

HERStory 3

IMPACT EVALUATION OF A COMBINATION HIV PREVENTION INTERVENTION FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA:

THE HERSTORY 3 STUDY

Qualitative Study Component

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Qualitative Executive Summary

Introduction

South African adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) are at high risk of HIV infection due to multiple factors that serve as barriers to young women's ability to protect themselves from HIV or to effectively treat HIV. These factors include gender inequalities, age disparate relationships, gender-based violence (GBV), low levels of education, lack of access to adequate sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services and stigma and discrimination.

To alleviate HIV among AGYW, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria invested in a combination HIV prevention intervention for AGYW with the aim of reducing HIV incidence, teenage pregnancy, and GBV, and to increase retention in school and access to economic opportunities. Combination HIV prevention interventions, which merge effective biomedical, behavioural and structural interventions for combined delivery, are one of the key strategies for reaching the 95-95-95 targets and achieving the SDG goal of ending the HIV epidemic by 2030.

The **My Journey Programme** was implemented in South Africa from 2016 through to 2024, the time of writing this report. The programme was implemented by three Principal Recipients (PRs): AIDS Foundation of South Africa (AFSA), Beyond Zero, and Networking HIV/AIDS Community of Southern Africa (NACOSA). The PRs contracted sub-recipients (SRs) to implement the intervention components. AGYW were introduced to the programme through several entry points and referred for services via two main components called the "Core Service" (which was usually but not always received first) and "Layered Services", which were additional services that were provided based on the needs of the beneficiary and were received over time. Core and layered services were delivered by funded SRs in schools, TVET colleges, dedicated safe spaces in communities, and mobile clinics that delivered clinical HIV and SRH related services. Layered services were categorized into biomedical, behavioural and structural services.

The South African Medical Research Council was contracted to evaluate the impact of the My Journey Programme. **The HERStory 3 study** is a mixed-methods evaluation of the My Journey Programme. This report presents findings on the qualitative component of the HERStory 3 study.

Aims and Objectives

The **qualitative study component contributed** to the overall HERStory 3 study aims by helping to describe the acceptability of the intervention among AGYW programme beneficiaries, and describe the self-reported impact of the intervention on access to economic opportunities for AGYW, health and well-being among AGYW who participated in it. The acceptability of an HIV prevention intervention or service is one of the factors that will influence AGYW's motivation to take it up or use it, and therefore is one of the underlying concepts influencing the steps in the HIV prevention cascade or in any coverage cascade. The acceptability of interventions to beneficiaries/recipients, community stakeholders, and intervention implementers is an important issue to consider in the development, evaluation and implementation

phases of interventions. The insights about acceptability from the evaluation can help to inform the interpretation of the gaps in the HIV prevention cascade or other coverage cascades, and in intervention outcomes.

Methodology

Qualitative data was collected in the following districts in which the My Journey programme was implemented: AbaQulusi and uMhlathuze (KwaZulu Natal), Mbombela and Govan Mbeki (Mpumalanga), Nelson Mandela Bay and Nyandeni (Eastern Cape), Dihlabeng and Setsoso (Free State), Greater Tubatse (Limpopo), Tshwane 1 (Gauteng), Rustenburg (North West), Klipfontein (Western Cape). Qualitative interviews were conducted with AGYW aged 15-24 years, living in the 12 subdistricts within which the intervention was implemented, who had participated in the HERStory 3 survey. The sample of the qualitative study component comprised a total of 68 AGYW from across the study sites; 13 AGYW in the 15-17 age group, and 55 in the 18-24 age group. Thematic analysis of qualitative data followed an integrated and cyclical process which evolved iteratively through a deductive and inductive process reflecting the study’s key objectives and topics that emerged through reading the data.

Findings

Findings Theme Table

AGYW Participation in My Journey and other AGYW Programmes & Services	
Site	AGYW Programmes & Services
Setsoso & Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana - Free State	- CCI - Centre for Communication Impact Programme - School Based Programmes
Tshwane 1 - Gauteng	- Child Line Programmes - LoveLife Programmes - Other Miscellaneous / Unnamed / Unbranded Programmes
AbaQulusi, Zululand & uMhlathuze, King Cetshwayo - KZN	- Lungelo Youth Development programme - Miscellaneous / Unnamed / Unbranded Programmes
Rustenberg, Bojanala - North West	- My Journey Programme - Aurum Institute programmes - LifeLine programmes - The “Yes Programme” - Love Life Programmes - Rise Programmes - Other Miscellaneous / Unnamed / Unbranded Programmes
Mbombela, Ehlanzeni – Mpumalanga	- Vuka Uhlale Foundation Programme - Service Hope Programme - Seed of Hope Programme - Imayihlasele Izazi Girls Bond (IIGB) programme

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HashTag Say It (HTSI) Programme 3 - Miscellaneous / Unnamed / Unbranded Programmes
Klipfontein, City of Cape Town - Western Cape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - My Journey Programme - The “Yes” Programme - CK Community Keepers Programme - YDT Programme (UCT) - Miscellaneous / Unnamed / Unbranded Programmes
Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo & Nelson Mandela C, Nelson Mandela Bay Metro - Eastern Cape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Songe Social Change - Miscellaneous / Unnamed / Unbranded Programmes
AGYW Experiences with Programmes	
Experiences with Demand Creation, Enrolment and Risk Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only participation was risk assessment - Was expecting something more
Recruitment Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HIV testing at recruitment and enrolment - Pap smears and other screening tests at recruitment and enrolment - Eligibility Screening processes - Blood tests and biological samples taken at enrolment - Embarrassed and Uncomfortable with Screening Questions - Concerns about confidentiality allayed - Made to feel comfortable while answering questions - Felt good that someone was taking an interest in her well-being - Parental consent for participation
AGYW experiences participating in Layered Services	
AGYW experiences participating in Biomedical Layered Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comparing Programme biomedical services with public sector clinics - Experiences with programme HIV Testing services - Experiences attending Mobile Clinics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o SRH services at Mobile Clinics o Confidentiality and privacy of Mobile clinic services o Respectful staff at Mobile clinics o Accessible services at Mobile clinics o Fast and convenient services at Mobile Clinics o No queues at Mobile Clinics o AGYW PrEP Knowledge & Experiences o Sources of Information about PrEP o PrEP Journeys
AGYW experiences participating in Behavioural Layered Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experiences with Psychosocial support and services - Experiences with Substance Use Support & Awareness programmes - Experiences with Parenting / Teen Mothers’ Support programmes - Experiences with Physical Activity / Recreation programmes

<p>AGYW experiences participating in Structural Layered Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experiences with Safe Spaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o SRH services at Safe Spaces o Counselling services at Safe Spaces o Peer connection and support at Safe Spaces o Educational and Career Support provided at Safe Spaces o What could have been improved about Safe Spaces? - Experiences with Homework Support - After School Programmes - Experiences with Economic Strengthening programmes - Experiences with GBV Support / Self-defence programmes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o GBV Education and Awareness programmes o Self-defence classes o Counselling and support for victims of abuse
<p>AGYW perceived benefits of participating in programmes and services</p>	
<p>Positive behaviour change benefits of participating in programmes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased self-esteem, self-confidence and awareness of rights - Increased adoption of healthy behaviours - Reduced homophobia / homophobia - Increased ability to contribute to household finances
<p>SRH education benefits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gained SRH knowledge unable to get from parents - Learned about condom use, contraceptives, puberty, and delaying childbearing - Gained knowledge about HIV and PrEP
<p>Mental health and psychosocial benefits of participating in programmes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved access to psychosocial support - “Having someone to talk to” - Connect with peers and access emotional support - Improved ability to articulate mental health needs as a means to access support - Reduced feelings of emotional isolation - Improved resilience: more positive outlook, more hope
<p>Health benefits of participating in programmes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved access to health and diagnostic tests - Improved access to Contraceptives - Improved access to high quality, youth-friendly, non-judgemental comprehensive health services - Improved access to support and health care for most vulnerable AGYW - Access to menstrual management products
<p>Educational / Career benefits of participating in programmes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assistance with applications to employment / tertiary education - Assistance and support with school work - Support for entrepreneurship and start-up businesses
<p>Motivations / Facilitators to participating in programmes and activities</p>	
<p>What made AGYW want to join / participate in programmes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Friendly and welcoming staff - To connect with peers - Friends already part of programme/s

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educational support and career advice services - Psychosocial support offered by programmes - Information and education provided by programmes - Incentives / vouchers / food - Menstrual management products - Free transport - Health services provided by programme - Desire to empower oneself - To keep busy / be productive / try something new - Free to choose whether to participate or not - Parent / caregiver wanted me to join
What would make more AGYW want to join the programmes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incentives - Provision of Food - Fun activities / events - Emphasise / Ensure Confidentiality - Provide clear & interesting explanations - Provision of information to Parents/Caregivers - Programmes for out-of-school AGYW in rural villages - Expanded service hours / days - Better branding and advertising - Make the programmes easily accessible - More spacious venues
Barriers to Participation in Programmes / Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fear / concerns about joining programmes / services / activities - Fear related to blood samples / blood tests - Fear of medical procedures - Fear of being labelled
Decisions not to participate in programmes / activities / services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Did not feel programme was relevant - No need of services - Too busy / not enough time - Too shy / introvert to participate - Too emotional to participate
AGYW Views on Programmes needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Psychosocial support and counselling programmes - Alcohol and other substance use support and rehab programmes - GBV support programmes and Safe Houses - Educational and Career support programmes - Provision of menstrual management products - Safe Spaces - “Empowerment” programmes for AGYW - Sports and Recreation Programmes - Abortion support and adoption programmes for AGYW - Programmes to reduce teenage pregnancy - Peer Support Groups

AGYW Participation in My Journey and other AGYW Programmes & Services

The majority of participants interviewed had not heard of the My Journey Programme, and some confused the My Journey Programme with the HERStory 3 evaluation survey. Interviewers probed on any other programmes and services for AGYW in the community which participants were aware of. The findings section presents all programmes listed by respondents, outlining the services and activities that AGYW understood them to provide, and where they heard about the programmes.

Key points

- Respondents described and listed various different programmes, activities and services for young people in their communities.
 - In Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, respondents referred to a programme they called CCI (it is likely this refers to the Centre for Communication Impact). Also in Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, respondents shared knowledge of a school-based programme for AGYW offering SRH services and information. In Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, respondents also knew about the CCI programme.
 - Respondents in Tshwane 1, Gauteng, described programmes for AGYW being provided by ChildLine and LoveLife. A participant in Tshwane had also been offered by a programme she couldn't name.
 - In AbaQulusi, Zululand, respondents described programmes coming regularly to schools and clinic. No named programmes. Also in KZN, a participant in uMhlatuze, King Cetshwayo described her interaction with a programme called Lungelo Youth Development. No other programmes were named.
 - In Rustenberg some participants had heard of the My Journey programme, one had received a "My Journey" booklet and diary from the LifeLine programme. Several AGYW mentioned the Aurum Institute. Also in Rustenberg were the "Yes Programme", and the Rise Programme.
 - Participants in Mbombela recalled described programmes called the Vuka Uhlale Foundation, Service Hope, Seed of Hope, Imayihlasele Izazi Girls Bond (IIGB) and the HashTag Say It (HTSI) programme.
 - One respondent in Klipfontein had recently heard of the My Journey programme, but said that she hadn't had the opportunity to participate in it. Other programmes in Klipfontein were "Yes", "CK Community Keepers" and "YDT".
 - In Nyandeni, participants described the Songe Social Change programme for AGYW. No others were named.
 - In Nelson Mandela Metro, a participant spoke about what could have been LifeLine. No other programmes were named.
- Most respondents encountered these programmes and services on the streets - with staff doing street-based outreach and recruitment or setting up mobile clinics or tents in the community.

- Respondents also encountered programmes at school where programme staff / representatives would come and offer services and information at school.
- A few respondents also encountered programmes recruiting AGYW in the clinics they attended.

Experiences with Demand Creation, Enrolment, Risk Assessments & Retention

Experiences with demand creation, enrolment and risk assessments for the various programmes varied, and respondents described various procedures they underwent as part of the screening and enrolment process. Some participants claimed that their only participation was risk assessment screening. Some respondents expressed disappointment as they had been expecting more engagement and activities to take place after screening and enrolment but had not been invited to participate in anything further.

Most participants described being asked some kind of screening questions – most often about sexual behaviour. Some had initial concerns about confidentiality, but these were generally allayed, and most AGYW reported that they were made to feel comfortable while answering questions despite the questions relating to sensitive topics. Generally screening staff were described as non-judgemental, and some AGYW appreciated being asked questions about their health and well-being, reporting that it made them feel cared for.

Most participants described being tested for HIV at enrolment, with some reporting having had pap smears, blood tests and other biological samples taken. Some respondents were concerned about blood samples being taken specifically citing concern over where their blood was being taken and what was being done with it.

Several participants reported that after enrolment, they had not been contacted further. Some articulated feeling disappointed by this lack of further contact, even suggesting a feeling of betrayal that they'd trusted the programme staff, and opened up to answer personal questions, only for no further action to be taken.

Key points

- AGYW's main concern in screenings and risk assessments relates to confidentiality of answers about sexual risk behaviours etc
- Even though questions about sexual behaviour can be considered uncomfortable and awkward, if the purpose of asking the questions is well explained, AGYW feel comfortable to answer
- Depending on how risk assessment questions are asked, they can also make AGYW feel cared for, and that someone is interested in and concerned about their well-being
- Additionally AGYW cite concerns about blood and biological samples being taken - indicating that thorough explanations about the purpose, need for, and procedures for the samples processing are necessary

- A number of respondents described their experience of being disappointed with the lack of follow up after recruitment and enrolment.
- After having been through risk assessment processes, answering personal questions, some claimed they were never contacted again, which led to feelings of betrayal of trust

AGYW experiences participating in Layered Services

AGYW experiences participating in Biomedical Layered Services

Generally, participants spoke very positively about the biomedical and/or clinical services received through the programmes, reporting that programme staff were more youth-friendly than staff in public sector health facilities. HIV testing was the most commonly received health services that participants reported receiving through the programmes, and generally respondents spoke positively about the pre- and post-test counselling they received, and reassurance that if they tested positive they would receive treatment and care. Participants shared experiences of having attended Mobile Clinics in their communities, with the majority having receiving SRH services. Mobile clinics were described in a positive light, with staff described as friendly, non-judgemental and welcoming, and services as fast and convenient.

