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An insight to Youth Information Center in a Rural Indian Setting

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ACRONYMS

ANM	Auxiliary Nurse Midwife
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
AWW	Anganwadi Workers
BCC	Behavior Change Communication
ERYICA	European Youth Information and Counselling Agency
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IDI	In-Depth Interview
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
MAMTA HIMC	MAMTA Health Institute for Mother and Child
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ORW	Out Reach Worker
PHC	Primary Health Care
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
WHO	World Health Organization
YIC	Youth Information Center

INTRODUCTION

A non-governmental organization (NGO) in India is implementing a multi-district community based intervention project in 18 sites in India and two neighbouring countries. The project aims to counteract the high rates of early marriage and early pregnancy. Youth Information Center (YIC) is a key establishment in meeting the project objectives and there is general positive outlook among the project leaders about it. To our understanding, the concept of YIC from the perspective of different stakeholders themselves and in the context of resource-constrained settings such as rural India has not been investigated systematically. Literature is sparse on this topic and the materials that are published are from developed country settings. This study adds to the understanding of YIC and the expectations of key stakeholders from YIC.

The concept and functional expectations of YIC from western countries cannot be transferred to the poor rural communities of emerging economies like India, as the contexts are very different. The struggle for survival in a resource constrained setting results in the development of a scenario where the needs of youths are overlooked. It thus seems logical to investigate the determinants of successful YIC functioning in order to capture areas of relevance for making most effective service available at YIC for youths. This report aims at providing an understanding of the concept of YIC in a developing country's context and identification of determinants in its functioning through qualitative approaches.

Like this project, there are many examples of youth centers being set up with a youth sexual and reproductive health (SRH) focus in mind, and these tend to combine SRH services with recreational activities to attract young people as well as providing vocational and educational components (Kesterton & Mello, 2010). A wide variety of terms are used in the literature to describe the establishments such as: *'drop-in center'*, *'youth information centers'*, *'youth development information center'*, *'youth friendly centers'*, and *'youth center'*. For the purposes of this report the term youth information center (YIC) as used in the project will be used consistently. Considering YICs in a global context there are multiple definitions of YIC and there is no definitive model for it. According to International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) definition of a youth center described in Springboard Guide to youth-friendly centers is: 'A youth friendly place or venue which aims to serve a specific group of young people. Young people can go to the centre to access information and services which address their needs and wants, including sexual and reproductive health needs as well as other needs, such as life skills and recreational activities' (IPPF, 2008). Such youth centers have covered a wide range of activities from as unstructured as a place to "hang out" to well structured approach as providing support for homework as per the demands of youths themselves (Kanter, 2001).

YICs: Historical Background

The concept of youth centers is not new. Some form of youth organizations dated back to 1787 in Germany called CVJMs which is German equivalent to Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). YMCA was established in 1844 with the goal of putting Christian principles into practice achieved by developing a healthy mind, spirit and body (World Alliance of YMCAs, 2010). Today, YMCAs are open to all, regardless of faith, social class, age or gender. Youth Information Centers until the 70's were places where youths could go and where someone would answer their question or where they could pick up a leaflet or any other kind of written information. In the 70's the first initiatives to start exchange of knowledge on Youth Information were made (European Youth Information and Counselling Agency [ERYICA], 2010). The youth groups served for their needs according to the time and context, like during the war crisis (World War I and World War II) to provide nursing, shelter and support. Similarly, community perceptions vary, as it is seen as a community sports facility in North America and in Great Britain primarily as a place for homeless young people. Youth clubs arise as a generic concept of a platform to advise young people with their future, to talk about the past and even help them with the present in the process of helping them understand the world around them.

YIC under the current project

YIC has been used as an establishment to bring about change desired to achieve project targets. The project aims to identify determinants of early marriage and exercise gender transformative approaches in dealing with the problem. YIC aspires to address needs of young adolescents. Opened in 2011, YIC is a center that serves young people aged 10 to 24 years. It works in close association with youth groups that are formed in each village under the project. There are 6 YICs per intervention district and each district has eight project staff; one program manager, one supervisor and six Outreach Workers (ORWs). One YIC serves 5 to 6 villages. There are two youth volunteers, one male and one female referred to as YIC managers in each YIC. YIC is opened by YIC manager for two hours everyday anytime from 10am to 4pm depending on availability of the managers. There is different timing for male and female users to attend YIC. In every village one male and one female peer educator acts as catalyst to bring in peer youths to YIC. Events like birthday celebration, group meetings, and sport competition are organized at YICs. YIC managers get occasional assistance from ORWs and a supervisor. There is a question box in the YIC where youths can put in their queries.

1. AIM

The aim of the study was to gain in-depth understanding about the determinants of YIC functioning among key stakeholders (users, field staffs, promoters) of a community based intervention for young people SRH.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study aimed to understand the generic characteristics of YICs by studying already functioning YICs. This study was conducted during the period February to May of 2012. The study was based on open ended questions in semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) pertaining to concept of YIC and its functioning to explore the determinants in play. The method used for analyzing the data was qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is a suitable method when the purpose of a study is to extract meaning from the content of a text as it facilitates the identification and categorization of the information without changing its meaning. The method shows similarities and differences in the material. The result is proportionately close to the text, and the contextual coherence creates the meaning. The advantage of qualitative content analysis is that it is suitable for different levels of text, as well as for analyzing short answers to open-ended questions in a questionnaire (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004), as in the present study.

2.1 Sample and setting

A total of eleven IDIs and two FGDs were conducted in this fieldwork. IDIs were conducted with all the four YIC promoters (Table 1) and seven field staffs (Table 2) involved in the selected YIC. The interview with YIC promoters was conducted in a quiet and secluded room of NGO. All the FGDs and some interviews with field staffs were conducted in the YIC itself and rest of the interviews in the office of partner NGO. The choice of location was made to ensure convenience, confidentiality and comfort of the interviewees. The four YIC promoters were sampled purposively among the staffs working under the project that handles YIC. One of the YIC in a northern state of India was sampled purposively on the basis of feasibility of travel and language convenience. All of the five field staff members of YIC holding different positions and roles in YIC functioning were interviewed. Two previous YIC managers, one male and one female, were also interviewed to have a better understanding of functional aspects of YIC. Two FGDs with ten participants in each were conducted with users of YIC (Table 3).

2.2 Data collection

The investigator is a postgraduate student at EHESP French School of Public Health and fluent in the local language (Hindi). The investigator herself conducted all the FGDs and IDIs, which lasted from 33 to 82 minutes each. There was guidance from experienced supervisor; readings from literature for conducting IDIs and FGDs were used and prior rehearsal built the capacity of the investigator in this arena. The field visit to the selected YIC of a state in North India was facilitated by the NGO staff and staffs of partner NGO (program manager and outreach coordinator). The visit was of two days in the month of March. Informal interaction with other partner NGO staffs was also done to know more about the context of YIC functioning.

An interview guide was prepared which included introduction on the fieldwork, objectives, benefits, confirmation on confidentiality and freedom to decide on participation. Interviews began with an open-ended question:

“What do you think about YIC?”

