Supérieur Des Sciences De La Population (ISSP) at the Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo from Burkina Faso, and the Centre for Social Research (CSR) at the University of Malawi are implementing the PROMOTE project in Burkina Faso and Malawi. The PROMOTE project is a 3-year pilot randomized controlled trial in Blantyre (Malawi) and Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) to estimate the incremental effect of three interventions aimed at facilitating adolescent mothers' (re)entry into school or vocational training. The three interventions are; a cash transfer conditioned on (re)enrolment into school or vocational training; subsidized child care; and adolescent mothers' clubs—a safe place where adolescent mothers will receive life skills training covering nurturing childcare, sexual and reproductive health (SRH), and financial literacy. The clubs will be facilitated by community health workers. This gender-transformative study aims to generate rigorous evidence that provides insights into how policymakers and program implementers can support pregnant and parenting adolescents to continue their education and improve their SRH and mental health. The project is funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).



Photo credit: APHRC

ADOLESCENT MOTHERS' CLUBS CURRICULUM

During the second quarter of 2022, APHRC developed the adolescent mothers' clubs curriculum. The curriculum contains 24 sessions and has been adapted from the Population Council's Adolescent Girls Initiative – Kenya Safe Spaces curriculum; the Mphatlalatsane (Early Morning Star) Health and Nutrition Programme Manual; the Maternal and Child Health Handbook (Ministry of Public Health - Cameroon) and the Parenting for Lifelong Health Programme for Young Children (Facilitator manual). In Malawi, the adolescent mothers' clubs will be facilitated by health surveillance assistants (HSAs), who are community health workers paid by the government, while in Burkina Faso, community health and hygiene agents will facilitate the clubs. Given their role as a bridge between the community and the health sector, working with community health workers will be critical in facilitating access to SRH and child health services for adolescent mothers and their children.

The curriculum is made of three components; financial literacy, childcare and lifeskills. Some of the topics covered are mental health, HIV and AIDS/STIs, sexual and reproductive health, how to save, income cycles, spending priorities, communication about money, growth and nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, bonding with your child, giving specific, positive and realistic instructions to our children, praising and rewarding, and using consequences to support compliance, among others.

ADOLESCENT MOTHERS' CLUBS CURRICULUM TRAINING IN MALAWI

On November 21 to 25, 2022, APHRC, jointly with the CSR, University of Malawi, facilitated a five-day in-person training workshop for HSAs on the adolescent mothers' club curriculum in Blantyre, Malawi. The training brought together 21 HSAs from different constituencies in Blantyre. The HSAs will be pivotal in delivering the adolescent mothers' club intervention. The sessions were very interactive, incorporating roleplays, group work, and songs. A similar training is expected to take place in Burkina Faso in the first quarter of 2023.



Participants during one of the sessions

VALUES CLARIFICATION AND ATTITUDE TRANSFORMATION (VCAT) TRAINING ON SRHR

On November 8 to 10, 2022, APHRC held a values clarification and attitude transformation (VCAT) training on SRH for the HSAs in Blantyre, Malawi. The training was a collaborative effort supported by APHRC's Challenging the Politics of Social Exclusion (CPSE) project and was attended by 27 HSAs and the Director for Health and Environmental services, Mr. Samden Seunda.

ETHICAL APPROVALS AND RESEARCH PERMITS

Having met all the relevant ethical and regulatory requirements in Malawi, and Burkina Faso, APHRC and its partners in both countries obtained the research ethics and regulatory approvals for the PROMOTE project for Malawi and Burkina Faso.

BASELINE DATA COLLECTION IN MALAWI

In preparation for the baseline data collection for the PROMOTE study in Malawi, CSR in collaboration with APHRC conducted a training of Research Assistants (RAs) who will support the data collection activities in Blantyre. The training was held in Zomba, Malawi from November 1 to 5, 2022. Fourteen (14) RAs were taken through a comprehensive four days of classroom-based training and a one-day piloting of the baseline survey instruments and fieldwork procedures on November 5, 2022. The training was facilitated by APHRC and the CSR study team. Baseline data collection began on November 17, 2022. The RAs were deployed to administer questionnaires in randomly selected enumeration areas in Blantyre. The RAs successfully interviewed 286 adolescent mothers by December 2022. These young mothers will be randomized into the three arms of the study.

INCEPTION MEETING IN BURKINA FASO

APHRC, with its partners in Burkina Faso, the Institut Supérieur Des Sciences De La Population (ISSP), and Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo, held an inception meeting in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on June 16, 2022. The meeting brought together 83 participants from Burkina Faso, including policymakers and partners in the health sector. The meeting was held alongside the dissemination workshop for the "Lived experiences of pregnant and parenting adolescents" study in Burkina Faso. The meeting presented an excellent opportunity for participants to learn about the PROMOTE project and identify areas of synergy for the advocacy work.



From left: Prof. Abdramane Soura Director ISSP, Mme Rasmata Ouédraogo Director Directorate for the Promotion of Inclusive Education, Girls' Education and Gender Dr. Patrick Bougouma, Family Health Branch and Ramatou Ouédraogo from APHRC

PROMOTE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT MEETING IN MALAWI

On October 31, 2022, APHRC and CSR launched the PROMOTE project in Blantyre, Malawi. The launch drew participation from the government, the University of Malawi, and non-state actors working on adolescent mothers' issues. The aim of the meeting was to introduce the project to the relevant stakeholders and get their input in ensuring the project's success in Malawi. Dr. Beatrice Maina, on behalf of APHRC, made a presentation where she provided a broad overview of the PROMOTE study, its background, and its objectives. CSR's presentation was made by Dr. Chrissie Thakwalakwa, the CSR Director, who narrowed down on how the study will be implemented in Malawi. The meeting was graced by the Deputy Minister of Gender, Community Development, and Social Welfare, Hon. Agness Nkusa Nkhoma, MP, who, was the guest of honor. The stakeholder engagement forum provided insights that are fundamental for further planning and running of different activities in the study.