Key points

- Being made to feel a sense of agency was important, for example not feeling forced to have an HIV test but to decide oneself was important
- The reassurance of confidentiality of services and test results was very important to AGYW
- Being offered pre and post test counselling for HIV testing was highly valued
- Mobile clinics were seen to offer greater privacy and confidentiality than public sector health facilities in the community
- Staff attitudes were listed as a key benefit of mobile clinics over public clinic facilities. Respondents invariably felt that staff were less judgemental, particularly in the provision of SRH services.



My experience was very nice because they didn't make you feel like you should be ashamed of what you are doing... if you're coming contraceptives... they told you it is actually a good choice if you want to make it... it was my choice but they supported whatever choice I made.

- Compared to accounts of experiences at public sector facilities, respondents spoke positively of treatment at mobile clinics, where they felt respected and that staff were friendly, welcoming and non-judgmental
- Youth friendly and non-judgemental staff attitudes in the provision of contraceptives was a key benefit of mobile clinics - thus reducing barriers to access to contraceptives for AGYW.
- AGYW report that nurses in public clinics make them feel ashamed/blamed for being sexually active, and in comparison felt that staff at mobile clinics were encouraging and non-judgemental, supporting AGYW to make decisions and exercise agency over their SRH

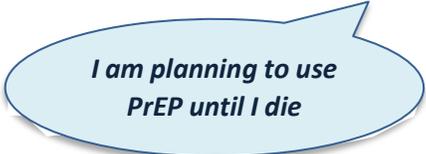
- Proximity and convenience of mobile clinics was highly valued, especially if they were within walking distance
- One key benefit of Mobile clinics was that AGYW can avoid queuing and long waiting times at the public health facilities
- From respondents' accounts, queues and waiting times are a key barrier to accessing clinic services - these can be overcome through mobile clinic services and innovative ways of delivering services such as contraceptives

AGYW PrEP Knowledge & Experiences

Many of the AGYW respondents had heard of PrEP, and had a rough idea of what it was. Sources of information about PrEP were mostly health workers at the clinic, at the mobile health service points in the community, or at school.

The section on ***PrEP Journeys***, outlines the experiences of those respondents who disclosed that they were currently using, or had previously used PrEP. These journeys illustrate their decision making processes, their experiences accessing PrEP, and experiences using PrEP.

- Amongst those AGYW who are currently using PrEP, there was a strong sense of feeling happy, protected and safe, in a context of high HIV prevalence and sexual violence - leading to a strong motivation to continue using it. Many of those currently using PrEP reported that they received support from family members and/or partners for their PrEP use. Some of these AGYW also shared their PrEP with friends or family members, wanting to protect them too.



I am planning to use PrEP until I die

- Amongst those AGYW who had tried taking PrEP at some point but had discontinued, there were various reasons - the key reason was unpleasant side effects experienced. Other reasons for discontinuation included fears of PrEP stigma, that PrEP would be mistaken for ARVs, the burden of having to take daily pills, and changes in relationship status.
- Amongst AGYW who had heard about PrEP, and been offered it, but had decided not to take it, reasons for refusing PrEP included not being sexually active, being 'too busy', fear of PrEP after hearing scary things about it including negative side effects, concerns about PrEP stigma related to it being confused with ARVs by others, dislike of having to take a pill daily, the size of the pill, and concerns about mixing PrEP with other medications. Several respondents said that they would consider using PrEP in the future. PrEP was regarded as a useful product amends important to look after one's own health and not trust sexual partners.

Key points

- Sources of information about PrEP were mostly health workers at clinics, at mobile health service points in community, through NGO programmes, or at school.
- Participants who manage to continue with their PrEP use are motivated by remaining safe, protected and healthy - particularly when in relationships where there is a lack of trust, and when living in communities with high levels of sexual violence, and high HIV prevalence
- Most AGYW who have ever used PrEP experience unpleasant side effects with initial use
- Those AGYW who discontinue using PrEP do so primarily because of side effects experienced, but also due to reasons including fear of HIV stigma, lack of follow-up / monitoring, medication burden of having to take a daily pill, fear of contraindications with other medications, and change in relationship status

AGYW experiences participating in Behavioural Layered Services

Respondents across sites described their experiences and interactions receiving psychosocial support services through the programmes, inclusive of individual and group counselling, peer group support, and access to social workers. Specific narratives of AGYW's perceived psychosocial benefits of participating in such services can be found in the section on perceived benefits.

The majority of participants who shared their experiences participating in substance use support programmes were in Tshwane 1 in Gauteng province. Activities that respondents described included substance use awareness campaigns and educational activities.

Only one participant in Klipfontein, Cape Town described her personal experiences engaging with a teen parenting support programme.

A few respondents described physical exercise, sports and recreation activities that they had participated in their community including soccer, netball, litter collecting, and assisting elderly people in the community.

Key points

- Those AGYW who had engaged with **psychosocial support services and activities** describe feeling cared for, as if someone takes interest in their well-being
 - Through gaining access to counselling, coaching, and social workers, AGYW learn how to open up and speak about their feelings, which is especially beneficial for those who feel they are unable to speak to family members / friends about their mental well being
 - AGYW value the opportunity of relieving themselves of the burden of their worries by sharing their challenges in a confidential and safe space
 - Overall AGYW spoke positively of staff offering psychosocial support services, with specific value placed on their non-judgemental, caring, and youth-friendly manner
- Those AGYW who had participated in **substance use support and education programmes** described feeling more informed about substance use and abuse, and the impacts on individuals, families and societies as whole
 - AGYW reported that taking part in programmes encouraged them to stay away from substances, and gave them a sense of empowerment to say no.
 - Participants felt they'd gained skills to assist and support other people struggling with substance abuse, such as parents/caregivers, family members and peers.
- Despite very few participants reporting their personal engagement in **teen parenting support programmes**, or with **physical activity and recreation programmes** - those that did share their experiences were overwhelmingly positive.

AGYW experiences participating in Structural Layered Services

Those participants who were aware of, and had attended Safe Spaces in their communities, described services received and activities participated in at Safe Spaces including SRH services, counselling, educational and career support services, and connecting with peers.

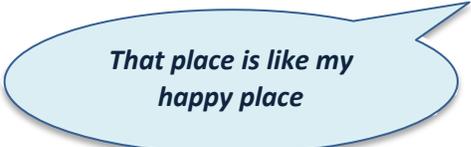
Several respondents across the sites shared their experiences of having participated in some form of After School Homework Support programmes. Generally AGYW were very positive about the help and support received through these programmes, listing benefits such as improved grades, improved ability to manage study time, improved comprehension of course content, improved academic self-esteem and self-confidence, access to computers and internet, assistance with applications. Additional data related to perceived educational and career benefits of participating in the programmes can also be found in the section on perceived benefits

Several respondents described economic strengthening programmes that they had participated in. The most common type of support received was assistance writing CVs, job applications, applications for higher/further education, business skills and development.

Several respondents from across various sites described their involvement with programmes or activities related to gender based violence and self defence, inclusive of self-defence classes, abuse counselling and support, and GBV education and awareness programmes.

Key points

- Respondents spoke positively of experiences attending **Safe Spaces**
 - SRH services received at Safe Spaces included HIV testing services – pre and post test counselling, and contraceptives
 - Health care and social work staff at Safe Spaces were described as more welcoming, warm and non-judgemental than staff in public health facilities
 - AGYW respondents were generally very impressed by the caring staff and nice environments offered in Safe Spaces
 - Respondents shared positive experiences receiving counselling services at Safe Spaces that helped address mental health issues
 - AGYW spoke positively of the opportunities for peer connection, sharing, and receiving advice and support at Safe Spaces
 - Respondents related experiences receiving career and skills training, educational support, and help with applications
- Those AGYW who had participated in **Homework Support Programmes** described receiving assistance with understanding course content, access to internet and computers, and receiving assistance with applications.



*That place is like my
happy place*

AGYW perceived benefits of participating in programmes and services

Respondents described various ways in which participating in programmes and activities had benefited them, including positive behaviour changes, financial and material benefits, increased SRH information and knowledge, health benefits, mental health and psychosocial benefits, and educational and career benefits.

Positive behaviour change benefits of participating in programmes

Respondents listed various positive behaviour changes that they perceived as a result of participating in the programmes and activities. These included increased self-esteem, self-confidence and awareness of

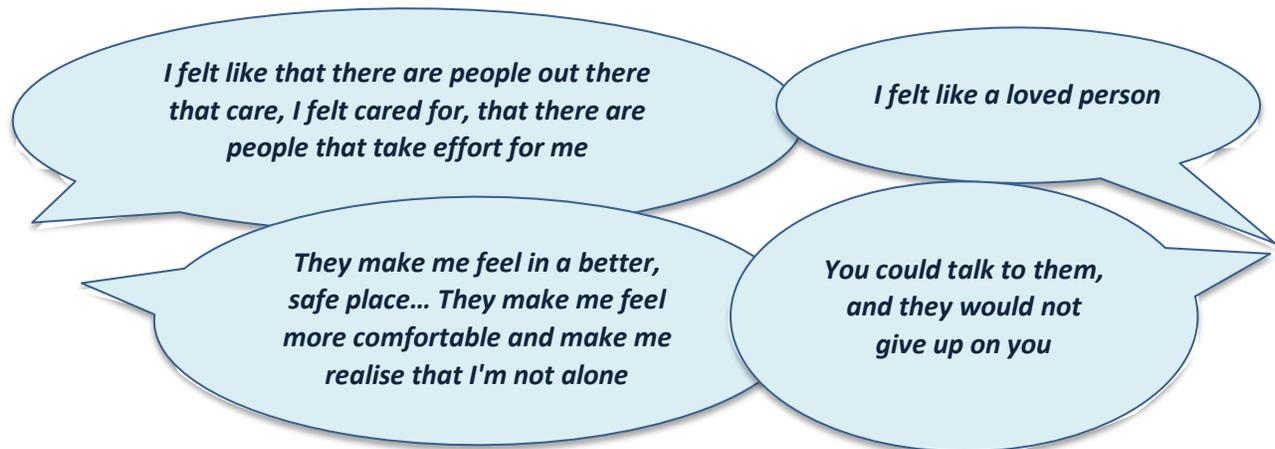
rights, improved attitudes towards life, reduced homophobic and homoprejudicial attitudes, and adoption of healthier behaviours such as using spare time more constructively, and drinking less alcohol.

SRH education benefits

Increased access to sexual and reproductive health information and education and improved SRH knowledge, was a key perceived benefit of partaking in the programmes. AGYW felt that they had gained SRH knowledge that they are unable to get from parents/caregivers, particularly pertaining to safe sex, adolescence, HIV and PrEP.

Mental health and psychosocial benefits of participating in programmes

One key area in which respondents noted benefits of programme participation was that of mental health. Benefits described by participants included improved access to psychosocial and emotional support from trained staff and from peers, improved ability to articulate mental health needs as a means to access support, and reduced feelings of emotional isolation. AGYW narratives suggested an improved mental health resilience, with respondents describing having a more positive outlook on life, and more hope.



Health benefits of participating in programmes

Respondents described a range of perceived health benefits of participating in programmes, including improved access to health and diagnostic tests; improved access to free contraceptives; improved access to high quality, youth-friendly, non-judgemental comprehensive health services; improved access to support and health care for most vulnerable AGYW; and access to menstrual management products.



Educational / Career benefits of participating in programmes

*It can unlock our lives,
and see what to do and
how we succeed in life*

Respondents shared their views on the various ways in which participating in the programmes had positively impacted their education and/or careers including assistance with applications to employment and further/tertiary education, assistance and support with school work, and support for entrepreneurship and start-up businesses.

Key points

- AGYW feel that programmes increase their access to critical SRH information, enabling them to understand the importance of preventing pregnancy, and delaying childbearing in order to prioritise their education.
- Participating in the programmes improved AGYW help seeking behaviour and ability to access psychosocial support.
- Programme participation helped AGYW build resilience, helping them to have a more positive outlook on their lives, increasing their sense of hope for the future
- Perceived health benefits of programme participation centred around improved access to youth friendly and appropriate services and commodities.

Motivations / Facilitators to participating in programmes and activities

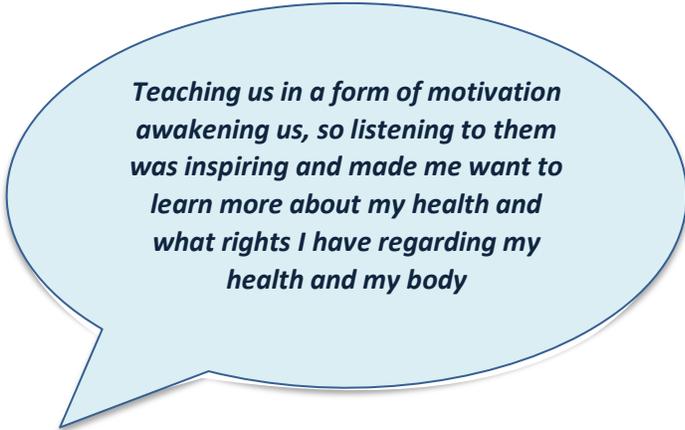
What made AGYW want to join / participate in programmes?

Respondents listed the various reasons and motivating factors that encouraged them to participate in programmes and services.

- Friendly and welcoming programme staff offering non-judgemental support and services was a strong motivating factor to join.
- The opportunity to connect with peers was a motivation, and having friends who were already participating in programmes made it easier for AGYW to join the programmes themselves.
- Respondents reported that the opportunity to get educational support and career advice services was a strong motivator to join programmes; assistance with CV writing, job applications, and homework support were motivators. The offer of WIFI, internet connectivity and free data was also described as big pull factor.
- Psychosocial support offered by programmes was a key motivator. For those AGYW who feel they have no one to talk to, and are unable to speak with their families about their problems,

*We gel together and then
it becomes one big
sisterhood programme*

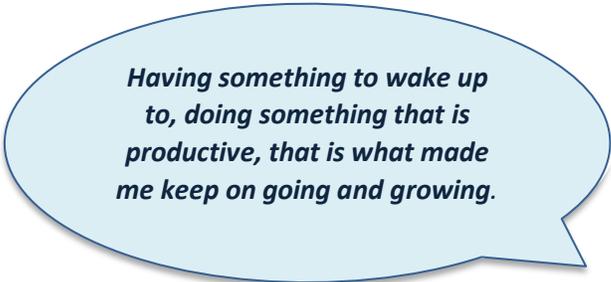
having the opportunity to talk to someone and share challenges they're facing is a strong motivating factor to join programmes.