The investigator then probed according to the interviewees' train of thought and included predetermined themes such as how does the activity help youths and what are their experiences in YIC. An interview guide was prepared in English for YIC promoters at the nodal NGO (Annex 2). The other interview guides for partner NGO staff, ORW, YIC manager and focus group discussion guide for users were prepared in Hindi language. All interviews were conducted with the approval of the participants and digitally recorded as verbatim quotes were necessary for data analysis. Detailed interview notes were taken during and after each interview. Participant list was prepared for all interviews and focus group discussions. The digitally recorded sessions were transcribed and reviewed for accuracy by the investigator. The texts used in the report were translated to English by the investigator using forward-backward translation method (World Health Organization [WHO], 2009). Translation guidelines were followed to ensure conceptual and linguistic equivalence during the translation process (Temple & Young, 2004). Transcripts of FGD did not include statements attributable to specific participants and specific FGD participants were unidentifiable.

Rational in sample selection

1. **YIC Promoters:** YIC promoters in different hierarchical positions of the NGO were interviewed separately to minimize the power differences that may come into play in expression of thoughts and perceptions about YIC.

2. **Interview with YIC staff**

2.1 Field staff: A staff or partner NGO who was the outreach coordinator for the project was interviewed to get his perspective on YIC, its functioning, recommendations and vision for its sustainability. Male and female ORWs were interviewed together to have gender issues

covered as a whole and get a complete outlook on YIC.

2.2 YIC manager: At the grass root level YIC managers who are volunteers were interviewed. As the current YIC managers were newly appointed, the previous YIC manager was also interviewed along with the current one to have a full picture of their understanding of activities carried out at YIC. Male and female YIC managers were interviewed separately to insure that they speak without any restrictions.

3. **YIC users:** Youth in FGDs were divided according to gender in an attempt to facilitate a comfortable environment to enable participants to speak freely.

2.3. Ethical aspects

Approval was not sought from an ethical review committee. However, the study was conducted according to the guidelines for research on human subjects according to the Belmont report and Declaration of Helsinki, and the investigator has completed an online training titled “Research Ethics Training Curriculum” from Family Health International. Permission to perform the study was sought and received from the NGO that is undertaking the project. Information about the fieldwork and its purpose was shared with all interviewees and before starting the interview and verbal consent from each participant was taken separately for participation in the study and for audio recording the interview (Annex 1). It was emphasized that the participation was voluntary and anonymous. All the recordings and transcribed materials were kept confidential.

2.4. Data analysis and interpretation

The qualitative analysis began with the researcher reading the responses several times to gain a sense of the whole (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004). The parts of the text that were related to the aim were transferred and entered into an analysis matrix as meaning units (Table 4). The matrix was then scrutinized by the supervisor. The analysis continued by condensing the meaning units while retaining the core meaning. The next step was to abstract the condensed meaning units into codes from which the subcategories and then categories were subsequently generated by applying the technique of repetition (Ryan & Bernad, 2003). Simultaneously, interpretation of the underlying meaning of the text was done to incorporate both manifest and latent levels of analysis in which manifest level is supposed to be the surface structure of the text, while the latent level is the deeper structural meaning conveyed by the text (Berg, 2004). The analysis constantly moved between the original texts and the various levels of abstraction to ensure that no data were excluded or included under more than one category. It was also important to ensure that the categories were mutually exclusive. Though the analysis was performed by the investigator herself, the supervisors and investigator had frequent discussions in order to reach consensus.

5. FINDINGS

The red thread running across that emerged from the text can be summarized in the phrase ***‘YIC is an oasis of safety and source of information and opportunities for youths in the restrictive culture of society akin to a desert with limited options to express their needs’***.

Two broad categories embracing the concept of YIC that constitute the determinants of its functioning emerged: community as sea of opportunity or desert of challenges for youth SRH and the gestalt of YIC. In this process subcategories under these categories were identified to provide clarity in understanding the concept (Table 5).

The project issues were highlighted in the interview at all levels of hierarchy of YIC. All of the participants did mention at some point in the interview that the project deals with SRH of young people focusing on counteracting early marriage and early pregnancy through changing social norms and attitude among the target population of young people and key stakeholders.

5.1. Community as sea of opportunity or desert of challenges for youth SRH

Any establishment poses challenges and enjoys opportunities depending on the socio-cultural environment where it stands. Youth SRH concerns in the traditional rural settings in village have limited acceptance by the community and YIC is expressed as one alternative to this. This category has been further explored under two subcategories: restrictive culture and relevance of youth SRH information.

5.1.1. Restrictive culture

The community has a restrictive culture where talking about sexuality and reproductive health is not appreciated and in some cases is even considered as a revolution against social values. This phenomenon is depicted under two subheadings: “never taught to talk” and community ideals.

“Never taught to talk”

SRH is a sensitive issue for discussion in the society due to taboos around discussion of these issues. There are limited options available to the youth to discuss their SRH concerns. In the culture that youths have been raised, there always exists a barrier between family and youths to commence such discussions. They have been brought up with the ideals set in their mind that they should not discuss their sexuality with others. In general the characteristics of youths in rural community are such that they are reluctant to speak to others.

“I have never come across any family where parents have been very comfortable giving this simple message (related to SRH) to their children. And neither child is very comfortable

asking these questions to the parents because this is something which is related to private parts which since childhood they were never taught to talk about..." (YIC promoter)

Community ideals

The society in which YIC is operating has closed boundaries and there is set ideals that the youths need to follow. With the inception of adolescence society strongly attempts to enforce gender norms and roles in the both sexes but more strongly for girls. Society does not entertain youths talking to opposite sex and any such attempt is viewed with skepticism and fear of socially undesired and discreditable outcomes such as pre-marital sex, taboo in the society.

"In India, in the rural areas... they don't appreciate young boys or girls talking or spending time with each other and that is always looked with suspicion and is not acceptable to the community... the fear is that they will engage into premarital sex or there would be love affairs and all that. The moment they enter the adolescence the family and the community, the norms they separate them from talking to each other..." (YIC promoter)

Adding in the separation of adolescents of opposite sex, another social dogma that specifically handicaps the female youths, is the restriction on mobility. Girls are not allowed to venture out of their homes, as the community perceives them as vulnerable to abuse. This deprives them of education and many more opportunities that they could have achieved.

"...we see in our rural community there is widespread belief of not sending girls far distances from home for education. Sending girls away from home is considered like a curse. It is because of this superstition that girls have very less education..." (Male FGD participant)

Deep rooted social norms and expected behavior of youths defined by society was depicted even in the words of youths themselves of the same sex that signifies strong indoctrination of youths. Girls not talking to boys is considered as higher conduct of character. While this is expected from youth in the community, the youth involved in YIC management also shared the belief.

"Bad character means talking to someone (boys), flirting with them. For example going somewhere and talking to a boy. Then when villagers see that, they start questioning on why his/her daughter is talking with that boy? From which village is that boy? How is he talking to her? Parents do not bother that much but neighbors get more concerned..." (Young YIC manager, female)

5.1.2. Relevance of youth SRH information

Three important issues, the need for SRH information in rural youths, unavailability of any space for them, and relevance of YIC for both genders are described here. YIC is looked upon as an

establishment that fills in the gap of unavailability of any space in the community for youths of both sexes to talk on relevant issues.