From left: Hon. Agness Nkusa Nkhoma, Deputy Minister of Gender, Community Development, and Social Welfare - Malawi, and Dr. Beatrice Maina of APHRC

REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON ADOLESCENT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS IN KENYA

On May 17 to 18, 2022, APHRC participated in a regional workshop on adolescent and reproductive health and rights in Nairobi, Kenya. Different stakeholders from the East Africa region attended the workshop. Dr. Caroline Kabiru, in a presentation on the PROMOTE project, spoke about the three interventions of the project in Burkina Faso and Malawi.

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE ON EMPOWERING ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN AFRICA

On November 24, 2021, APHRC, represented by Dr. Caroline Kabiru, participated in a virtual conference on empowering adolescent girls and young women in Africa convened by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The virtual convening brought together participants from different countries in Africa. Dr. Kabiru was among the panelists and discussed the role of gender transformative research in improving adolescent sexual reproductive health and rights.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

In commemorating International Women's Day (IWD) on March 8, 2022, APHRC published two blogs; [Breaking the Bias: Getting adolescent mothers back in school](#) and [Take Five with Dr. Chrissie Thakwalakwa](#). The blogs highlighted challenges facing pregnant and parenting adolescents and some findings from the "Lived experiences of pregnant and parenting adolescents" study in Malawi. Among the challenges mentioned include alcohol and drug abuse, HIV, child marriage, child labor, the lack of employment opportunities, and challenges in accessing education. It was noted that the challenges threaten adolescent mothers' individual development as well as the contributions that the adolescents and the youth can make towards national development. The two blogs were published on APHRC's website.

Breaking the Bias: Getting adolescent mothers back in school

📅 March 8, 2022

SHARE THIS:



...mtoto lala..." sings 15-year-old Kethi to her nursing baby. She is home on lunch break, and she needs to make it to school in time for the afternoon lessons. This is her first term back in school since she had her baby over a year. While it has been a struggle juggling motherhood and education, she would not change anything for the world. Getting back to class has been a collective effort for the entire family – during the day, her mother watches the baby while going to her small business by the roadside. After school, Kethi comes home to a balancing act of house chores, work, and her baby. The headteacher at her school has also been supportive, encouraging her to resume her studies and taking allowance for her to attend to her child as she needs to.

It is fortunate to have this support system that allows her to go back to school and pursue her dream of becoming a teacher. Unfortunately, this is not the case for many other pregnant and parenting adolescents across sub-Saharan Africa. Lack of policies and/or poor implementation of existing regulations that provide for school re-entry make it difficult for adolescent mothers to re-enter the education system. This has a long-term effect on opportunities available to

CONTRIBUTORS



CAROLINE KABIRU

Take Five with Dr. Chrissie Thakwalakwa

📅 March 8, 2022

SHARE THIS:



Dr. Chrissie Kantukule is the Deputy Director for the Centre for Social Research. She has expertise in designing and implementing as well as health-related projects and studies.

Currently, she is part of the team at CSR #breakingthebias by working with APHRC on two studies targeting pregnant and parenting adolescents, namely Challenging the Politics of Social Exclusion (CPSE) and PROMOTE.

Why are you so passionate about PPAs?

According to the 2018 National Housing and Population Census, the median age of Malawi's population is 17. This is a young population, and this constitutes a great asset for the country. The adolescents as well as the youths, if properly nurtured, have the potential to contribute significantly to the country's development.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MEDIA

ARTICLE IN THE AFRICABRIEF

An article on challenges experienced by adolescent mothers in pursuing their education was published by the AfricaBrief. The article highlighted the findings from a study on lived experiences of pregnant and parenting adolescents in Burkina Faso and Malawi, which was conducted by APHRC, ISSP, and CSR.

INTERVIEW WITH THE BBC RADIO

On October 16, 2022, Catherine Asego from APHRC was invited by the BBC radio at the Amka na BBC radio, where she spoke about pregnant learners in Narok County, Kenya, and the challenges they face as adolescents. This came in the wake of the rise in cases of teenage pregnancies in Narok County. The interview also focused on support that the parenting adolescents require.

PUBLICATIONS

Effectiveness of conditional cash transfers, subsidized child care, and life skills training on adolescent mothers' school reentry, sexual and reproductive health, and mental health in Malawi and Burkina Faso: The PROMOTE Project pilot randomized control trial.

Link can be found [here](#).

TWITTER SPACE TO COMMEMORATE THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD

To celebrate the International Day of the Girl Child, observed on October 11, 2022, APHRC participated in a Twitter space on school re-entry titled "Our rights, our future: Getting parenting girls back to school" on Thursday, October 6, 2022. Among partners who were part of the engagement include CSR, the Center for Reproductive Rights, Plan International Kenya, and Positive Young Women Voices. The Twitter space highlighted key findings from studies by the APHRC focusing on the lived experiences of pregnant and parenting adolescents, including schooling. In addition, the session focused on barriers and facilitators of school re-entry as panelists discussed innovative recommendations for addressing challenges pregnant and parenting adolescents face, including deprivation of the right to education, child abuse, stigma, and violation of human rights.



PROMOTE PROJECT PARTNERS