- Information and education provided by programmes was a key motivating factor for joining programmes described by participants. Respondents explained that they wanted to gain knowledge and access information on SRH and other health related topics. By gaining new knowledge, respondents felt that they also gained self-awareness and in the process were able to “discover” and empower themselves.

- Incentives, reimbursements, shopping vouchers, food, sanitary pads, branded clothing and bags, and free transport, provided by programmes were all incentives to join.

- Health services provided by the programmes, such as diagnostic tests, psychosocial support, and treatment were a key draw for joining.
- For some AGYW, the opportunity to learn self-defence skills and feel more empowered was a motivator to join
- Joining programmes also provided AGYW with an opportunity to keep busy, be productive, and try something new, which was described as a strong motivator, particularly for those AGYW who were out of school or unemployed.
- Joining the programmes due to being encouraged to do so by a parent or caregiver was also cited as a motivation.
- Although for some AGYW, a key motivating factor to join programmes was the feeling of agency to choose whether to participate or not, and the feeling of not being forced to join.



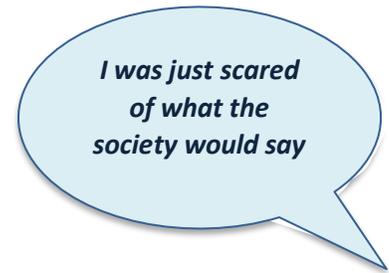
Barriers to Participation in Programmes / Services

Key points

Barriers to participation in programmes/services fell into 2 main categories:

- 1) Fear and concerns:

- Fears cited mostly related to the medical procedures involved in participation, such as blood tests, pap smears etc.
- Fear related to being labelled if participating in programmes, and concerns about what peers might think/say: respondents cited fears of being labelled as 'high risk' / promiscuous associated with AGYW PrEP programme participation; fears of being labelled as mentally ill or depressed; fear of being labelled as 'abused'



2) Reasons for deciding not to participate in programmes/services included not being in need of the services offered, not feeling that the services/activities were relevant, being too busy and not having enough time to participate, being too shy or introverted to participate, or being too angry/upset/emotional to participate.

AGYW Views on Programmes needed

Respondents were asked their views on what kinds of programmes they felt were lacking, or were needed by young women like themselves in their communities. AGYW were asked if they were going to design a programme for AGYW in their community, what kind of programme they would design.

Suggestions provided by AGYW respondents included:

- Psychosocial support and counselling programmes, and from motivational programmes
- Alcohol and other substance use support and rehab programmes, including rehab centres.
- GBV support programmes and Safe Houses for abused AGYW.
- Educational and Career support programmes
 - Safe spaces housing libraries and offering reading and educational support would be useful, especially for AGYW who have had children and have not been able to finish schooling
 - Career assistance and advice, support writing CVs, and job-skills programmes
 - Programmes providing AGYW with assistance with applications for further education, scholarships and bursaries
- Provision of menstrual management products
- Safe Spaces
- "Empowerment" programmes for AGYW, to build self confidence and self esteem
- Sports and Recreation Programmes
- Abortion support and adoption programmes for AGYW
- Programmes to reduce teenage pregnancy
- Peer Support Groups

Discussion

The qualitative findings add valuable insight into the perceptions, experiences and narratives of AGYW living in communities in which the My Journey Programme was implemented. These findings, which illustrate the voices and lived experiences of AGYW, enable a deeper understanding of the ways in which interventions such as the My Journey Programme impact of AGYW's lives, sexual and reproductive health, mental health and general well-being.

Since the majority of participants interviewed had not heard of the My Journey Programme, and cognisant of the fact that programme components were offered by various service providers under different names and brands, the findings pertain to AGYW perspectives and acceptability of any programmes and services for AGYW in their community which they had participated in, or were aware of. Thus, it is not always possible to determine which programmes respondents are referring to, however all interview respondents were recruited from communities in which the intervention had been implemented, and had indicated during the survey that they had participated. Qualitative interviews showed that AGYW often cannot recall the name of the programme or organisation offering services, however when incentives such as branded clothing, diaries/journals or other stationary or toiletries are provided, AGYW are more likely to recall the programme name and brand. This implies that very clear naming and branding would help to identify programmes and create familiarity.

Findings suggest that during the processes of enrolment and recruitment into interventions and programmes, once confidentiality concerns are addressed and confidentiality ensured, AGYW feel comfortable. During risk assessment screenings, AGYW are reassured when they know WHY the questions are being asked, what will happen with the information they give, and what happens next. Findings indicate that there need to be clear explanations of what the next steps are after risk assessment screenings, so that AGYW clearly know what to expect from programmes, in order to avoid disappointment with and loss of trust in programmes.

In terms of biomedical services, what seems to be most important to AGYW is quality of care, specifically the feeling of being respected and treated well by staff offering services. AGYW value privacy, confidentiality, accessibility of SRH services, and want to be treated respectfully. To ensure acceptability of SRH services for AGYW, youth friendly comprehensive services need to be provided in youth-friendly accessible spaces, by youth-friendly staff.

Knowledge about PrEP in the intervention communities is relatively high. PrEP journeys narrated by respondents highlight the importance of self-motivation to use and continue using PrEP, as well as the critical role of support from family to use PrEP. The decision to use PrEP is not just a once-off - AGYW need on-going support in their decisions around starting, stopping, and continuing to use PrEP, as their life and relationship situations shift and change.

In terms of intervention acceptability and perceived benefits, AGYW narratives suggest that programme participation can result in substantial increases in access to comprehensive SRH information and services, and lead to positive behaviour change, improved self-esteem, and help to bolster AGYW mental health

and resilience. AGYW highly value a sense of agency in the decision to join a programme or not, to consider all the benefits, and decide for oneself - this helps to foster a sense of taking one's own health and well-being into one's own hands.

To date, adolescent SRH interventions have focused largely on expanding access to and improving quality of health care services, and enhancing AGYW's SRH knowledge, with a growing need to explore informed decision-making around their SRH. Findings from this evaluation concur with emerging evidence that there is a need to simultaneously enhance agency of AGYW.

Introduction & Background

The My Journey Programme

In South Africa, adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) are at high risk of HIV infection, and there has been insufficient progress in preventing HIV infection among this population. Multiple factors intersect to increase AGYWs risk of HIV, these include, but are not limited to gender inequalities, age disparate relationships, gender- based violence (GBV), low levels of education, lack of access to adequate sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services and stigma and discrimination. These factors serve as barriers to young women’s ability to protect themselves from HIV or to effectively treat HIV. To alleviate the HIV burden among AGYW, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria has invested in a combination HIV prevention intervention, now called the **My Journey Programme**, for AGYW. This programme was implemented in South Africa from 2016 through to 2024, the time of writing this report. Combination HIV prevention interventions, which merge effective biomedical, behavioural and structural interventions for combined delivery, are one of the key strategies for reaching the 95-95-95 targets and achieving the SDG goal of ending the HIV epidemic by 2030.

The programme was implemented by three Principal Recipients (PRs): AIDS Foundation of South Africa (AFSA), Beyond Zero, and Networking HIV/AIDS Community of Southern Africa (NACOSA). The PRs contracted sub- recipients (SRs) to implement the intervention components. The aim of the combination intervention was to reduce HIV incidence, teenage pregnancy, and GBV, and to increase retention in school and access to economic opportunities. AGYW were introduced to the programme through several entry points and referred for services via two main components called the “Core Service” (which was usually but not always received first) and “Layered Services”, which were additional services that were provided based on the needs of the beneficiary and were received over time. Core and layered services were delivered by funded SRs in schools, TVET colleges, dedicated safe spaces in communities, and mobile clinics that delivered clinical HIV and SRH related services. Layered services were categorized into biomedical, behavioural and structural services.

The South African Medical Research Council was contracted to evaluate the impact of the My Journey Programme.

The HERStory 3 Study

The HERStory 3 study is a mixed-methods evaluation of the My Journey Programme. This report presents findings on the qualitative component of the HERStory 3 study, a mixed-methods evaluation of the My Journey Programme. The qualitative component contributed to the overall HERStory 3 study aims by helping to describe the acceptability of the intervention among AGYW programme beneficiaries, and describe the self-reported impact of the intervention on access to economic opportunities for AGYW,

health and well-being among AGYW who participated in it. Qualitative inquiry places a priority on people's lived experience and the meanings they ascribe to their experiences (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The success of any intervention depends on its acceptability. Acceptability has been defined as the perception among intervention beneficiaries and implementation stakeholders that a given intervention and its activities, are agreeable or satisfactory (Proctor et al, 2011). Acceptability is not simply an attribute of an intervention but is rather a subjective evaluation made by individuals who experience (or expect to experience) or deliver (or expected to deliver) an intervention (Sekhon et al., 2017). Acceptability should be assessed based on stakeholders' knowledge of or direct experience with various dimensions of the intervention – acceptability can be prospective or retrospective, depending on whether the assessment occurs before, during and after intervention delivery (Proctor et al, 2011; Sekhon et al., 2017). Importantly, levels of acceptability are likely to vary at different time points, throughout various stages of implementation, and different temporal perspectives change the purpose of the acceptability assessment and may change the evaluation. The acceptability of an HIV prevention intervention or service is one of the factors that will influence AGYW's motivation to take it up or use it, and therefore is one of the underlying concepts influencing the steps in the HIV prevention cascade or in any coverage cascade.

Hand in hand with acceptability is the notion of “appropriateness”, which refers to the perceived fit, relevance, or compatibility of the innovation or evidence-based practice for a given practice setting, provider, or consumer; and/or perceived fit of the innovation to address a particular issue or problem. The acceptability of interventions to beneficiaries/recipients, community stakeholders, and intervention implementers is an important issue to consider in the development, evaluation and implementation phases of interventions. The insights about acceptability from the evaluation can help to inform the interpretation of the gaps in the HIV prevention cascade or other coverage cascades, and in intervention outcomes. Qualitative methods are useful to assess perceptions, experiences, and acceptability of the intervention for recipients and implementers, as well as for capturing the voices and experiences of AGYW in order to build an understanding of how interventions can impact happiness, life satisfaction and positive interpersonal relationships (Govindasamy et al., 2020; Sekhon et al., 2017). The HERStory 3 qualitative study component aimed to assess the acceptability of the My Journey Programme.

HERStory 3 Qualitative Study Methodology

Sampling and Recruitment

Study setting

The setting of the HERStory 3 qualitative study component was the following subdistricts in which the My Journey programme was implemented: AbaQulusi and uMhlathuze (KwaZulu Natal), Mbombela and Govan Mbeki (Mpumalanga), Nelson Mandela Bay and Nyandeni (Eastern Cape), Dihlabeng and Setsoso (Free State), Greater Tubatse (Limpopo), Tshwane 1 (Gauteng), Rustenburg (North West), Klipfontein (Western Cape).

Study population

AGYW aged 15-24 years, living in the 12 subdistricts within which the intervention was implemented, who participated in the HERStory 3 survey.

Recruitment and Screening

In order to sample the qualitative participants, the HERStory3 quantitative survey was programmed with a prompt which appeared at the end of the questionnaire, and invited the participant to inform the fieldworker whether she would like to participate in in-depth interview/s. If the participant indicated that she was willing to participate in a qualitative interview, her cell phone number was captured in a database.

A referral list was generated containing the cell numbers of survey participants who had indicated they were willing to be contacted and invited to take part in a telephone interview. These cell numbers were entered into a screening and enrolment log, and each cell number was allocated a unique participant identification number (PID), based on the site from which she was referred, and the age group.

Qualitative interviewers were allocated according to their language skills and the dominant language spoken at each site (isiZulu, seSotho, Setswana, Afrikaans, isiXhosa or English). Interviewers proceeded to contact AGYW listed in the enrolment log, and invite them to participate using a screening script with information about the study. In each case, interviewers recorded whether the participant was successfully contacted or not, and if so, if she was willing to participate in an interview. Those AGYW who were successfully contacted, and willing to participate in interviews then underwent a consenting process, before being scheduled for an interview.

Table 1: Screening totals

Activities	March	April	May	Totals
AGYW called	90	218	40	348
AGYW successfully contacted	33	62	17	112
AGYW contacted and declined participation	5	7	2	14
AGYW successfully screened: Eligible and Willing	24	58	9	91
AGYW successfully consented	15	50	8	73
AGYW successfully interviewed (inclusive of once-off and serial)	15	45	8	68

Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting interviews, informed consent processes were conducted. The verbal consenting process was guided by the trained interviewer, in which each potential study participant was informed about the study using the English or local language consent form, given an opportunity to ask questions, and then reciting the consenting script if agreeing to participate in the study. Interviewers recorded participants' anonymised verbal consent, using the study's participant identification number, and saved it on secure servers. At any point during the interview, participants were able to refuse to answer questions and could stop their participation. If a participant hung up the phone prior to completing the interview, this was considered a voluntary withdrawal. In cases where the participant called and indicated that the hang up was a mistake, they were given the opportunity to continue the interview voluntarily. For participants who were under 18 years of age, verbal informed consent from a parent, guardian or caregiver, was also sought, recorded, and saved. A R200 reimbursement in the form of a cash-send voucher was sent to each participant after they completed each interview.

No serious adverse events occurred during the study. Additionally no potential victims and perpetrators of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual) and neglect were identified in interviews. Lastly, no vulnerable individuals requiring referral were identified through the study (e.g. HIV-positive individuals not in care, children in child-headed households with no social support or adult supervisor).

Data Collection: Qualitative Interviews

Data collection took place in the period March – May 2024. Trained female interviewers conducted in-depth interviews, both once-off and serial, telephonically with purposively selected participants from the AGYW living in the intervention sub-districts who participated in the survey. Interviews were conducted using Teams software, were each approximately one hour in length, and were audio recorded with participants' consent. Interviews followed topic guides that were co-developed by the SAMRC together with AIDS Foundation of South Africa (AFSA), Beyond Zero, and Networking HIV/AIDS Community of Southern Africa (NACOSA), SANAC TSU, sub-recipient (SRs) intervention implementers, and partners.