Considering these scenarios, youths are deprived of a space where they can get answers to the queries about youth SRH. Most of the project staff mentioned that youths of rural areas have no opportunity to discuss and clarify on SRH topics. Homes of the youths in rural areas do not meet the need of information of youths due to the existing barrier between parents and youths. Youths feel shy to talk about SRH with their parents or any other acquaintance at school, and they find only their peers accessible for resolving such queries. The information that they have is what they acquire from other youths and they spread the same to others without knowing whether it is reliable or not. They face reproductive health and developmental challenges due to lack of supervised information from significant others in the family and other settings.

“For example a boy has wet dreams and he does not know what it is. So he asks his peer who also does not have information and might have asked somebody else about it that has this problem and he tell the boy that it is a big disease and you can become sterile or weak because they do not have the information// So there is an immense need to give correct information to boys...” (ORW, Male)

Lack of information leads to unnecessary pressure and fear among youths for consequences related to the SRH problems. It is necessary to break into the loop of information sharing they have and inject correct information. Hence, an establishment is required that is intent on delivering correct information and creating pool of knowledge among youths so that it can resonate among them. Furthermore, there is no place in the community where youths can be themselves and experience freedom from imposed restrictions of the society. There does not exist any formal place where they can interact with their friends. Hence, a platform as a vent for expression of youths is a requisite in the community for creating a supportive environment. This will contribute in utilization of youth energy in a constructive way.

“...in the rural areas, they don't have any kind of recreational activities happening. They don't have any opportunities. They hardly have any facilities for the games and sports. They don't have schools nearby, no other such things. They need something; they need a youth information center. They don't have anything, any such place or centre or supervision which could channelize their energy in a meaningful way, in a productive way...” (YIC promoter)

The need for YIC was expressed regardless of gender differences. Though girls are more comfortable talking to their mothers about their SRH problems, boys are reserved in this matter and they feel more comfortable talking to their peers than to anybody else.

“...they (youths) don't get, especially girls don't get opportunity to socialize, there and no places where they can go and sit and talk...” (YIC promoter)

“When youths have problems of adolescence, either girl or boy. Then girls can deal with it by talking to their mothers but boys cannot talk it to his father, they feel shy...” (Male FGD participant)

5.2. The Gestalt of YIC

YIC in the present project is a complex conglomerate of processes that attempts to develop knowledge and skills of youths on SRH especially early marriage and early pregnancy. The present category attempts to decipher different processes to understand what can be the Gestalt of YIC. This category has been further categorized into nine subcategories to uncover the layers of complexity associated with this question of understanding YIC concept. These subcategories are: “Come, sit and talk”, what is safe space, different stakeholders; different aspirations, who decides for youths to attend YIC, I meet them; I tell them, supportive supervision as catalyst, recreation at YIC, linkages and referral, and island of opportunity in the sea of challenges.

5.2.1. “Come, sit and talk”

As the need being highlighted because of the lack of any space where youths can interact among their peers, the YIC stands as an establishment that provides space in the community, as all participants expressed that YIC is a place where youths can come, sit and talk. It helps them to socialize with other youths from within and beyond the community and also learn from them. This is even better for girls who have limited opportunities to interact.

“When there is nothing else to do... like after getting back from school or when we get back from any other work... and (when) there is no work... then we just sit here (YIC) and get the information...” (Male FGD participant)

“YIC is a place where girls like me come, sit and talk among each other. What I mean is, she gets the information that I have and I get information that she has...” (YIC manager, female)

In the view of restrictive culture of society and strict environment at school, YIC is seen as an outlet to give them some free space. YIC is articulated as a flexible environment that is neither a school nor home and is decided by the young people themselves thus providing an opportunity to express their will independently in an otherwise restricted environment of the society.

“It’s a place where you can meet your friends, your peers, there could be some intelligent discussions and some entertainment as well, where it’s not a school or college where you have to be very disciplined type. You still have to maintain some code of conduct when you are at the YIC and there has to be entertainment factor at the YIC...” (YIC promoter)

5.2.2. What is safe space?

YIC is generally understood as a safe place for vulnerable population (especially girls) outside home. YIC is a space where youths can ask questions that they do not ask anywhere else with significant others in the community. Youths can vent their opinion fearlessly in an atmosphere of trust that there is no judgment made on them by anyone in YIC.

“...when we say ‘safe space’, it is a place where they (youths) can articulate, they can vent whatever their opinions are or their questions are which they cannot ask or discuss anywhere else...// then nobody is going to ask you, why are you asking this question, or it is not good for a young child or young adolescent like you to be thinking like this. There is no value judgment...” (YIC promoter)

YIC is very open structure in the community regarding its agenda and activities that also add to youths perception of safety of YIC. Community acceptance of YIC makes them comfortable to come and discuss issues at YIC. YIC promoters associate the safety aspect beyond physical safety with more emphasis on psychological level. Furthermore another YIC promoter added overall safety concerns of the community to the safe space concept. Maintaining personal space of young people and safety in view of community can provide the environment for overall health and development of youths.

“...(YIC is) Safe space in the community where young boys and young people they come out of their houses, they feel safe and community more than children, the community feels that this particular space is safe for my children// safety does not mean bringing the safety measures at the YIC but the safety has to be understood by the community and the young people” (YIC promoter)

While discussing about whether the youths feel safe at YIC during the male FGD, they mentioned that they feel safe in terms of physical safety like from sun, rain and safety with respect to psychological aspects like privacy and freedom of expression. By venting their problems, youths can seek solution to their problems at YIC.

“Like in the adolescence, they (youths) have multiple sorts of problem. There are multiple sorts of physical problems... multiple sorts of problems occur in their life. Here they can freely talk about it and get rid of their problems...” (Male FGD participant)

“Privacy is certainly maintained here (at YIC) that is why everyone can talk freely...” (Male FGD participant)

Anonymity is an important issue identified by the YIC promoters at YIC, and putting in a question box helps in maintaining that and provides comfort to the youths to ask questions about sensitive issue of SRH. The question box can be understood as a proxy indicator of safety. Most of the field staff and

male users in FGD expressed that question box is being used well in identifying concerns of youths and helps in maintaining privacy. But when inquired about it to female YIC manager and female users in FGD, they said that they do not use it much instead they talk to YIC staff directly.

Risk perception of community for boys and girls are different. Safety of girls is a prominent concern of the parents and was highlighted by two YIC promoters. Restrictions are more for girls than for boys as girls are considered to be vulnerable for abuse in adolescent age. Families feel assured to send girls out of home when other peers accompany them.

“If they (girls) go alone then they (parents) are afraid but if there are other one or two girls accompanying then they (parents) feel that their girls are safe...” (Female FGD participant)

YIC is not targeting just the vulnerable population of girls and youth group members but it is open for all youths in the community to meet its aspiration of reaching out to the maximum number of youths. It is not just open for all youths but everybody from the community is welcomed to YIC without any restrictions. This is done to promote community acceptance of YIC. In order to achieve this, newspaper is used as a medium for attraction for community members.

