

HEALTH, WELLBEING, AND HEALTH SEEKING BEHAVIOURS OF YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE: A COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH STUDY

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BACKGROUND

- According to Sierra Leone youth policy, young people are individuals between the ages of 15-35 years
- According to United Nations, by 2030, there will be over 1.3 billion young people on earth
- Today, over 60% of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is below 25 years
- About 62% of the SSA urban population reside in informal settlements
- Healthcare access is poor among young people living in informal settlements



AIM AND OBJECTIVES

To understand the health and wellbeing of young people living in informal settlements in Freetown, Sierra Leone

Specific objectives

- To document how young people understand health and wellbeing in informal settlements
- To understand how young people in informal settlements plan and seek health services
- To document the issues that affect and determine the health and wellbeing of young people in informal settlements



METHODOLOGY

Sampling

- Young people, aged 15-35 years (Sierra Leone definition)

Study site

- Moyiba and Cackle Bay informal settlements

Methods used

- Social mapping
- Wellbeing ranking
- Venn Diagramming

Key informant interviews

- Stakeholders and development organisations



RESULTS

1 – Understanding of health and wellbeing

Health and wellbeing definitions related to young people's environments, WASH and livelihood activities

“I think [a young boy] health is defined as the state in which I can care for myself when I am sick and when I have no diseases or bacteria affecting my body.” - Young man, Moyiba

Wellbeing was specifically related to being able to take care of oneself and family

“...wellbeing [Beteh life] is when I can do everything myself especially when I am not struggling to pay school fees or what I should eat for the day. I can do everything for myself without getting others involved with my burden.” - Young woman, Cockle Bay



RESULTS

2 – Seeking healthcare

- Moyiba community has one primary healthcare facility, while Cockle Bay has none
- All young people had engaged with drug peddlers, traditional healers, or friends providing medication at home
- Most 15-17 years old girls seek care based on parents' instructions and many have little knowledge of healthcare seeking options
- Most older young men (18-35 years) self medicated, and delayed seeking health services



DISCUSSING THE FINDINGS

- Issues related to understanding health and wellbeing contributes significantly to health seeking behaviours for young people in informal settlements
- Young people's low level of understanding and income in informal settlements has made seeking care from peddlers, homecare and friends favourable
- As in many studies, water, sanitation and hygiene services have been found to be a major factor affecting the health of young people



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