Table 2: Final study sample

Province	Sub-district	District	15-17 years	18-24 years	Total
KwaZulu-Natal	AbaQulusi	Zululand	0	3	3
	uMhlathuze	King Cetshwayo	0	4	4
Mpumalanga	Mbombela	Ehlanzeni	0	11	11
	Govan Mbeki	Gert Sibande	0	3	3
Eastern Cape	Nelson Mandela C	Nelson Mandela Bay Metro	0	1	1
	Nyandeni	Oliver Tambo	1	1	2
Free State	Dihlabeng	Thabo Mofutsanyana	2	2	4
	Setsoho	Thabo Mofutsanyana	3	4	7
Limpopo	Greater Tubatse	Greater Sekhukhune	0	0	0
Gauteng	Tshwane 1	Tshwane	2	6	8
North West	Rustenburg	Bojanala	2	8	10
Western Cape	Klipfontein	City of Cape Town	3	12	15
TOTALS			13	55	68

Qualitative Data Analysis

Audio recordings of interviews were directly translated from their original language into English transcripts. We used a Thematic analysis approach with the purpose of transforming the raw data (transcripts) by searching, evaluating, recognising, coding, mapping, exploring and describing patterns, trends, themes and categories, in order to interpret them and provide their underlying meaning. Thematic analysis followed an integrated and cyclical process using a set of pre-determined deductive code types based on the topics included in the interview guides, which were built upon through the inductive development and refinement of code. Transcripts were analysed first through identification of emergent

key themes and topics in initial readings. The analysis process evolved iteratively through a deductive and inductive process reflecting the study's key objectives and topics that emerged through reading the data. During the early stages of data collection, a set of preliminary themes and topic areas were defined based on the key research questions. The analysis structure reflected the topics/themes covered in the interview guides.

After the initial interviews were completed, and transcripts completed, preliminary analysis involved multiple readings of transcripts, using this initial set of thematic areas, identifying sub-themes that emerge from the data. During preliminary analysis, definitions of thematic areas were expanded, modified and refined as necessary. Additional thematic areas were identified through an iterative process of reading the textual data and identifying emergent themes. In addition to descriptive themes, pattern themes, which achieve a greater level of abstraction, were used to start linking themes and topics together in order to explore relationships in the data.

Qualitative Findings

AGYW Participation in the My Journey Programme and other AGYW Programmes & Services

The majority of participants interviewed had not heard of the My Journey Programme, and some confused the My Journey Programme with the HERStory3 evaluation survey. Interviewers probed on any other programmes and services for AGYW in the community which participants were aware of.

Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana - Free State province

CCI - Centre for Communication Impact Programmes

In Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, respondents referred to a programme they called CCI (it is likely this refers to the Centre for Communication Impact). In their explanations, this programme offers SRH services inclusive of HIV testing, contraceptives and PrEP.

CCI helps us young girls... to prevent and also frequently check if you have been infected... PrEP pills are also available there. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 15-17 years)

Another participant in Setsoso had interacted with the CCI Programme, who was recruiting AGYW from the streets in her area, and offering SRH services and educational and career support.

I have heard about... the CCI Programme... I was just passing by and then I saw the people working there... They called me then I went and listened to what they were talking about... And then I ended up doing blood tests there.... I also did my CV there and applications for job... They talked about how to prevent HIV... They also said they have contraceptives... Testing... They also help with applications for school etc. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Another participant in Setsoso heard about the CCI programme at school, and recalls being told it was a programme that offered help and support to girls.

CCI, that is the only one I know... it helps girls, in different ways... if you are not feeling well, you can go and talk to them and be fine... There were people who were at school... They explained to us, how we may be helped... as girls, they told us that. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

School Based Programmes

Also in Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, respondents shared knowledge of a school-based programme for AGYW offering SRH services and information

It was at school... they included teenage pregnancies... sexual activities... They were talking about having safe sex, about protection. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 15-17 years)

Additionally, other school-based programmes described by respondents in Setsoso included the provision of menstrual management products, as well as the provision of information and advice on contraceptives.

There used to come people at school who used to teach us what we should do as girls and young ladies when facing certain problems... they were giving us pads if we did not have... they were also making us aware that we should use the... contraceptives to avoid pregnancy... we got to be informed (about the programme) by teachers... They brought us such people, who gave us such information. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 15-17 years)

Also in Setsoso, a participant described a programme that came to her school - she was unable to recall the name of the programme but explained that they offered AGYW support and services.

There is a programme I know that was called hashtag... I cannot remember hashtag what... they help people a lot, if you have problems, they are able to talk to you and get you help... We heard about it at school... if you are a teenage girl you should talk with them so they can help you with your problems which you cannot share with your parents or your friends... They refer one to social workers and also help with things you cannot buy at home, like other teenagers cannot afford to buy sanitary pads; they do offer them... They asked for our names and home address in case you are sick and unable to attend the programme they will bring the services to your home... They asked my name, age, where I stay, and if I can do HIV test so that I can know if I have HIV infection or not... Then they tested for other new diseases. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana - Free State province

CCI - Centre for Communication Impact Programmes

In Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, respondents also knew about the CCI programme who came into schools. Respondents described activities they were involved in including doing an assessment (filling out forms), being tested for HIV, and receiving information on PrEP and contraceptives.

What happens at CCI is that they make us fill up the forms... Thereafter they test you for HIV... they tell you that girls should use injection... They then told us about implants and PrEP... the importance of using contraceptives... for us not to have babies... When I was still at school, when you needed help with your homework, you went to them... If you wanted to apply... at school... The people who worked there came and introduced themselves... they visited every class... Mostly for girls, they fall pregnant while still at school, yet they are struggling... they fall pregnant and have to drop out of school. They were encouraging us to use contraceptives, to avoid pregnancy as they know that the children nowadays have boyfriends at an early age... I felt that it was a good thing, because they are helping young people. (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Another participant in Dihlabeng described her knowledge of the CCI programme offering SRH services and information, as well as academic support and WIFI.

I know the CCI Programme... They work with girls from 15-. They help us with getting contraceptives and teach us about unsafe sexual activities... They help us with school related matters like applying for school, helping us with homework and free Wi-Fi connection... I felt very happy, because it helps us, I saw it bringing a lot of changes. (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Another participant in Dihlabeng explained that CCI came to her school and said that they offered SRH education, HIV testing, and homework support.

CCI... It helps the young girls and females... with a lot of things... They teach us about people who have HIV, such things, even if you have homework you go to them for help... (I heard about CCI programme) at school... they introduced them to us... that people from CCI are going to help us... when you want to test for HIV you go to them... Even when you need to do school homework you go to them for help. (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 15-17 years)

Tshwane 1 - Gauteng province

Child Line Programmes

Respondents in Tshwane 1, described programmes for AGYW being provided by ChildLine. Activities included the provision of SRH information and menstrual management products. The respondent below explains that she was recruited from the street. She explains that in this first encounter, programme staff gave her a menstrual management pack and took her contact details, and invited her to attend the programme. She explains that she felt reassured of confidentiality when she had her contact details and ID number taken by recruiters.

They were telling us about STIs, HIV, protection methods... it is not easy people coming up to you to tell you about this or this... on the street they called us out, they took our contact details, names, date of birth and gave us a package... It had period packs ... they texted me and we met up at some building... they asked us our names, date of birth, where we live... they asked me about my ID number... I wanted to know more about information that would be shared that maybe I do not know about... They did mention that they have sessions... There were no activities it was just sitting down and being given information and then you have a look at it... STIs, HIV/AIDS, prevention methods... and also ways one can use to not get pregnant and stuff. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Additionally it was explained that ChildLine in Tshwane 1 provided HIV self-testing kits to AGYW attending the sessions.

(I did go to a ChildLine program)... I was anxious to hear what they wanted to speak to me about... we had a HIV group... it was informative... you could ask questions and they would answer you well... they gave us HIV testing kits... They showed us how to use it and gave it to us we went home... We met at the street, they took our numbers, they send me SMS, when I got there they confirmed that I am in the database, they spoke to us about HIV and then they gave us testing kit and that was that. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

LoveLife Programmes

Another programme mentioned in Tshwane was LoveLife, which was described as providing SRH information and HIV prevention education. It was explained that the programme didn't actually provide services but rather referred young people to the clinic.

I know about Love Life... it's available at clinics, it's a programme where they teach about adolescent HIV... about health... when I was still in high school they used to come and teach us about health... They taught us about PrEP prevention... condoms and contraception.. the programme would often visit the school and teach us about PrEP etc... the programme came to the school and the knowledge was being offered I did not intentionally go to the program... I didn't get any services... they said to us that if we ever need the services we should go to the nearest clinic to get services. The programme offers knowledge not services... the services are being offered in the clinic. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Other Miscellaneous / Unnamed / Unbranded Programmes

A participant in Tshwane was unable to recall the name of the programme she participated in but said that a woman approached her when she was at the clinic and recruited her into a programme offering PrEP to AGYW.

(I have taken part in a programme for AGYW)... at our clinic an HIV testing one and then, they were giving us girls PrEP as well... I visit clinic for my child's immunization and then, this lady that works with the programme approached me, I forgot the name of the program, then she started explaining that, this is the campaign they are currently running, to raise awareness about PrEP for young girls in the community... she then explained the benefits of the PrEP and the safety... she approached me in a nice manner and a polite way, so she made me comfortable... she was very polite and nice to me, so that's why I didn't mind taking part in the program... I only did the service with them once and then so far they haven't called to like update or to check on how it have been, I'm waiting to hear from them... My experience was good, because of how the lady was attentive and clear on explaining things to me on that day... the way she was explaining the whole programme... how it benefits the girls in my community... So she told me that they are give PrEP to young ladies and then she further asked me if I am comfortable with taking an HIV test before they give me the PrEP, so they know that I am HIV negative with the rapid test... so they did the HIV test and it came out negative and then they gave me the PrEP. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

AbaQulusi, Zululand - KwaZulu-Natal province

In AbaQulusi, Zululand, respondents described programmes coming regularly to schools and clinics to discuss SRH and provide menstrual management products.

It has been a norm for people to come to our school and ask us questions about HIV and AIDS. As well in the clinic... They were very nice people and kind... I felt alright and got a lot of information, because we children tend to deceive each other with many things when we are alone, I gained a lot of knowledge... They visited maybe after every two months... They brought pads for us. (AbaQulusi, Zululand, AGYW 18-24 years)

uMhlathuze, King Cetshwayo - KwaZulu-Natal province

Lungelo Youth Development programme

A participant in uMhlathuze, King Cetshwayo described her interaction with a programme called Lungelo Youth Development, that offered SRH services, educational support, and other skills building activities.

I know one (a programme for AGYW) that's called Lungelo Youth Development... there was a lady going door to door recruiting girls, they said that on a certain day they want us to meet at the grounds... I felt happy because we needed something like this as girls... This programme made a huge difference... It helps us with hygiene packs... contraceptives, HIV test. Because sometimes we go to clinic but we do not receive any help because the nurses talk a lot and they have attitude. But these clinics help us a lot, they teach us about bursaries and other computer and baking programmes which we get certificate out them, these are three months programmes, so it's a lot they help us with. (uMhlathuze, King Cetshwayo, AGYW 18-24 years)

Rustenberg, Bojanala - North West province

My Journey Programme

In Rustenberg a participant explained that the My Journey programme came to her school and recruited AGYW from the streets, bringing incentives such as bags and toiletries, and testing for HIV. She was not aware of any activities provided by the programme.

At school they do (have programmes for AGYW) and sometimes at the streets where they target school kids and ask them a few questions also test them... They come and teach young girls how to protect themselves, they give them free products, they tell them about their health... we learn a lot from them... They supply girls with pads and boys with condoms, they supply them with bags also... (I have heard the name My Journey)... I have seen people I do not know about this programme but I have seen many peers of mine receiving products from them - books, face cloths, toiletries... I have never been to that programme but I know about My Journey I have heard about it... They once came

locally... then I saw some girls passing by with the products which they have received...I saw the girls passing by with those packages I saw them holding books, toiletries and a bag... They say that they taught them how to protect themselves against diseases and then they tested for HIV, they gave them free products... There are no fun activities there honestly, when they come to schools we can say they're fun because they come with new things to share with us, maybe when they come along with a celebrity is the fun part but besides that there are no fun activities... there are no activities... when the people come they are hyper they come with positive energies towards us, at schools to explain to us new things they want to share with us okay that's also fun and then also when they come with celebrities you know Ma2k (slang to describe the new generation) when they come with them that's the fun part but besides that no. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Another participant in Rustenberg had heard of the My Journey programme at school, offering support to learners who were facing issues at home such as abuse.

The programme that I know is My Journey... I no longer do it... It's a programme whereby they help little young girls and boys who have problems... Like home situations or abuse... I heard that it (My Journey Programme) is at school.. They told us if you have any problems at home or with people that we relate with, we can share our stories with them, yeah! Or we, we don't have something at home, anything. But we can talk to them... I was happy... it helped a lot of children. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 15-17 years)

Aurum Institute programmes

Another programme for AGYW also described by respondents in Rustenberg appeared to be offered by the Aurum Institute. The programme was described as targeting AGYW, conducting assessments and blood tests, providing psychosocial support, food and sanitary towels. It was also reported that the programme held group activities for AGYW at their centre in Rustenberg, for which girls would be collected in Aurum cars.

The programme I'm doing... they help us with checking diseases... There was this woman around the community who told us about it - me and other girls, that we must join it, for STIs and our lives so that we know where we standing... Oram (Aurum?) I heard about it before COVID...it offers help with AIDS... it offers help for free. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 15-17 years)

Another participant in Rustenberg explained that Aurum took blood samples from AGYW, for which they received reimbursement. The programme also provided SRH information.

Aurum is also the same as Lifeline, they teach us about those things, that if you are a girl how you must behave, how you prevent diseases for you not to end up being sick... and they also take blood... you donate blood then you get R400... they don't tell us anything, to say where they are taking those blood... Serious I don't know anything... Aurum... They said it's a clinic...That helps adolescent girls...They explained to us from Aurum that they take kids, when you are underage they start from the age of 15 (Years) to 25 (Years)... so when you are under age you go with the parent, the parent sign for you (Provide parental consent), to show that she agrees that they can that blood, they give

you money and they also give her money, her R400 on the side then they also give you R400...Ah they taught us about those pap-smear, STI's the same as at Lifeline. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Another respondent in Rustenberg also explained that the Aurum programme takes blood sample from AGYW in exchange for money, in addition to holding classes for AGYW to provide information about SRH.