“YIC is not only catering to the youth members. Its open for all, so there are many young people who are coming who are not the youth members, who are not being reached by the community workers in their regular group meetings and regular group sessions...” (YIC promoter)

“There is an availability of employment newspaper at YIC. When YIC opens then it's not only us (youths) who read newspaper. Like there are uncles, fathers they also sit here and read it...” (Male FGD participant)

5.2.3. Different stakeholders; different aspirations

As an establishment in the community with the pledge of delivering benefits to the community people, YIC holds some expectation from its stakeholders. The community pictures YIC as a place for attaining visible and immediate benefits for youths. Having this picture of gains from YIC in their mind, family does not want to send youths to YIC just for recreation if their immediate needs that focuses on survival and livelihood skills are not addressed. The community has to be ensured that YIC has learning opportunities beyond SRH like vocational skills.

“...the community feels that only sending their children to play there or to gossip there is not something what the family would be interested into...// if the YIC fails to address their immediate needs and requirements then I think it will be difficult...” (YIC promoter)

The YIC promoter wants YIC to be a space of their own for youths, where they decide for how and what they want to do. YIC promoters picture YIC to become a culture for youths in the community

that will increase their participation and make it a permanent structure in the community. As expressed by YIC promoters, youths need to embrace and take care of YIC by themselves.

“...it (YIC) should be looked as a place where it is my own, and I can just come again at any point of time and I can do X fuzzy thing. It should not always be an assisted kind of process. That is how I envisage a YIC to be ultimately in the community...” (YIC promoter)

“I (Youth) have to go there, no matter what it costs...// I think it should be a trend that it should be a part of their culture that I (youth) am a part of that YIC.” (YIC promoter)

While YIC promoters have this empowering vision for youth involvement in YIC, youths look at YIC immediately as a means to fulfill their current requirements for information in an environment of fun that is not addressed by school and the expectation increase with participation in YIC activities. From YIC promoter's point of view, youths desire for information that is not accessible elsewhere and is embedded with entertainment.

“Schools are also giving benefits, colleges are also giving benefits. Parents say we always talk for your benefit only but that is not what youth wants. They want to learn, they want to get knowledge, information but in an entertaining way. And they don't just want bookish information ...”(YIC promoter)

From the perspective of youths themselves, they have some expectations from YIC. In congruence with project staffs' perception about youths needs, youths see YIC as a source of important information that cannot be attained elsewhere. Some youths express their ambition to change the society by considering YIC as a mediator for this change. They state YIC as a source of motivation, a vehicle for change in themselves and in society.

“When we first came to the YIC, then we liked it. YIC has things (information) to change the society that is why we liked it...” (Male FGD participant)

“When we get information then we get motivated and we know that we can also do something. Through this (YIC) we can have changes in ourselves in a lot of ways...” (Male FGD Participant)

5.2.4. Who decides for Youths to attend YIC?

Keeping in view the reserved and bonded family structure of rural areas, parents have almost total decision-making power for youths. This even applies to any attempts by youths to access SRH knowledge and skills that YIC aims to provide and develop. Hence, youths have to get permission from family to attend YIC.

“...young people to start visiting the YICs means the family has agreed to their young people, to their daughters and sons visiting this place...” (YIC promoter)

While the youth of both gender find it difficult to negotiate with their parents, the problem is much more for the young girls. The prevailing socio-cultural norms have strong negative bias towards young girls' mobility reflected from low attendance in the school. In this backdrop motivating parents to send their daughters to YIC is a major challenge.

"I go door to door, convince their (girls') mother and father to send them to the YIC. (That) They will be told some knowledgeable information. In fact I used to speak a lot of things then they sent otherwise sometimes they won't..." (YIC manager, female)

5.2.5. "I meet them, I tell them"

The primary users of YIC are youth group members and peer educators but it is open to all youths in the community to come in. Youth groups are formed in each village. One male and one female youth group leader act as catalyst for spreading information to remote youths in the villages. Youths share problems with their peers that they don't with their parents and in-laws. When youths talk they share their knowledge gained at YIC with their peers.

"After attending the meeting at YIC, whosoever asks me when I meet them, I tell them and then wherever I go I tell them that today such and such thing was told at the YIC..." (Male FGD participant)

So, secondary beneficiaries are the peers of YIC users with whom they discuss. Thus, YIC incorporates peer education approach in which youths become a medium to gather other youths and spread the information. All the participants of FGD expressed that they talk about information gained at YIC with other friends, brother or sister.

"Today I came alone (to YIC), tomorrow I bring him, and day after tomorrow he brings somebody else..." (Male FGD participant)

5.2.6. Supportive supervision as a catalyst

During group meetings at YIC, youths receive different information through YIC manager and other senior people visiting YIC that makes them aware of SRH. But initially youths in rural areas did not have any formal place where they could get the opportunity to develop their skills in managing and organizing events on their own. They need guidance to develop such skills and at YIC and they get supervised by trained ORW and YIC supervisor. YIC managers who are among youths are trained to handle issues of youths by themselves. If they are not able to do so then they seek help from senior staffs.

"We express our problems... when somebody has some problem then they tell it to YIC manager then they deal with it as per their capability otherwise they put the problem to their seniors..." (Male FGD participant)

Needs of young adolescents are attended at YIC. BCC materials have been prepared for transacting information to youths. They are made as such that youths start thinking about it and know how to plan their life as mentioned by one of the YIC promoters. When youths ask questions then BCC tools are discussed simultaneously while answering those questions. Pictorial communication helps in retaining information.

“When we show posters (one of the BCC materials) then it helps them (youths) to remember the issues discussed like they can remember a movie...” (ORW, Female)

There are materials at YIC that match to the requirement of youths. Educational materials like books on sexuality and SRH are made available at YIC. Through the employment newspaper that is available at YIC youths can aspire for jobs by applying to the vacancies and attain progress.

“Whatever materials are available here at YIC is in sync to their level. Now they have something like YIC in their village and they have got a medium... Like for example, youths had to travel to other village to get the employment newspaper. But now it is made available at YIC and they can have access to it easily and timely...” (ORW, Male)

Furthermore, all the male FGD participant expressed and agreed that all the changes brought about by YIC are good. Inclination towards acquiring knowledge at YIC exhibits the need as well as zeal among youths to get information.

“The new information that I get from here (YIC), the solution of problems... that I like the most...” (Male FGD participant)

Though project staffs try to develop skills of YIC manager to tackle the problems, some of them expressed that youths have not gained adequate confidence in doing so. Hence, capacity building and hand holding of young YIC managers is done by ORWs.

“Now we understand that our YIC managers are not so effective in conveying the importance of issues of discussion. For that when we come to the meeting, we make them start the meeting and then we support them by explaining the topic in detail...” (ORW, Male)

5.2.7. Its of no use if there is no fun

Recreational materials like sports equipment are made available at YIC. Young males attending YIC mentioned that they come to YIC to play ludo and other sports. Youths plan for competition like Mehdi competition, essay writing, and other games that they are interested in and small prizes are distributed to motivate youths. While YIC promoter see sport as a medium to unite youths, youths themselves see it a way of physical and psychological development.

“Through games there is physical development. Like we play football or hockey or badminton... this is body exercise and this causes (physical) development and like with ludo, it helps in mental development...” (Male FGD participant)

Sport is used as a medium in YIC to bring youth together and feel bound to a group that helps in getting over all sorts of discrimination and bias.