(Programmes for AGYW in this community) It's Aurum and OneLife or what is it, LifeOne... (I participated in) the Aurum one... Aurum collects young girls from the age of 13 or 14 up and it checks up on them. It has groups for teenagers, and it has groups for the older ladies. They do things like take bloods, checking AIDS and stuff... then at the end they would give you money... My friend told me about Aurum, at school because she used to attend classes there... She said Aurum helps girls with things like teenage pregnancy, they teach us how to use condoms and how to protect ourselves from sexually transmitted illnesses. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

LifeLine programmes

In Rustenberg, a participant mentioned that she knew about a LifeLine programme for AGYW, which provided SRH education, PrEP and conducted pap smears. The programme also hosted sessions for AGYW after which they would receive R20.

(I participated in a programme for AGYW)... Lifeline - they explained to us about STI's...HIV... provided us with PrEP... did pap smear... they were here in our community... there was a place where we heard about people from Lifeline, when we came from school we used to go there... we attended sessions, they were teaching us after that we got R20... the time I joined Lifeline I did ask them from Lifeline that group from Lifeline like how is it going to work...then they explained to us...they collect blood... we were attending sessions, we used to sing there, we got R20... I was happy to go there after school because I would get R20 for Kota (Bunny chow) after school you go there and get yourself R20 for Kota and then home... we have trips, we spend money, we eat this and that... at KFC...we get R20 after school... they were teaching us... when come back from school, Homework you see they can help us. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Another participant in Rustenberg said that she'd received a "My Journey" booklet and diary from the LifeLine programme, who visited her at home.

I think I have heard of it (My Journey programme.) I think from this programme called Life Line they once came to my house and gave me a My Journey booklet, so I have heard of it... I would say I know nothing about it because they never explained it to me in full details... They did not explain anything to me in full detail they just gave me a diary and asked me if am familiar with it and I said no I do not know it... With Life Line they came to my home to give me this thing... When I first heard about this programme called My Journey I felt so good because it helps young girls. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

The “Yes Programme”

Another Rustenberg participant said that she had heard of My Journey, but hadn’t participated in it. She explained that she has participated in another programme called the “Yes Programme” which provided SRH education to AGYW.

(My Journey)... I have heard of it, I do not know if it's the same programme but there one I was involved in, I forgot the name of it... the programme I was involved in is the 'Yes Programme'... 'Yes Programme' is a programme that is looking for adolescent girls who are 18-24, it teaches us about diseases and how we should better take care of ourselves and about HIV and STI's... The My Journey programme I heard it's looking for adolescent girls that helps them with skills and learnerships if am remembering correctly. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Love Life Programmes

Also in Rustenberg, a participant explained what she knew about the Love Life programme who provided condoms, toiletries, and SRH information. She suggested that she might not have heard of any other programmes as the area she lives in is considered unsafe and not many programmes come there. She also said she doesn’t have a phone so she often doesn’t hear about things that are happening.

(programmes for young women in my community that I know about) It's only Love Life... in schools, and public places... I haven't (participated in LoveLife) but I've seen it many times... they offer condoms... free condoms... teach women about pregnancy, about how people should deal with such things, about how you could protect yourself and feel safe and other stuff... They have offered free pads and free face cloths to other girls that needed them the most.... that's the only thing that I know about them... some of those programmes, I don't think they come directly at our place because it's considered to be a bad area. And sometimes they don't have the information. Previously before, I didn't even have a phone... maybe these programmes didn't come to our village or our Council, because it's considered to be a bad place of crime. Secondly... I don't have the information about these programmes and I didn't even have the phone to check what's going on... The only programme that we know about is Love Life because it comes on consistently after 3 month each time. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Rise Programmes

In addition, a participant from Rustenberg described her participation in the Rise Programme.

The programme I am attending is called Rise... The first time I heard about) The Rise programme... I heard with friends when they spoke about it I then decided to go hear it for myself... I felt sharp (slang for okay or good) it helps us a lot and it makes me happy. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Other Miscellaneous / Unnamed / Unbranded Programmes

Other programmes described by participants in Rustenberg included school based SRH information and education. It was unclear who provided these services and information.

It happens at schools... it only happens when we are in school, but outside school there is nothing like that... They teach us about diseases, about things that us girls we often have to experience. And how to tackle those... not only violence and unemployment, but finding ways to end poverty... When they speak about health issues related... from issues that affect women as a whole. They speak about HIV and rape, to tackle poverty and unemployment... HIV... Rape and unemployment. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Mbombela, Ehlanzeni - Mpumalanga

Vuka Uhlale Foundation Programme

One participant in Mbombela recalled a programme named Vuka Uhlale Foundation who runs weekly groups for boys and girls, offering SRH information and education, as well as menstrual management products.

There is only one (programme in my community that help young girls) which is called Vuka Uhlale foundation... for the youth in the community... We are taught on how to behave as young girls... there are two groups, boys and girls... I have never heard of a programme called My Journey... (I heard about) Vuka Uhlale... they wrote it on Facebook... if anyone is interested to join must contact them... I went... I wanted to understand more about young girls and how we should behave as young girls... because we are 18 years old... They got us all together and they started by greeting us and gave us pads... we attend every Friday... They give us pads every week... We meet up, we talk and they teach us. We share stories... They also ask questions... do we use protection when having sex? They teach us about STDs and PrEP, they also advise us to take PrEP because we don't know if our partners are sick or not...they told us to feel free to go take PrEP from the clinic... We are able speak about our problems if you are comfortable speaking about them... they also talk about gender-based violence... they tell us to use condoms or use PrEP. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

Service Hope Programme

One participant in Mbombela described a programme called Service Hope, which recruited AGYW from the street, offered condoms and contraceptives, provided incentives and held educational sessions.

(There are programmes in this community for young girls)... They are called Service Hope, they have tents. They teach us how to handle ourselves as girls. They offer free injection (Contraceptive) and free condoms... they were walking down the street registering girls up to 35 years. So, I did and they called me back... They ask questions and they tell you which week they will visit and they give us t-shirts, bottles and pads and things like that... they were very kind... We did some exercises on arrival... We exercised and learnt. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

Seed of Hope Programme

Also in Mbombela, a participant described the Seed of Hope programme which recruited AGYW from households, tested them for HIV, and provided PrEP and contraceptives.

Seed of Hope... They provide PrEP and contraceptive methods... (It is good because) we do not have to go for long distances to the clinic to access the contraceptive methods... (I first heard about it when) they were visiting households in the community... They gave us a form to fill our personal details and did HIV testing... They were good people. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

Imayihlasele Izazi Girls Bond (IIGB) programme

Another programme for AGYW in Mbombela was the Imayihlasele Izazi Girls Bond (IIGB) which provides support around substance use and GBV, as well as holding arts and drama programmes.

The Imayihlasele Izazi Girls Bond (IIGB)... programme assists girls in the community concerning the issues of abuse and substance abuse... They also have programmes of poetry, debate and acting... I am taking part in the programmes...,I got information from... the mentor that was visiting schools. He used to visit the school on Fridays during the assembly to give information about the programme and then there were groups that were formed... When you join IIGB, they will ask you about your family and the conditions of your home. They will ask you about your life, who is supporting you... (In the programme) we were doing poetry, debate, speech and drama... During the holidays we used to visit old age homes; we used to clean and spend time with old people... The IIGB was for school going children, but if you had time even though you are no longer a scholar you were free to attend. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

HashTag Say It (HTSI) Programme

A participant in Mbombela knew about the HashTag Say It (HTSI) programme which recruits youth from schools in the community and provides SRH services, inclusive of PrEP.

(I know of) HashTag Say It (HTSI)... The programme assists girls with contraceptive methods and HIV testing... They also provide PrEP and all the information regarding PrEP, like how to use it and what is it for... With HTSI, they used to be on the streets and they approach girls and give them information

about the programme... In the HTSI programme, they asked us about our HIV statuses whether we know them or not... If you do not know your status they will ask you if you are interested in doing the HIV testing then if you agree they will then test you... They will then give you more information about PrEP. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

Miscellaneous / Unnamed / Unbranded Programmes

In Mbombela a participant explained that she had seen programmes recruiting AGYW from the street. She explains that she was asked questions about HIV and contraceptive use, and was provided with sanitary pads.

There is a programme that I have participated in when I was still at school, however I found them on the streets, they made us sign forms, they check for HIV... I have been to them... We met them on the street on my way back from school... We saw them calling us, they explained the program... They asked if we want to test for HIV? Are we on contraceptives or not? If not do we want to start taking contraceptives... I did not know what the questions meant at the time... Some of us did not know how the questions made sense... Some of us were very young back then... They gave us ladies stuff like pads (sanitary pads). (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

Another participant in Mbombela explained that she knows about a programme for AGYW that set up tents in the community and provide SRH services.

(There are people who come and install tents)... There, you get birth control injection for free, get tested for HIV & Aids, they teach about a lot of things and how a woman should behave herself. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

Similarly, another participant in Mbombela described a programme that set up tents in the community and offered SRH services inclusive of HIV testing and counselling. She was unable to recall the name of the programme.

There is a programme that I know but I have forgotten its name... They used to put tents and invite girls... They provided girls with contraceptive methods and testing like HIV testing... They used to come for 1 or 2 days and leave... I used to go... I used to see the tents when I was walking in the streets and they will call me... They talked to me and gave me information and they also asked when was the last time I did the testing... They told me about the things that I should or should not do after getting the results. They mentioned that even if the results can come back positive; there will be no need to panic... I felt emotionally good and I had gained strength that even if I am not feeling well, I should not be afraid to go to the clinic because that will not be the end of my life... (Other girls) were not attending... I think they were not trusting themselves; that if they check and the results come back positive, they will then be heartbroken... The programme is helpful for us as girls, I would love it to continue... They were teaching about contraceptive methods... They were teaching us and then we had to take our own decision on whether we want to take the contraceptives or not. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

Another participant in Mbombela had participated in group sessions as part of a programme for AGYW but could not recall the name of the programme.

There has been one (a programme in community for AGYW) but it ended... They were asking relevant questions about girls... It was for one week... I have forgotten (the name) but they had a green logo... It was fine, it is just that young people don't have time to sit down and learn about life... I went there cause I wanted to hear what they had to say... I found it interesting... The way they taught us about life, they more they taught us the more we learnt because today's youth is very influential towards each other... They gave us opportunities to voice out as youth, they wanted to know about our goals and what we want to achieve, they encouraged us most of the time... It was nice, it always nice to meet other girls and listening to their stories... We did do activities... We stood up and formed a circle and we gave each other opportunities to talk. They used to also bring a ball... Others thought it was a waste of money... They left... not a lot (of girls attended the programme) it was a few... They had different views because others were fine and it was encouraging but others thought the programme does not make sense... (The programme did talk about career guidance or homework) They talked about it but many of us did not take our books there with us... But they did ask us to bring our books so that we can help each other... there were activities related to gender based violence... they taught us a lot of things. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

Klipfontein, City of Cape Town - Western Cape

My Journey Programme

One respondent in Klipfontein had recently heard of the My Journey programme, but said that she hadn't had the opportunity to participate in it herself as she'd never been invited.

I have heard about the My Journey programme but... I have never interacted or done anything regard the My Journey programme... nobody invited me to join the My Journey programme...(I heard) that... came together all young women and children, came together and then they spoke about how they can improve their health and things like that, and then they also gave out like things at the end of the programme. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

The "Yes" Programme

One of the respondents in Klipfontein related that she had been part of a programme for AGYW called "Yes", which provided toiletries to AGYW and organised group games.

I was (part of a programme for AGYW)... I'm not sure what the.. the programme was "Yes"... I know it was also for young people... sharing bags, giving out sanitary pads... we gave soap, pads, toothbrushes, wash rags, shampoo...we played games... to restore bonds between young people in Hanover Park... It was about helping other, other young ones out there about not having any access to any sanitary things. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

CK Community Keepers Programme

Another respondent in Klipfontein had participated in a few different programmes, including one called “CK Community Keepers” which offered school based mental health counselling.

These programmes that I joined at school... helps with the issue how children can get to peer-pressure and all that... it's with CK at my school... this lady's a therapist for school children... I was attending therapy classes at school... CK community keepers... it's like a class, you attend the session... Between the therapy and the learner... you have to help learners get through peer pressure and all the things that they're going through. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

YDT Programme (UCT)

The same participant had also attended a programme called “YDT” which offered outings to teenagers, and one programme run by UCT researchers.

I also attend an YDT programme that's for teenagers and younger youth... UCT is in charge of the program... YDT, actually is a programme for young kids... teenagers that go through a lot and they help you... get through your problems... we do activities... outings... It's a programme that helps you get through the day... also do activities on how to handle peer pressure, family problems... they mentioned something about teenage pregnancy... a module on teenage pregnancy... it was part of the programme I was doing... I had to join those other programmes with UCT researchers... when were done with their research with us... They gave us a form to sign and a paper where you sign up for these things... this group... That's called YDT... I got in this in this programme through them.... we just had to write... to send through an e-mail like a speech... Why do they think we are perfect for the program?... For the classes it was held at the school... But the programme is not held at our school. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

Miscellaneous / Unnamed / Unbranded Programmes

A participant in Klipfontein shared her experience of a school based programme offering SRH information and contraceptives, as well as information about substance use risks, especially whilst pregnant..

There was (a programme for AGYW that came to my school)... They came to talk about family planning, teenage pregnancies... HIV... and all the other kind of diseases... I don't remember (the name of the programme)... I went for three months family planning... in the school hall... they were actually the whole day at school.. They did (come back) ... but I didn't go back there... they told us we must always use protection if we are doing intimate stuff and to make always sure that we do

tests... and about drug babies... they showed us how babies look if you smoking drugs. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo - Eastern Cape

Songe Social Change

In Nyandeni, participants described the Songe Social Change programme for AGYW, which provided SRH services to AGYW in schools and communities.