“Sport is a very good medium to bring to young people from different levels of the society. They all come without any kind of discrimination and bias and playing together. It’s a good activity to bind them as a group as a youth rather than as on caste basis or class basis kind of things...” (YIC promoter)

Youths perceive sports as recreation and as an attraction to come to YIC. Also, the participants of male FGD expressed that there should be more facilities for entertainment like television.

“If there will be more (opportunities) for entertainment then some boys will come. First they will have recreation activities and then later they can be informed about other issues...” (Male FGD participant)

5.2.8. Linkages and referral

YIC is establishing active linkages and referrals to health services for the problems that cannot be handled there. YIC provides linkages on education, health and livelihood but is not a provider of these services on its own. It coordinates with other partner organizations that provide skill training and makes it accessible to youths in YIC. For the drop out students from school, YIC motivates them to rejoin school or tries to connect them with other vocational training opportunities.

“We have received some cases that we referred. First our peer educator or YIC manager informed us that there is this problem with this girl or boy. Then we went there and first looked at it and then directly referred them...//Because we can just inform or give suggestions as we are not doctor so we refer directly to doctor or PHC or health center...” (ORW, Male)

“...linkages is on education, health and livelihood, three linkages we actively do...” (YIC promoter)

Youths share the notion of underestimating the human resources from within the community. They consider people from outside to be more resourceful and value them more than the ones who are from within the community. The perception of superiority of outsiders was also expressed during informal talks of the investigator with other staffs of YIC and also the female youths when they said that the investigator (who is an outsider) would give them better information. Hence, YIC take advantage of this attitude and brings in people like ANM to get their questions answered.

“We deliver the answers to questions of youths through ANM. When ANM come and talk about issues youths think that they are trained. For example in the villages, if our peer educators or YIC managers tell something to youths then they rate it lower than some external person coming from distant places...” (ORW, Male)

5.2.9. Island of opportunity in the sea of challenges

From the beginning of the project the community has been involved in the establishment of YIC by providing space for YIC. It is a place endorsed by the community. It is a vent for providing a space for youths for discussion on sensitive issues of the society like SRH of youths. Since YIC tries to cross the restricted borders of social values, there are multiple challenges posed to functioning of YIC. Also it faces obstacles due to inherent characteristics of youths and rural setting where YIC is established. This section is elaborated under five subheadings: fear of community, distance, time, monotony and sustainability.

Fear of community

YIC is mentioned as a space for where society knows that youths are going to this place and getting answers to these questions related to SRH. Though agenda of YIC is fairly open to the community, some section of the society fears that youths will get information and attain behavior that is unacceptable by the restrictive Indian society. One of the FGD participant expressed that some people have preconceived notions about information given at YIC.

“When I walk from our home to come to YIC then I meet many such people on the way who say that it is just a place where girls and boys come, what do you get from that? Wrong things are taught over there...” (Male FGD participant)

Community poses restrictions to the youths to visit YIC. It has to feel assured that information delivered at YIC is good for its youths and there is no risk for socially unacceptable and detrimental activities for health and development. Community participation is promoted at YIC to build trust. It has not been limited to young people only but other older people and parents also visit YIC. To gain support from community joint meetings between parents and children is facilitated in the community.

Evolution of YIC into intangible asset of community is a slow process. Getting social approval to get boys and girls together at YIC is an important challenge. Changing social norms and attitudes is difficult and community has its own perception and beliefs which separates girls and boys from interacting.

“When we did it (group meetings) together then some people here thought that if it is done together then either boys would misbehave or girls would misbehave// then we had to change it to different timings for girls and boys...” (Young YIC manager, male)

Distance

One YIC covers 5-6 villages and distance of YIC from some villages is a significant problem. Youths in rural areas who have already very limited time have to travel long distances to come to YIC which is a challenge for having maximum participation of youths.

“...in every area, in each village YIC should be opened. Because some people in our village cannot come to YIC because of distance though this YIC is covering substantial area around. There are many such village...” (ORW, Male)

Field staffs as well as users suggested that to solve this problem of distance another YIC should be opened in other villages. However YIC promoter did not mention anything about this as the establishment of YIC was according to the project requirements and indicated that if the villagers want YIC to be opened then they can be able to do so on their own.

Time

Pressurized to struggle for survival in the poor rural communities, youths are bound to make maximum utility from whatever time available to them. They have very less time for activities for themselves, as they are involved in household chores in addition to their student roles.

“In rural areas there is problem of (arranging) time// Why there is a problem... see, we have to go to the fields too, we have to go to school, we need some time to play also. Its necessary to work on fields... wake up in the morning... there are cattle in house and need to feed them too...” (Male FGD participant)

Burden of workload on youths is another challenge that they have to fact to come to YIC. As a solution to this project staffs promote flexible hours of YIC to cover both school going and drop out youths.

“...before school and after school students have various household chores and they have even homework from schools that they need to do. So, within the remaining time they would be attending YICs. So, we have kept YICs as flexible that they should open it before school time and after school time because during the daytime it would be attended by only school drop-out. Then they are opening on Sundays as well so that all the school going can attend the YICs on Sundays.” (YIC promoter)

Strategy for arranging timings at YIC like opening it on holidays and before and after school hours is promoted to cover maximum youths in the community.

Monotony

YIC is established to spread knowledge about SRH among youths. This information might seem repetitive to the youths and they can get bored of it. Monotony of the information transacted at YIC was a matter of concern of YIC promoters and also field staffs. Hence field staff suggested to present the information in new and attractive ways.

Sustainability

Despite the encounter with the challenges posed by community, all the participants interviewed wanted the YIC to continue functioning even after the project ends. However, only few could provide the details on how it should be continued. Different participants proposed different approaches to sustain YIC. For increased community participation, involvement of local community leader is destined to bring in the feeling of ownership.

“We arrange Pradhan (head of local government) of villages to visit YIC and ask for their help in how it can be made bigger and better...” (ORW, Male)

YIC is envisioned as a vocational training center by female users as they feel it the prioritized need for them. When inquired with youths about how would the problems of unavailability of facilities at YIC be solved, one of the youths at male FGD expressed his view that it is the responsibility of the project people.

“Well, the first responsibility to handle it (problems at YIC) is of ORW. We come here but ORW has to look after or the YIC manager has to...” (Male FGD participant)

The population of young people that the YIC is serving is very dynamic. In this process they move out for other aspirations and take different roles as they grow and new group or young people would have more needs. On the other hand, YIC has a purpose and relevance of YIC for that particular youth is over once the purpose is served.

“... once people have come to YIC, they have learned something, they have seen something there. They definitely they will move out for other aspirations, if they have to do their other higher studies, or getting married of, or getting vocation. So that is a process// And may be the new group of young people coming in the community or growing up in the community can... would have more need of the YICs...// because their needs are changing. They may get used to it, they may get bored very soon...they want something new” (YIC promoter)

YIC has to prepare for the challenge of meeting diverse needs of youths. Trained staff needs to be brought in YIC to make it more innovative and sustainable by improving quality of activities at YIC.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Methodological considerations

Central to the method used in this study are considerations of trustworthiness which include credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (Shenton, 2004; Polit & Hungler, 1999). To establish *credibility*, i.e. confidence in the truth of the data, participants of both sexes, different power positions, managers at different levels of experience were selected to increase the possibility to shed light on all aspects determining the functioning of YIC. Interviews were undertaken with all levels of management beginning from YIC promoters at the nodal NGO to the YIC manager who comes from among the youths and then FGD was done with the users of YIC to cover the aspect under study in entirety. Furthermore, the FGD with users helped in comparing the perspectives from a different angle as youths' location in the social world is different from that of adults which influences the way they see it. Another aspect of credibility concerns with the sufficiency of data to answer the research question (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Altogether eleven IDI were taken with the project staff and two FGD with users of YIC. The interviews varied in richness and length, meaning that some interviews were short in length, but included a wide range of information. The data obtained during the interviews had reached to a level of saturation when no new information was observed in the data and it meets external criteria for sufficiency of data. Credibility also concerns the question of judging the similarities and differences between categories (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004), which was increased in this study as two people were involved in the analysis process allowing member checking. The fact that more than one person was involved in the process of analysis also strengthens the *dependability*.

To adhere to *confirmability*, the process of analysis was described in detail and this will allow for future replicability by the organizations implementing the concept of YIC in similar setting. Also, quotations from the interviews were presented in order to make the interpretation visible to the reader and confirmable after the fact if questions arise as to the accuracy of the conclusions. Considering *transferability*, i.e. to the extent findings can be transferred to other groups or settings (Polit & Hungler, 1999), the results of the study may be applicable to other YICs established in rural settings of India or other developing country with similar culture. However, the generic determinants of YIC functioning can have differences according to the community in which YIC is established as every community has some distinct characteristics from the other and while transferring the results community variability is to be taken into consideration.

5.2. Discussion of findings

This fieldwork addresses the important question of understanding the concept of YIC in a developing

country setting on the grounds of which the determinants of YIC functioning can be identified. An attempt has been made to explore the YIC run by the NGO and under the specific project that targets early marriage and early pregnancy. The YIC is focused towards youth SRH which is considered a critical issue in the community. Additionally, YICs under the project has been established specifically focusing on resource constrained settings, where need is high and service availability is low, these difficult social and economic environments need acknowledgement.

In the light of the scarce literature on YIC in such setting presenting a rich debate on YIC concept is beyond the scope of this fieldwork. This inadequate level of published literature is likely to be due to a range of factors. These can include the lack of training of researches in appropriate methodologies to evaluate these types of interventions and to meet the publication requirements of international journals (Kesterton & Mello, 2010). It can also be due to lack of motivation of the funders and project people in making an evaluation.

Two broad categories have been identified: Community as a sea of opportunity or desert of challenges and the gestalt of YIC. The first category describes the context in which YIC stands and how need for YIC is justified. The second category explains the understanding of YIC established under the project and explores its functions and challenges.

The need for youth SRH is felt and voiced strongly by the project people and young people themselves. This is in coherence with the literature which suggests that the age range of 10-24 years that young people belong is when most people begin to actively explore their sexuality and require SRH information and services (Kesterton & Mello, 2010). Additionally, the conservative society does not allow different sex youths to mix with each other that further build in the curiosity of youths about opposite sex. Youths in their pre and early teen years are growing rapidly, both physically and mentally, but they still need adults on whom they can relay and to whom they can talk (Kanter, 2001). But adults in the family and school in the rural setting are not able to provide SRH information as they are bound by restrictive culture of society that inhibits them from talking about youth SRH. Youths perceive the barrier between them and their families impenetrable for opening up discussion on SRH. The findings from this study show that restrictive culture is one of the major barrier to gaining SRH information.

YIC has been established as a vent for expression and safe space of youths where they can talk about SRH. But there are multiple barriers coming into play that hinder smooth running of YIC, the most important of which is the contextual features in the setting where YIC has been established. Societal values are put to high priority and adherence to it is mandatory. There is evidence from previous research that involvement of community gatekeepers such as parents is vital to generating wider community support for youth SRH (Kesterton & Mello, 2010). Community support is essential in nurturing a supportive environment for youth utilization of YIC. In coherence to this fact, efforts are

made to make YIC a community asset by involving community stakeholders in its functioning but the success depends on the motivation from both the sides of project people and community stakeholders. Despite the implementation of strategies like openness of YIC, occasional parent and community meetings that would promote its acceptability, there have been instances where relocation of YIC was the only choice left for the project people. This further strengthens the argument that a supportive environment is critical to the successful continuation of SRH program for adolescents (Senderowitz, 2000).

Youths are influenced by other individuals, their families, school and community and societal factors (Kesterton & Mello, 2010). They are under tremendous pressures- anxiety about the future, living up to the expectations of those around them and maintaining good living that roots from parent and community desires. Garrod A. et al (1995) elicited that adolescence is a critical stage in the individual's development where they are intensely aware of how they are seen by others. This characteristic was expressed in the youths in this study too. Girls not talking to boys is a finding that shows socially desirable behavior in youths that is according to the set standards of community. This is the reason they prioritize livelihood skills and strive to earn living of their own in future. Livelihood skill training can be incorporated in YIC functioning, as the evidence show that participatory and life skills approaches have the greatest potential for attaining community support (Kesterton & Mello, 2010). Given the submissive nature of youths, family and community acceptability is a key to youth participation in the YIC and as revealed in the literature it can ease some of the barriers to young people accessing SRH services (WHO, 2005).

YIC has made an attempt to resolve the issues of youth SRH by mobilizing the communication youths have among themselves that retains their personal space and respect. In this approach known as peer education, peer educators also act as counselor for other youths at YIC. Evidence suggests that peer education is most effective as a component of wider interventions (Family Health International, 2006) as it is implemented in the current YIC. Sports and entertainment prove to be a good medium of attraction for youth. But lack of ample time and far geographic distance of YIC, which needs further more time to travel, are hindering factors in gaining attendance at YIC. Evidence suggests that SRH services within the community may struggle to maintain attendance over a period of time, with other commitments getting on the way (Senderowitz, 2000). Being raised in the families that thrive for their survival needs, youths in rural areas are also taking up a lot household responsibilities that spares them with very less time for themselves. In some ways they are becoming "hyper responsible" children as described by Suarez-Orozco & Swarez-Orozco (2001).

As identified in the previous literature drop-in center, which is the structure like YIC, can be of three different types. These are 'consumer run', 'consumer involved' and 'user defined' (Mercier, Piat, Peladeau, & Dagenais, 2000). Project staffs aspire YIC to become 'consumer run' establishment. In order to achieve it, although all project staff voice a desire to capacitate youths in running the YIC,

there are obstacles that youths face from within themselves and their surrounding that is weakening them from achieving the standards. Having given almost no control over decision-making on issues that relate to them makes them feel powerless and unconfident. Youths are burdened with expectations of community and family that leads to blurring of their own critical thought process and creativity. Hence, achieving sustainability of YIC through initiatives of youths themselves is a challenge.