Here in my community there was a programme for youth that is called Songe Social Change that was helping girls from the age 14 to 24 years. The programme has also clinical services, were girls are able to get help and can test HIV/AIDS, get educated about early teenage pregnancy, how a person can prevent sexual transmitted diseases... Songe Social Change... it's in schools and in villages as well since other kids go to school and not available in communities during school hours. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)

Another participant in Nyandeni knew about the Songe Change programme that provides services and support for AGYW but hadn't participated in it herself as she was too young and didn't fit the age eligibility criteria.

I've never participated (in any programmes), but there is Songe for Change here in the village... I heard that they talk to girls, they encourage girls... when you're like HIV positive they say you are able to talk to people... be open and tell people about your story if you HIV, share your tales and other things... (I heard about it) From my elder sister, she is the one that used to go there... I felt the interest of wanting to go, because I enjoy spending time with people, like the ones that will tell you about their stories, especially the older ones with more experience. But now my age does not allow me to go... I was not allowed to because of my age. I was 16, and there they take girls from 17 and above. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 15-17 years)

Nelson Mandela C, Nelson Mandela Bay Metro - Eastern Cape

Miscellaneous / Unnamed / Unbranded Programmes

In Nelson Mandela Metro, a participant spoke about a programme - it may have been LifeLine - which provided SRH education in schools and in clinics.

When I was in school... the clinic had a program... we had to go at a certain time. Life something, the program's name was... It was about protection that sex and explaining about sex and HIV and all that kind of things... at the clinic after school, like 2:00 or 3:30, then if you want to go, then you can go to the clinic... there's like a special room just for the program... I was curious to know what they will say at the program, that's why I was participating in it... I did not finish the program. I only

went two or three times... The first day was nice because we needed other people and it was actually a nice programme to inform us who are young and don't know about these things, what to do and what not to do... the first time it was about teenage pregnancy, for young girls who are under the age of 16. (Nelson Mandela C, Nelson Mandela Bay Metro, AGYW 18-24 years)

AGYW experiences participating in Core Services

Experiences with Demand Creation, Enrolment and Risk Assessments

When asked to share any experiences with joining programmes, including experiences with recruitment, enrolment and risk assessment activities, a few respondents explained that they only recall being asked questions, but were not able to describe any other activities they'd participated in.

Only participation was risk assessment

One participant from Klipfontein sub district in the City of Cape Town was familiar with the "My Journey" name, and described her experiences. She explains that she was recruited at school, and was asked a series of questions, which she answered, and after which she received a package containing sanitary pads and toiletries. She says that she did not participate in any other activities related to the My Journey programme.

Oooh! I did (get invited to join the My Journey Programme) when I was in school... There was a programme... you get a package... Pads and face cloth... I still have this card saying "My Journey"... It was when I was in school... they did like the survey thing, the same as they did the other day (HERStory3 survey)... They only ask questions and stuff... Like do you need social worker, is everything fine at home, stuff like that... it was actually easy, because I did everything they asked for... I answered everything... I never did the programme I only did the survey... We didn't do any activities... if you are done you get the package... A face cloth, toothpaste, sanitizer and pads (sanitary pads). (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

Was expecting something more

A participant from Tshwane 1 describes how she was recruited by ChildLine outside her school gates. She was hoping/expecting something more than just being asked questions which she found boring, and was disappointed that nothing else was offered.

I heard about it (the ChildLine programme)... when they called us where we were passing because we were at school and then they were waiting just outside the gate... I was expecting from them not

to ask us boring questions, I expecting interesting questions... I was bored... Just questions only and not really long questions... I did not like it but it was just okay... The questions were really short... a few minutes but it was really quick... (It would be better if they) add questions that are real and fine, not random questions that are obvious not everybody likes to share about their personal life... They did not meet my needs at all they just asked me questions only... Nothing made me want to participate in the Childline activities it was just me being kind to the lady who wanted to talk to me. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 15-17 years)

Recruitment Procedures

Another participant from Klipfontein describes how staff from the My Journey programme came to her school and recruited AGYW, offering T-shirts and shopping vouchers as incentives. She explains that they were given some kind of test (HIV self-testing / vaginal swab).

I heard about the My Journey Programme... it was at one of our schools... we had to test ourselves with the long earbud... and we got a My Journey card and a sweater (T-shirt)... They came to our school and then they introduced to us, we were only girls in the class... and they asked us if we would like to participate. We all agreed to participate... (we had to) test ourselves with this long earbud... I was nervous, but everything went well. The people that helped us were very friendly... nothing bad happened. And we got sweaters (T-shirts) and My Journey card and... we still got R75 Shoprite vouchers... There wasn't anything I didn't like. It was just when we had to test ourselves it was very uncomfortable... we had to like put that long earbud in our private parts... if we didn't have to do that then, then they could have tested us in another way (giggle)... that was uncomfortable. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Tshwane recalls being signed onto a programme at school, but does not recall anything further happening after the introductions.

(When I first joined the programme)... there were registers distributed along the class... we filled in the registers and they gave us pamphlets and they introduced themselves. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

HIV testing at recruitment and enrolment

A participant in Setsoso explains that when she was enrolled into the CCI programme, she was initially anxious but was treated well and her anxiety abated. During the enrolment process she had an HIV test and discovered she was HIV positive.. She was provided with counselling and support to take treatment.

When I got there (to the CCI programme) they assisted me with it (CV writing), then they tested me for HIV... they explained further with HIV and people's health... they helped me to fill the form from CCI to join... I was treated well... at CCI, and even the questions I was asked on the forms I was able to answer them, I got good help and I completed... they asked for... my smart card... to do my CV,

from there they helped me fill their form so that... they can know that I was there that day...from there when I was doing blood... they asked questions and then I agreed... to be injected to check whether I have HIV or not, so they were able to check me... they motivated me so that even when I discovered that I was positive I should not look down on me I should take my things (ARV's) and take them (ARV's) home and take them (ARV's) because they will be helpful because it's my life after all... (Answering the enrolment questions)... because I am talkative person, I felt fine... I was able to express my feeling to them... at first, I was a bit anxious wondering what was happening here... but after they have explained what this programme is about and so on, that is when I started to feel good, my spirit relaxed and I was able to answer them in a right way... I was treated in a good way, the way they talk to people, they work well with people... I don't think it was difficult it was just that I was anxious at first when I didn't understand but after they explained...you know when you meet people, there are people who are not working well with people right, so I think that was what made me anxious, I thought those people were going to be rude I mean they don't know me, this is my first time here, and I'm here to ask for help, so I think that was what made anxious... even when I was filling the form they were able to explain to me that if I feel like I don't feel well about their questions I should not answer them...or they can leave me to answer them on my own. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Pap smears and other screening tests at recruitment and enrolment

A participant in Rustenberg described her experience enrolling into the Aurum programme in which she had an HIV test and a vaginal procedure, possibly a pap smear.

(At Aurum) I took part in HIV activities, to test for everything... the one I was going to participate in just now was for pregnancy prevention, but they said I wasn't qualified for it because there were some tests that had to be done... I was happy, especially that I got to know my status. I was able to ask them questions... you could ask questions there because there are nurses and so on... (What I liked most) I loved the money part of it, money [chuckles]... there was an activity I didn't like... the last one.. The one when you don't want to get pregnant, I don't know if they inject you or what, they take some jelly from you vagina [pap smear], to check some symptoms, those kind of things, they also check what kind of illnesses you might have from your vagina and how they could prevent them and if they insert 2 fingers, you are not supposed to feel anything. So, I didn't qualify... [chuckles] I don't know (why), they never really gave me any reason. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Eligibility Screening processes

A participant in Rustenberg describes the procedures she underwent when enrolled into the Aurum PrEP program. In her understanding, they only wanted to recruit AGYW who were having a lot of unprotected sex, so she was advised to tell them that she had frequent condomless sex. She was initially shocked by this, and shocked at the woman who gave her this advice.

*(When I joined) Aurum (the things I had to do) it's pap smear and to be injected... with PrEP on my stomach, they inject you twice, in the stomach... They asked me that do I have sex? do I use a condom? ... **if you are using a condom they do not want you, they want people who are not using a condom...** They do not want people who are condoms because they are looking for people who are having sex flesh to flesh...when you arrive there, they are those who give us tips... there are people who give us tips on how they work at Aurum... there was this other sister XX...she told us that if you get there don't say you are using a condom, they are looking for girls who are not using condom...you're not supposed to say you are having sex for one round, you should say you are having three rounds upwards... Eh I was surprised Iyo! I was surprised...they are looking for girls who are Iyo!... (What I thought of the person asking the questions) I was asking myself what kind of mother she is, because she is also a parent, I asked my if her child also lies and does this and that because...that sister who tips us she tells us when you come for the first time, if it's your first time you skip 3 days before you can come, then you go again they tell you that after that three days you must come after you had sex...and you must have unprotected sex...if you don't use injection, if you don't use prevention injectables are there, they make you use them, Eh- aye (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)*

Blood tests and biological samples taken at enrolment

A participant in Rustenberg describes procedures she underwent when joining a programme / study at Aurum institute called "Maggie" in which blood samples were taken.

(I have taken part in a programme) It's Aurum... I was part of that study it was called Maggie... they told us that they are going to teach us STIs... and vagina... they were testing it...they also took some blood samples...they read some case study to you, then you answer questions to show that you have understood... then they take blood samples from you... first time I thought like they only wanted blood... they taught us about teenagers... diseases we have currently, STIs... I heard about it from my friend.. She only told us that at Aurum they check diseases, they take blood sample and test them if you have HIV whatever, PrEP, so that you can protect yourself... I was scared though. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Also in Rustenberg, a participant described the screening and enrolment process at Aurum in which she was asked questions, had blood samples taken and was given food and sanitary pads, and provided with transport.

They asked me if I had a boyfriend or not and I said I do not have, are you sexually active or not... I filled in forms they required a parent and me and for me to register... I felt okay because she (person asking the questions) is a person too, there was not a lot of people it was just the two of us... (At first) I was a bit scared asking myself what will they do to us, but no they just wanted to ask us about sex... they take our bloods to test us, so I was scared for such things... They take us from our homes via transport, give us food, social worker and whatever you want you get and then you talk to the person you are given too, she does not scare you she is fine... They took our bloods to check us if we are okay or not...They were testing us, asking us questions and then they gave us (sanitary pads)...

(Aurum is) in town... we go with their cars, they come and collect us and bring us back. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 15-17 years)

Another participant in Rustenberg also enrolled into the Aurum programme and explained that she had HIV and STI testing, and had blood and urine samples taken.

When I go to get tested for my status... when you go for a test you obviously feel scared, and when your results come, your heart starts beating and when they tell you the good news about your results then you would be happy...(other tests I had) for the STI... and TB... When you go for an HIV test they test your urine as well right? Because at Aurum they did it step by step. They tested HIV, then STI, then the urine and so on. That was last year, the last time I went for an HIV test they test for everything... It was that time when I went to join the group... They started by testing all of us and then they came for the vagina, that's when I refused... I was a bit scared but then at the... it was right, it was normal. But I was a little bit frightened, the results came out negative. Also, I don't want to take pills... so, I was happy. I was very happy when I got the results... Some of them (tests) I haven't done at Aurum. The only ones I did was for HIV and the STI's... I did the HIV test. They drew bloods. Because I was still a teen, it was scary... It was fine, it was alright. I was able to be free and ask questions when I had questions and they explained everything that I needed. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Also related to enrolling into the Aurum programme in Rustenberg, a participant describes the process she underwent with having blood samples taken, an HIV test, screening questions, and parental consenting processes.

(At first) it was a bit scary, but then when I got inside the classroom, they explained to us what we were going to do there, all the steps and how it will be. We will go into a separate room to draw some bloods and wait for the results for like 20 minutes. The time I was waiting for the results was the time I was more scared. But after the results came out, then my I was no longer scared... when you are testing for HIV, obviously we know how HIV is spread. To get your results its really scary... At the time I was joining, they said we can choose if we want to join or not. Also they said, if you don't want to join, no one is forcing you. And also, if you have already joined, and change you mind or get scared during, you can drop out at any time. If you were underage, like under 18, you had to come with a parent to consent for you. But if you were over 18, you could sign by yourself... (I joined) around when I was 17, I didn't start at 13... I have forgotten those questions. Oh! They asked us about STI's, the diseases that come via sex. And they told us that when you are dating what is it that you and your partner must first do, you know sometimes you would tell your boyfriend, "Let's go and get tested". So, at the adolescent age those things don't just happen. So, they teach us how to protect ourselves from diseases so let's use a condom... I'm the kind of person that always speaks with my mother. So, my mom once chatted about such, so I never really felt unhappy or what, it was just a normal thing... I felt okay, like I said before, I would normally have these kinds of talks with my mother. So, I took it as just a lesson from a teacher.... Because my parent was there for the signing, I was a bit scared, but as the time went by, it all went well and I got used to it as I kept on

attending... Firstly, the person who told me about this Aurum was my friend right, so it was up to me to either take her word for it or not. So I decided to talk to my mother about it, then my mother went...I just went to it just like that... I was happy, because I told myself since I got to know my results, they told us that we don't only get sick via sleeping, but there are other ways that one can get infected. So, when I joined I was happy that I was "clean" and so on. I was okay... We wanted to take care of ourselves, and to learn about diseases and to know about some things that are not taught at school. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Another participant in Rustenberg said that in addition to being enrolled into a study at Aurum, she also enrolled in the My Journey programme, and underwent a similar process of screening and having blood samples taken.

(When I joined) My Journey it was the same as Aurum, they read to us this thing what do they call it? Certain case study, they also gave us, pen and paper... maybe it's a tablet, to answer questions and then they took some blood samples...I only took part once... I was already used to what they do at Aurum, they just do the same you see ... I was scared... I was thought they would find disease from me whatsoever...They showed the results, I became fine, I started to relax and comfortable... They said... if we want PrEP to protect ourselves from HIV we should tell them... My Journey wasn't difficult then, my heart was open... I felt like I was lost...as time goes on, I continued, and I became okay and got happy... (The activities we did) They read case studies, after that it will depend on what the case study was about, it was about Maggie and about what do they call this? After that they tested us for virginity what-what, the vagina...the blood, they also offered us PrEP...they took blood samples... was not fine...I was just testing...Aurum... sometimes I would be afraid... They test for one thing every day, when they call us they test for one thing, one thing every day... I was just happy with My Journey. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

A participant in Nyandeni explained that when she'd joined a programme, she had a pregnancy test, was screened for STIs, and had blood tests.