Despite the attempts to make the fieldwork as unbiased as possible there are limitations associated with sample selected. Due to short time to conduct the study, only one YIC of a district in Northern state of India was selected purposively that might have led in the direction of findings revealed and it should be noted that some important factor relevant in similar rural setting could not be explored from different perspectives. Also, FGD was conducted with users who attended YIC and these might not be the ones who actually need YIC. The participation of young people in FGD was voluntary and the views expressed are solely of the participating youths cannot be fully representative of all views among the youths in the community. The ones who are not attending might have reasons for non-participation and dissatisfaction that could not be explored with this sample. Also the views of gatekeepers of YIC in the community like parents, political or administrative people are not covered in this fieldwork that might have resulted in framing the findings with restricted scope. Another source of bias can be insufficiency of extracted information, which can be due to factors like lack of knowledge among informants or unwillingness to share for fear of identification. Also, during the interviews the participation for sharing knowledge is dependent on individual personality, job responsibility, power differences and many other individual factors. However, these limitations are not specific to this fieldwork but for any kind of qualitative exercise and readers of qualitative papers understand the inherent lacunae of the qualitative methodology.

Apart from the limitations discussed above this present fieldwork has its strengths. To our limited knowledge, this fieldwork is first of its kind in which such a comprehensive qualitative exercise was conducted to understand the concept of YIC involving multiple stakeholders in a resource constrained rural setting. We believe that this will help guide future research in this area to bring more rigorous evidence to support YIC as a strategy to improve SRH needs of highly vulnerable youth population that forms a large section of population in the poor countries. Information from this fieldwork can be used to better understand the concept of YIC and its determinants in developing country setting that is relatively underexplored. It adds to the body of knowledge highlighting the context and working scenario for YIC. It provides a broader outlook to the project people for what they are dealing with, which will help them in framing the pathway they want to adopt for better outcomes of the project through YIC. Also the need for systematic research with such interventions and its evaluation is highlighted that will pave a way for future research by concerned organizations working in similar areas.

6. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the present fieldwork indicated that YIC is viewed by all the interviewed stakeholders and especially the youths in a positive light of safety, hope and trust and in the suffocative community environment. This is expressed in the theme identified i.e. ***‘YIC is an oasis of safety and source of information and opportunities for youths in the restrictive culture of society akin to a desert with limited options to express their needs’***. This fieldwork has identified a number of practical hurdles that affect YIC in meeting SRH needs of youths.

It is important to highlight that YIC as a medium in a combined multi-component approach to address youth SRH needs more research in such rural settings to provide basis for evidence on its strengths and how it should be envisioned in future. YIC as implemented in the present project by NGO surely has some elements that needs to be given due attention and explored to establish it as a strategy to be scaled up.

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ANNEX LIST

Annex 1: Introduction (Opening Statement of IDI and consent)

Annex 2: Semi-structured questionnaire for In-Depth Interview with YIC promoters

Annex 3: List of tables

Table 1. Profile of participants among YIC promoters at MAMTA HIMC

Table 2. Profile of participants of IDI with other field staffs and volunteers at YIC

Table 3. Profile of participants of FGD with users of YIC

Table 4. Example of analysis matrix with codes, sub categories and categories from content analysis of text

Table 5. Codes, sub categories and Categories derived from qualitative analysis

ANNEX 1

Introduction (Opening of IDI and consent)

(6 minutes)

(Interviewer will read out this section)

Greetings (Namaste!) My name is Ruby Yadav. I am from EHESP School of Public Health, France. I am doing my internship with MAMTA Health Institute for Mother and Child. To begin, I would like to thank you on behalf of my team for taking the time to participate in this interview.

After the discussions with the project staff “Improving Reproductive and Sexual Health of young people by increasing age at marriage in India, Nepal and Bangladesh” the need for understanding one of its components i.e. YIC (Youth Information Centre) has been recognized. This interview is intended to serve to this objective and through this interaction we would like to know your views about the existing structural and functional aspects of YIC. This is important for us to gain a good understanding of YIC from your perspective. This fieldwork will serve for the improvement of the program functioning.

We will keep the views you express in this interview confidential. We will remove all the information from any documents we share, about your identity in order to maintain privacy. We will use this information only to guide the evaluation of YIC.

In this interview we will cover a series of topics through various questions and ask you to express your views. We would like to emphasize that there are no right or wrong views. Therefore, please feel free to express your views in an open manner.

If you don't understand a question, please let us know. We are here to ask questions, listen, and make sure that you have a chance to share your views. If we seem to be stuck on a topic, we may interrupt you. But we must stress that you are not obliged to answer all the questions. You can simply say pass or "I do not have an opinion". Also, at any point, if you want to, you could leave the interview without giving a reason.

As this interview is being audio recorded we request that you speak slowly and clearly.

Do you confirm to give consent for the participant in the interview?

(Verbal consent Yes No)

Let's get started!

ANNEX 2

In-Depth Interview – YIC Promoters

Now shall we start this by discussion on your perception about YIC, its functioning and recommendations?

Let us begin the talk by discussion about YIC that is part of the project you are handling?

a) What do you think about the YIC that is part of this project?

(Let the participants speak uninterrupted for a while. Probe will be based on the cues and if required.)

- a. Who are the target group/beneficiaries of YIC?
- b. Who are the implementers?
 - i. What are their roles and responsibilities?
- c. What are the components (activities) within YIC in this project?

(Prepare list of components. Please elaborate on individual components listed above.)

- i. Who does the individual activity?
 - ii. What purpose do they serve? And for whom?
 - iii. In what ways they are effective? Please elaborate with example?
 - iv. What kind of problems do they face?
 - v. How can these problems be addressed?
- d. What is your role with respect to implementation of YIC?
 - i. What are your experiences about this work?
 - ii. What challenges did and/or do you face?
 - iii. Did you manage to overcome them? How?

Thank you for the information, now we will discuss about an ideal YIC?

- b) What do you understand about an Ideal YIC?
 - a. What purpose will that YIC serve?
 - i. Why do you think so?
 - b. What are/should be the components of an ideal YIC?
 - i. Why do you think so?

(Prepare list of components)

- c. What purpose do these components serve?
 - i. Please elaborate on individual components listed above?
- d. How can you improve YIC in the project to make it an ideal YIC?
 - i. Please elaborate on individual components listed above?
- e. What are your recommendations for improvement of YIC functioning?