I first tested for pregnancy because I was not sure... then I asked for injection to prevent... there were questions asked about STIs, we were first told about the signs of STIs, how does your body feel, if there are any changes you feel so we were asked such questions. Then you fill in a form according to your understanding and then blood was taken to check if there are any illnesses that haven't surfaced. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)

Embarrassed and Uncomfortable with Screening Questions

A participant in Rustenberg found the sexual risk screening questions very uncomfortable and embarrassing. Her account was unclear between the two programmes she'd participated in - it seems that she found the Aurum screening process difficult as she was screened by a male, but found the My Journey screening process easier.

They asked us how many people do have sex with...we should mention how many people we have sex within a year or a month... (Answering those questions) I was shy, I only got comfortable as we went on... I was a bit angry... Eh! Those things are embarrassing... it was just that I had to open my heart so that I can join, because other people were joining, youth is joining... I had to open my heart... with My Journey they had privacy... you can say whatever that you feel like you need to say with an open heart... it's not easy to answer questions, the questions are asked by men, they ask you "Do have sex"... (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Concerns about confidentiality allayed

One respondent in Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana explains that she had been concerned about breaches in confidentiality and had been reluctant to share any personal information when she was enrolled, but had been pleasantly surprised when she realised that confidentiality was maintained.

Even just now last month I met them as there was a form that I had to fill in... I felt well because people working there treat people in the right way... If you work with them there's not a single time that you will hear that there was an information leak, there is complete confidentiality... No one knows that you were there and what you were doing. That is what I have learnt there...At first, I was afraid that my confidential information will be exposed. That I met them, and this is what transpired. I was afraid that they will judge me if there is something I wanted to say. They give you good support, there's is nothing bad, you leave the place relieved. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

They asked me to fill in their form. Then they asked me certain questions. They said that I can leave the questions I can't answer or feel uncomfortable with... They asked name, do you have both parents? ...Is there abuse at home? ...Do you have a child or not? ... Are you a learner? Such questions... I felt fine because I managed to answer them all... I had an afterthought asking myself what if this person will leak this information that I gave and tell other people when they see me... And maybe say I arrived there then my private information be spread... Everything is still fine... I was scared... I was asking myself a lot of questions such as why did I meet these people and why they chose me? ... What kind of questions are they going to ask me? ... That is what made me afraid... None of my fears occurred because I gave the information they needed... And no one knows, so I realised that even our confidential information is safe... even after testing your information is safe, if you had been there no one knows why you were there. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

When I first joined, I was afraid that the place will be full of people hanging there and people will always be informed with your private information... But I realised that I filled the form alone and even when testing I was alone, every time I went there was privacy, and no one knows whether it is for testing or to collect contraceptives, so your information is safe. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

One of the respondents in Rustenberg described her experiences enrolling in the “Yes Programme”. She recalls being asked questions about her sexual behaviour, explaining that she was made to feel comfortable after being reassured about the confidentiality of her answers.

The “Yes Programme”... They said they there to assist the youth with the challenges we face and also ask us questions in that regard... I felt okay because I felt that at least there are people out there that care about us and what we need in our community... To be honest I was okay I was enjoying and the people who are from the programme are good people... They did not want a lot of things, they just wanted my ID number also my age, and those are some of the things I remember they did not want a lot of things... Yes they asked me... Like have you ever slept with someone in exchange of money, what challenges you face, have you ever tested for HIV, have you ever been infected with STI such things... If I prevent (use contraceptives) .. I was comfortable because they told us that this thing is private and you wrote without anyone looking at you I had no problem... At some point I was not comfortable...At first I was scared that I would be bored, that they will talk for long, I will get hungry also sitting for long... Okay at first I felt fine because I was being taught about something over time I felt settled after I saw that “oh this is how they operate”. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Made to feel comfortable while answering questions

One of the respondents in Dihlabeng said that when she’d enrolled in the CCI programme, she had a good experience with the risk assessment screening process. She said that she’d filled in forms, and was made to feel comfortable answering all the questions, and felt that everything was explained well.

(The staff at CCI programme) They had me sign a form... Filling in my details... My name, then you would say if you wanted to use injection or what, but I had not done it by then... I didn’t participate... I did not take part, they wanted people who needed to use (contraceptive) injection, and I didn’t do it. (because) I am not in a relationship...They asked me if I had a boyfriend, do I live with both parents? ... Are they employed, am I sexually active? ... Haai, I just answered, and gave the truth... That person (asking the questions) made me feel free... So that I don’t feel uncomfortable... I was happy... Because they explained me everything and convinced on life matters... (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Similarly, another participant in Dihlabeng said that she was asked a range of questions and filled in forms when she joined the CCI programme. At first she wondered what the relevance of all the questions about her sexual behaviour was but said that the person asking the questions made her feel comfortable.

I participated in it... It has been for some time now, maybe it is a year and half... (I found out about it).. I saw it as I passed the street, on their board...Then I asked what it was, and they explained that it was CCI and also how they operate... When I started, I went for family planning, you see... Then on that day they worked well and taught us... Thereafter there was a programme they held, they were asking about entertainment; the use of alcohol, and going to the taverns, how do I feel... It

was both girls and boys, there and we shared our experiences, it was nice... The experience was nice and beautiful... They did not ask me to bring anything they made me fill in forms only... I think they are CCI forms... because even here at home they came and they asked questions... they did not ask us to bring anything... On the form they asked my names, the last time I filled their form that is filled in quarterly, when did you matriculate if you have matric, are you in a sexual relationship, do you know your status and that of your partner, do you have protected or unprotected sex, uhm, they asked also about contraceptives heh!.. When I started it made me feel a lot disturbed, because those things were not things that really mattered to me... But through time I was now enjoying it as I now had experience and had information to fill in... I felt free and open to the person who helped me... because that person made me feel comfortable with those questions even the way the questions were asked... I felt happy... With the programme... (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Dihlabeng recalls being asked sensitive questions about her sexual behaviour, but she felt fine about it because the questions were asked in privacy and she felt the person asking the questions was trustworthy.

People from CCI treat us well... (When I first joined the programme) They made me fill in forms... And when I joined, they asked me if I had tested for HIV... And my response was a no, then they said I should come test... They asked me; questions on the form... they asked if I had sexual intercourse, yes... They asked me a lot of questions... I felt fine, they asked me in privacy, I was alone... It was a person I felt I could trust... I felt just fine... There were no services that I needed... I was helped with homework... I went to test for HIV... That's all. (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 15-17 years)

A participant in Tshwane 1 described some of the questions she'd been asked by ChildLine, which she likened to the survey questions. The participant doesn't recall being involved in any programme activities other than being asked the risk assessment and screening questions.

I was worried about the questions (in the survey) that they would be a lot like the ones which are asked by Childline. They ask you a lot about your personal life and your family. So these ones they asked me about my wellbeing and health... (I was involved in a Childline programme).. that was in 2022... I was asked questions about myself, my mom, my family. Those are the questions I remember. There are no activities as such only them asking you questions... it was not bad even though that person was an older person that I did not understand at times but it was not bad... They asked me about my mental health... (When I first joined the Childline programme, the type of questions I was asked) ... How many years am I, where do I school, where I live with who I live with, how is it where I live ,who is the bread winner those are the questions I think I remember. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 15-17 years)

A respondent in Tshwane who said she was recruited by a lady at the clinic said that she was asked a range of questions and had to fill in a form, before being given a rapid HIV test and the provided with PrEP. She said that some of the questions were quite uncomfortable, such as whether she'd had multiple sexual

partners, but she did not find it unusual for them to be asking such questions in the context, so was happy to answer them.

I was actually comfortable hey, I was comfortable because she was not making me feel somehow, and then I was free to answer any question she was asking, because she was not asking me uncomfortable questions too... That they didn't give me I only filled out a form, the same thing I don't remember the name of that properly, but... I just filled in a form and then they gave me the PrEP after the Rapid test... the lady that approached me, the one that made me play part in the campaign, the one that made me comfortable with not minding to take part... I would to say the, the uncomfortable questions part of it were like getting asked if I have been sleeping with multiple partners, of which it's a normal question that you get asked when you test for HIV and all that stuff, so yeah, they were, they were a bit uncomfortable but I did answer them, because they are normal for such a survey... Some of them... So like for instance say, she asked me if I have been like in the last month I have been active with more than one person, and she would ask that question again in a different manner, it was like mmmh! Okay (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant from Nelson Mandela C site in Nelson Mandela Bay Metro said that she was asked questions about her romantic and sex life, but she didn't mind as she isn't a shy person, and the person asking the questions was very friendly.

(When I first joined the programme) they asked us questions like you have a boyfriend that you have sex with, like such questions... I was very comfortable because I'm not afraid to speak in front of people and my self-confidence is very high, so it won't have any effect on me. But I don't know about the others, so I won't feel ashamed or anything... The person was very friendly, and she was like using pictures and stuff so that we can understand because most of us were still underage like 15, 16. So she might not feel comfortable and not uncomfortable. And then she told us it's nothing to be ashamed of. But...I really can't remember a lot because I'm 23 now and I was only 16 that time. (Nelson Mandela C, Nelson Mandela Bay Metro, AGYW 18-24 years)

(The questions they asked)... They asked me how old I am, who do I stay with, how many are in the household... I was comfortable... (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

When I joined Lungelo Youth Development programme... there are questions that they asked... I felt relieved because they asked me simple questions... (the person asking the questions) was a person who was easy to talk to, that worked very well with other people and I was at ease... it was easy because it was something I had needed at the time, it was easy when they explained the programme and what they had to offer, I still need it because its works for me... it wasn't difficult but I think is was because of a challenge that was facing at the time. They asked me to come with them to Richards Bay, but I could not because of the situation I was facing at that time. (uMhlathuze, King Cetshwayo, AGYW 18-24 years)

Felt good that someone was taking an interest in her well-being

A participant in Tshwane 1 explained that when she joined the ChildLine programme she was asked a range of questions about her home life and well-being. She said that being asked these questions made her feel as if someone cared about her and was trying to offer help. She felt that she had a good rapport with the person asking the questions which made her feel safe and comfortable.

Uhm, the questions that were asked when I first joined (the ChildLine programme), [...] it was obviously my information, and then where I reside, and then also, they gave me some little bit of motivation; that as a girl, you should stand up for yourself, do things for yourself. As I said, there's a "No Means No" program, and that it helped us and taught us to- how to defend ourselves from danger, from men that are abusive and what-not. So, they asked, "Miss, are you comfortable with attending the- if you—if you start, you have to complete the program. You don't have to—if you don't want to, stop and you won't start again because you are not going to get your computer certificate." And they also offered food and drinks. So yes, that was the questions asked. They also went into de- they wanted to know about, "Are you comfortable at home? Are you free at home? Are you not abused?" and what-not. They also wanted to know more about where- how our home situations were for ourselves. It's always nice hearing people who don't know you and they want to help you, or rather care about you. It's nice when a stranger wants to help or do things for you. And surely enough, there are people that know you. So, you also feel silly because they don't know certain things about you. It's you who's going to start by telling them and if you feel comfortable to know so, people, that don't know you and they wanting to help. They are wanting to listen as well. They are also nice; it's great that they are not rude with words. It's a nice thing to—to have such people or... or programmes even... Er, the first thing, she (the person asking the questions) was kind... she could, like, compliment me and say, "You look beautiful." Like, she made sure that I was comfortable first with her before she can ask proper questions that she needed to ask. So, she was so nice. She was so giggling and laughing. We were laughing and then also made jokes about her that it was—something that was a nice conversation. It was like I was speaking to a sister, not someone that is professionally doing that... I could talk to her about everything... I was nervous. I was nervous because it was—it was a new place where, even though I was told what was going to be offered, it was a new place and new people. Not knowing who you're going to meet, and then not knowing if ever the girls are going to fight because you know situations with girls. But then in groups, a group of friendships and sisterhood there, so at first, I was nervous. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

One of the respondents in Klipfontein said that she was recruited into a programme for AGYW by a woman at the clinic. She was unable to recall the name of the programme, but remembers being asked a range of questions, and from her account, appears to have been offered PrEP and HPV vaccine, but did not fully comprehend what they were.

I went to the day hospital...they spoke to me and I also met another lady, she is also part of this programme stuff... and then she like said if I feel like there's is anything wrong with me or anything I can just like contact them... then they gave me tablets and said I should test it out because it's the

main thing, I should test it out to prevent... they also spoke to me about how to prevent infections or whether I should go on contraceptives to avoid teenage pregnancy.... they were working for another place at the clinic. The doctor advise me that I could speak to her if I want to... I can't remember what was the programme's name... they were sitting there in the clinic... then she called me... and she said... I can just go get that medication then I can leave. And then she called me and the doctor said yes I can go and speak to her to find out more... how to avoid teenage pregnancy and stuff like that and then I went to her and we spoke and she asked Am I using any contraceptives... I explained to her no and then she also asked Am I sexually active and I said yes... and she asked me similar questions... I don't know if its HPV or something but a tablet that they use, they using to prevent HIV from... I cannot remember (the name) but I know they were also part of the programme, they were wearing these orange sweaters. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

Parental consent for participation

Some participants described the parental consent process during enrolment into programmes.

(When I joined the programme) ohh concepts [consent] form that our parents was supposed to sign. They gave us forms that we must give to our parents and then our parents must read and if your parents would like you to participate and then you must then you parents going to sign and if not they won't sign, then you can't join the programme. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

(When I first joined the Aurum programme) I needed approval because I was still young, I told my parents about it. Then they went to check it out and they saw it was a good thing, they said I can join. So that I can also be protected from sexual related illnesses. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Experiences with Retention

A participant in Tshwane 1 who had received psychosocial support over the phone said that she had benefited from this help, but then the programme stopped contacting her.

Thus far I joined it they assigned me a person that person who helped me she took my numbers we talked for some time and then they stopped communicating with me, so I could not take part in the activities and everything else...I was not able to participate in the activities because they never reached out to me the way they were suppose to I do not know what was the problem. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

The participant explained that she feels that the programme should do more to maintain contact with enrolled participants.

I would advise for them to engage more with the people they have recruited or registered at least maybe once in a week just maybe to find out how are we doing as the people who are registered in the programme. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Another participant in Tshwane 1 described how she had been recruited by ChildLine and had been asked a range of personal questions, which she answered because she felt compelled to do so. She explains that the staff who screened her said that they would contact her again but never did. This made her feel betrayed as she felt that she had opened up to the person screening her, and subsequently felt that she hadn't been taken seriously as she was never contacted again.