(The questions will be open ended and probing will be done wherever needed in accordance with the information delivered by the interviewee)

Table 1. Profile of participants among YIC promoters at MAMTA HIMC

Age in years	Sex	Education	Association with the project in months
31	Male	MA Applied Psychology	8
36	Male	MA Health Administration	19
37	Female	MA Mass Communication & Journalism	42
46	Female	M Phil, Social work	25

Table 2. Profile of participants of IDI with other field staffs and volunteers at YIC

Participants designation	Age in years	Sex	Education	Association with current YIC in months
Outreach Coordinator	25	Male	Bachelor	4
Outreach Worker	21	Female	Bachelor	12
Outreach Worker	20	Male	Bachelor	12
Current YIC manager	17	Female	High School	12
Current YIC manager	19	Male	Intermediate	12
Previous YIC manager	18	Female	Intermediate	12
Previous YIC manager	19	Male	Bachelor	12

Table 3. Profile of participants of FGD with users of YIC

Sex	S. No.	Age in years	Education (Completed class in school)	Association with current YIC in months
Male	1	18	12	12
	2	22	10	6
	3	17	10	6
	4	20	10	6
	5	15	9	6
	6	15	9	8
	7	16	10	12
	8	16	10	12
	9	18	12	12
	10	16	9	6
Female	1	15	8	12
	2	15	8	12
	3	17	11	12
	4	17	11	12
	5	18	11	12
	6	17	9	12
	7	17	8	12
	8	17	9	12
	9	18	12	12
	10	15	5	12

Table 4. Example of analysis matrix with codes, sub categories and categories from content analysis of text

Meaning Units	Condensed Meaning units	Interpretation of underlying meaning	Codes	Sub-categories	Category
But if the YIC fails to address their immediate needs and requirements then I think it will be difficult just only for young people for only the recreational things because that is even the community feels that only sending their children to play there or to gossip there is not something what the family would be interested into.	Sending their children to just gossip or for recreation is not what the family would be interested in and it is difficult if YIC fails to address the immediate needs and requirements	Motivation by the community to send children is only when they feel that their children are getting what they want them to get like vocational skills, for financial security	Recreation at YIC not a motivation for family to send youths	Different stakeholders; different aspiration	The Gestalt of YIC
It's a place where you can meet your friends, your peers, there could be some intelligent discussions and some entertainment as well, where its not a school or college where you have to be very disciplined type. You still have to maintain some code of conduct when you are at the YIC and there has to be entertainment factor at the YIC.	At YIC youths can meet friends, have intelligent discussions, entertainment, not very disciplined.	YIC is a seen as a space which has freedom, learning opportunities with entertainment and is not suffocative like school	Space to interact with peers	Come, sit and talk	
			Learning at YIC	Supportive supervision as catalyst	
			Entertainment at YIC	Its of no use if there is no fun	

Table 5. Codes, sub categories and Categories derived from qualitative analysis

S. No.	Codes	Sub categories	Categories
1.	Never taught to talk	Restrictive culture	Community as sea of opportunity or desert of challenges for youth SRH
2.	Community ideals		
3.	SRH needs of youths	Relevance (need)	
4.	Unavailability of any space		
5.	Relevance for both gender		
6.	Space to express themselves	Come sit and talk	The Gestalt of YIC
7.	Space to interact with peers		
8.	Safe space for youth to seek SRH information	What is safe space?	
9.	Safety in psychological terms like no discrimination, bias or judgment; anonymity		
10.	Physical safety		
11.	Expectations of community from YIC	Different stakeholders different aspiration	
12.	Aspirations of YIC promoters		
13.	Youths' aspiration from YIC		
14.	Decision in hands of parents	Who decides for youths to attend YIC?	
15.	Difficulty in gathering youths at YIC		
16.	Peer education at YIC	I meet them, I tell them	
17.	Learning at YIC	Supportive supervision as catalyst	
18.	Supervision at YIC		
19.	Non verbal aids in YIC		
20.	Capacity building of youths		
21.	Birthday celebration as entertainment	Its of no use if there is no fun	
22.	Entertainment with sports		
23.	Networking: Linkages and referral	Linkages and referral	
24.	Fear of community	Island of opportunity in sea of challenges	
25.	Distance		
26.	Time factor		
27.	Monotony of activities		
28.	Sustainability issues Community recognition of YIC Community and youth participation Dynamic needs of young people		

ABSTRACT

Background: A non- government organization in India is implementing an international donor supported community based intervention project in India and neighboring countries to improve youth sexual reproductive health (SRH), reduce early marriage and early pregnancy involving youth information centers (YICs) as one of the key strategies.

Aim: The aim of the fieldwork was to understand the determinants of YIC functioning in resource constrained setting of one of the YICs in a northern district of rural India.

Participants: Purposive sample comprised of YIC promoters in the nodal NGO, field staffs of the selected YIC and users (male and female).

Methods: Qualitative in-depth interviews and focused group discussions (FGDs) using open ended interview and FGD guide were performed, and analyzed using latent and manifest content analysis.

Findings: The overall theme was expressed to be '*YIC is an oasis of safety and source of information and opportunities for youths in the restrictive culture of society akin to a desert with limited options to express their needs*'. Two categories embraced the context of setting in which YIC is established and its functioning: Community as sea of opportunity or desert of challenges for youth SRH and the Gestalt of YIC. The need of SRH information for youths is justified and the challenge posed by restrictive culture makes this need more pronounced. Safety, peer education, satisfying diverse aspirations, and linkages with other services were important to YIC functioning while fear of community and distance were identified as the major obstacles.

Conclusion: YIC is viewed in a positive light of safety, hope and trust in the suffocative community environment to fulfill youth SRH needs. There is need for further research on YIC as a medium in a combined multi-component approach to address youth SRH.

Keywords: Youth information center; Youths; Young people; Qualitative fieldwork; Sexual and reproductive health; Resource constrained setting

RESUME

Contexte:

Une organisation non-gouvernementale indienne met en place un projet d'intervention à base communautaire soutenu par des bailleurs de fonds internationaux afin d'améliorer, en Inde et dans les pays voisins, la santé sexuelle et reproductive (SSR) chez les jeunes, de réduire le nombre de mariages précoces et de grossesses précoces, en impliquant, comme stratégie-clé, des centres d'information pour la jeunesse (CIJ).

Objectif :

L'objectif du travail de terrain était de comprendre les déterminants du fonctionnement des CIJ dans le contexte de ressources limitées d'un Centre situé dans un district rural du nord de l'Inde.

Participants :

Un échantillon choisi comprenant des promoteurs de CIJ au sein de l'ONG, des employés de terrain du Centre sélectionné et des utilisateurs (hommes et femmes).

Méthode :

Des entretiens qualitatifs approfondis et des discussions ciblées de groupe, avec questions ouvertes et guide d'entretien, ont été menés et analysés dans leur contenu manifeste et latent.

Résultats :

Le point de vue globalement exprimé est le suivant : « Le CIJ est un oasis de sécurité et une source d'informations et d'opportunités pour les jeunes, dans une société de culture restrictive semblable à un désert qui leur offre peu de latitude pour exprimer leurs besoins ». Le contexte et le fonctionnement du Centre est vu de deux manières différentes : la communauté en tant que champ d'opportunités ou que désert de challenges pour la SSR des jeunes et la nature des CIJ. Le besoin d'information en matière de SSR pour les jeunes est justifié et l'obstacle que constitue une culture restrictive le renforce. La sécurité, l'éducation par les pairs, la réponse donnée à des aspirations diverses et les liens tissés avec d'autres services sont importants dans le fonctionnement des CIJ, dont les principaux obstacles identifiés sont la distance et la peur de la communauté.

Conclusion :

Dans un environnement communautaire étouffant, le CIJ est appréhendé positivement comme un espace de sécurité, de confiance et d'espoir pour subvenir aux besoins en matière de SSR chez les jeunes. Il existe un besoin de recherche complémentaire sur les CIJ en tant que vecteur dans un approche combinée et plurielle de la SSR des jeunes.