I was still young I just answered because I had to... It was fine but even though I could sense that the person is a bit impatient but well what could I say... They asked me a lot of questions, I was trying to figure out what is Childline, and I thought they asked you questions about your parents but I realised that they want to know about you as a child... They did say they will call but never did... I felt bad because I opened up to that person so I felt like it's a game and we are not taken seriously (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 15-17 years)

A participant in Mbombela explained that in 2022, she was recruited into a programme, whose staff promised that they would return to come and provide AGYW with information, but never returned. She was upset by this and felt that she had been deceived.

Some (programmes) come and they tell us lies... They told us they were going to teach us some other time... They were lying, I am still not comfortable with the way they conducted everything because I believe people should be taught and made to understand... They came two times in this community... In 2022... I was still in school...(Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

AGYW experiences participating in Layered Services

AGYW experiences participating in Biomedical Layered Services

Generally, participants spoke very positively about the biomedical and/or clinical services received through the programmes, reporting that programme staff were more youth-friendly than staff in public sector health facilities. HIV testing was the most commonly received health services that participants reported receiving through the programmes, and generally respondents spoke positively about the pre- and post-test counselling they received, and reassurance that if they tested positive they would receive treatment and care. Participants shared experiences of having attended Mobile Clinics in their communities, with the majority having receiving SRH services. Mobile clinics were described in a positive light, with staff described as friendly, non-judgemental and welcoming, and services as fast and convenient.

Comparing Programme biomedical services with public sector clinics

A participant in Nyandeni explained that nurses and medical staff at the Songe Social Change Programme provide a more holistic service, where you can speak about anything, compared to public facility nurses who are too busy and overworked.

There is no difference in the treatment (you receive), the difference is with the staff - the nurses... the difference with our clinics and Songe. At Songe you can say what is bothering you the time they are helping you but at clinic it's hard to share with the nurses because they are always busy, because it is always full. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)

Experiences with programme HIV Testing services

A participant in Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana described her experiences receiving HIV testing through the CCI programme. She explains that she initially just wanted to be tested for HIV but was encouraged to start using contraceptives too. She felt she was treated well, and felt that at no point felt forced or obliged, but encouraged to decide for herself. She felt reassured of the confidentiality of her HIV test results, and felt that whatever the outcome, she would receive good treatment.

What I did was just to go and test for HIV and they also asked me if I didn't want to use contraceptives... I was not yet ready for that... after a while they explained the importance of using contraceptives and it made sense to me, so I applied and started... What I loved was that they would tell you that you are not obliged to test... It is up to you, and no one will know your status, even when testing they are busy with counselling so that you may accept whatever the results may be... They do counsel even before you test... I was fine but it was scary sometimes as I was thinking what if my status has changed and is now in a state that will make me scared or discouraged... But they had explained that if it happens that I am positive, I will get medication and be fine. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Rustenberg attended a programme called "Show me your number" which was providing HIV testing and sanitary pads through a mobile unit on the streets in her community. They also asked some kind of screening questions, which the participant likened to questions she was asked in another programme - which may have been Aurum.

I also attended another programme called "Show me your number"... I wanted to go test only and the lady that was helping us was calling us to test there after gave us pads... Where I live the Deputy Minister, those that administer social grant came to us to the community so I was invited to go there as the youth, so at the gate there were there seated there and they called us to come through that they will test us and that our results are a secret that will be told to no one and taught us the importance of being tested is and for us not to be embarrassed... They test people on the streets... At "Show me your number" we did not do anything, we just tested and they gave us our results and then after they gave us pads... I was used to the questions, they are similar to Oram's (Aurum?)

questions so I was comfortable... it was a good person who was not shouting at me, giving me attitude or being rude to me it was a good person and was patient with me... (I have received services related to HIV)... Many times, I like to test... The people at "Show me your number". came again with the EFF people and the lady that helped me the last time recognized me and asked me to test again so I did. So every time I see the "Show me your number" people I go and test... Show me your number normally uses one (a mobile clinic) when they test... they tested me and told me that am negative, they told me to take good care of myself and gave me condoms. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Experiences attending Mobile Clinics

SRH services at Mobile Clinics

Respondents across various study sites described SRH services received at Mobile Clinics.

A participant in Tshwane 1 described mobile clinics offered by Childline which offered HIV testing and contraceptives, provided free condoms and sanitary pads, and provided SRH education and information about PrEP etc.

(With ChildLine) There were days where they were doing mobile clinics... they did HIV testing... In the mobile clinic, they would ask you whether you are having protected sex or not? Are you even preventing or not? And then, if you want to prevent... offer you contraceptives. And if you needed condoms, they would give you because there were also boys there that they gave each one of them condoms, and girls were given each one of them sanitary pads... that was the health services that I received there. And there was also this one day, it was June 16th, we had an event – it was last year June 16th – where we do the HIV testing. They also taught us—it was a motivational speaker working in health where he taught us about ARV, about PrEP, and PEP. Then they were also offering people who wanted to start taking the medication for their own benefit and health. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Confidentiality and privacy of Mobile clinic services

One participant from Klipfontein, City of Cape Town said that she preferred the Mobile Clinic services as they offered more privacy, confidentiality and anonymity than the day hospital.

The mobile clinic is private... There's always a lot of people that you know at a day hospital. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 15-17 years)

A participant from Tshwane, Gauteng attended a mobile clinic to get an HIV test. She said that she was made to feel comfortable and privacy was ensured.

Mobile tents... I have been there to test [nervous laugh]... I felt okay because there was privacy... It was fine, there was privacy at least. (Tshwane 1, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

The mobile clinic physical set-ups and spaces were described as being conducive to ensuring confidentiality, as described by a participant in Tshwane, who also said that she'd received very good HIV pre and post test counselling at the mobile clinic.

(At the mobile clinic) My experience, it was nice given the privacy there because I was the only one going in there. And there's no-one who's going to come in and disrupt us while we're having conversations or in the process of getting the service. So, the privacy is very nice... I can ask and speak anything that I want in there. And also, it was very nice of how the worker would encourage you if you find that your results are positive... life goes on... the counselling they give, how encouraging they are.... It was HIV testing services that I received. I just went there when I saw the mobile clinic, thinking it's been a while since I've tested, so let me just... that was just an instant decision that I made to go in... I was treated in a kind way; they were very nice... it was a very nice experience. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Respectful staff at Mobile clinics

Staff attitudes were listed as a key benefit of mobile clinics over public clinic facilities. Respondents invariably felt that staff were less judgemental, particularly in the provision of SRH services. A participant in Klipfontein explained that she went to the Mobile clinic for a pregnancy test, and was treated well by staff.

(I did a) pregnancy test... I was treated well... They weren't judging... at the mobile clinic... They didn't judge you... They actually made me feel comfortable. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 15-17 years)

Another participant from Klipfontein, City of Cape Town attended a Mobile Clinic to get contraceptives, and felt that she was treated very well by staff.

(I have attended a mobile clinic) They were very nice... (I had) My 3 months injection... (I was treated) Very nice... They greet, they don't chase you away, they understand. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

Youth friendly and non judgemental staff attitudes in the provision of contraceptives was a key benefit of mobile clinics - thus reducing barriers to access to contraceptives for AGYW. A participant in Klipfontein was encouraged by attitude of the staff in the mobile clinic, encouraging her to take contraceptives, instead of blaming her for being sexually active.

*(I did go to a mobile clinic)... It was at Manenberg... **(My experience was) very nice because they didn't make you feel like you should be ashamed of what you are doing... like if you coming for the contraceptive or something... they told you no it is actually a good choice if you want to make it... For, I went for the contraceptive.. Its easier, its more easier at the mobile***

*clinic because they tend to babies and one side is for the contraceptive.. and at the day hospital they have to be in all places and maybe it is a little difficult for them, cause you have to wait also. Whereas at the clinic you can just get it... I was treated very nicely, in a friendly manner... and they like gave me positive vibes... **it was my choice but they supported whatever choice I made.** (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)*

Friendly, warm and welcoming staff at Mobile clinics were also seen as a major benefit by respondents across sites.

They (staff) were not rude... they were welcoming. (Tshwane 1, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

*I have (attended a mobile clinic)...I tested for HIV, yes mam...They treated me well, **they were not bad people with sour faces.** (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 15-17 years)*

Accessible services at Mobile clinics

A participant in Tshwane 1 appreciated that it made the testing services more accessible than having to walk to the clinic.

I was happy because one does not have to walk very far to go to the clinic... (Tshwane 1, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Nyandeni had positive experiences at a mobile clinic, and felt she'd been treated well by staff. In her view, mobile clinics, which offer a wide range of services, are beneficial especially in communities where the public clinic is very far away.

I did attend a Mobile Clinic... At the mobile clinic you tell them why you are there and they can assist you with what they have if they don't have the service you want they will let know and when to come back for it, but there are a lot of services there especially testing... Mobile clinics can come to our villages maybe if you are far from the clinic so mobile clinics are very helpful for the villages that are very far from the government clinics. The service that I did at the mobile clinic was to test pregnancy so that I can get injection (prevention) and tested for HIV only... The staff were nice. They knew how to communicate with us. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)

Fast and convenient services at Mobile Clinics

One participant from Mbombela explained that she gets her SRH services including contraceptives from the mobile clinic whenever they are in her area. She spoke positively of her experiences with the staff, and said that she prefers getting services from the mobile clinic as it's faster and more convenient than going to the public clinic.

I do (visit the tents)... I met them on way to the plaza, they were walking around the community... They registered me, they call me when they are around my vicinity... I take my contraceptives from

them... Because it is faster than the clinic... (The questions) they ask you about your cycle dates, if you have a baby, how do you with a baby? ... They give me knowledge... They are very nice and open... The people from the tents taught us about HIV and what to do when you find out you have it. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

Not all respondents shared experiences of mobile clinics being faster and more convenient, as one respondent in Mbombela described her experience of waiting a long time for services. However she did feel that the treatment she received was good.

(For health services) I go to the mobile clinic... I wait for a long time before getting any help, we leave home in the morning with the aim of getting back earlier but we will come back late... they open in the morning but they are slow when doing the work... They are women (providing the services) ... They treat us good it is just that they are slow... There are mobile clinics in the community... they come here and test us and they also encourage us to come and ask any kind of questions that we might be having... They stand on the streets... they are stationed at schools and streets. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

No queues at Mobile Clinics

In Rustenberg, a participant explained that she'd attended a mobile clinic that travelled in trucks. She went there for HIV testing and gave positive feedback that the staff were very friendly, and that there were no queues like at the public clinic.

Mobile clinic... The ones that travel with trucks, telling you.....how to receive treatment and PrEP... (I have been... my experience) It was good and the people who were working there... are really nice and friendly... there are no lines, first of all. At the clinic there's a line. And then you sit there for a very long time, and they are so full to even ask the nurses some questions at that time... (I went) to test for HIV and to learn about PrEP. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Similarly, another respondent explained that she preferred seeking SRH services from the mobile clinic as there were no queues.

(I have attended a mobile clinic)... if you want to prevent (get contraceptives) you go, if you do not go to the clinic or if you want to take your child there you do that as well... I have been... It was fine because when they come around people are not aware so it's not full like it is at the clinic... they help you, you do not have to queue up in a long line and then you go home... I went to get contraceptives there. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

AGYW PrEP Knowledge & Experiences

Sources of Information about PrEP

Many of the AGYW respondents had heard of PrEP, and had a rough idea of what it was. There were also several respondents who stated that they had either never heard of PrEP, or had heard of it but did not know what it was. For those AGYW who did know what PrEP was, sources of information were mostly health workers at the clinic, at the mobile health service points in the community, or at school.

Clinic

Participants from AbaQulusi, Mbombela, uMhlathuze and Rustenberg, described hearing about PrEP at clinics in their communities:

I know how it (PrEP) works... It's a pill that you take once a month, it protects you from getting infected with HIV... I got this information from the clinic... It's a community clinic, but there is room of which they call young children into... they deal a lot with health care related issues... They always approach me when I'm at the clinic, they tell me to pass by them when I'm finished with getting services... I also got the information the health care workers that visit our school. (AbaQulusi, Zululand, AGYW 18-24 years)

I do (have information on PrEP)... its pills to prevent HIV. I heard about it... from the clinic. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

PrEP... Mm. I think it's the tablets that are given to people that wanna protect themselves from getting HIV... that's all I know...(I heard about) at the clinic... they told us about the importance of PrEP, what it does and those things. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

I have little information about PrEP... I am not even sure whether it is true or not... I know that PrEP is the tablet that is used to prevent HIV or if you do not trust your partner... If maybe you had unprotected sex with a person that is HIV positive, then you can take the pill before not sure of the hours and you have to take daily I think for seven days but I am not sure... I got this information from the staff at the clinic... I thought it is a good tablet because you will never know what is the person is doing behind your back. (uMhlathuze, King Cetshwayo, AGYW 18-24 years)

Programmes in the community

Some respondents reported that they had heard about PrEP through programmes in their community, such as CCI in Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana.

I do know (about PrEP)... I heard about it at CCI... PrEP is a pill you drink to prevent HIV... (When I heard about it) I was happy... Because we are saving people's lives, also ours... Where I live I can find it (PrEP) at CCI... it would not be difficult (to access). (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 15-17 years)

A participant in Mbombela learned about PrEP through the Service Hope programme.

(I know about PrEP) That it prevents HIV... (I got this information from) Service Hope programme. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

In Mbombela a participant described how she learned about and was offered PrEP at the mobile services offered in tents that were put up in her community by a programme that she was unable to recall the name of.

I do (have knowledge about PrEP)... I know that PrEP is the pill that you take to prevent HIV/AIDS... They explained to me and gave me information about PrEP before giving me... I got the information from those people that were on the tents. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

A participant in Rustenberg heard about PrEP through what appeared to be the Aurum Institute conducting a PrEP study.

(What I know about) PrEP is pills that prevent HIV they are called "Pre" that "Pre" stands for before you are infected with HIV. PrEP prevents HIV for that certain time you take PrEP but if you leave PrEP you will still get HIV because you are not taking it... I first heard about it at a study at Oram (Aurum Institute?) which they too were looking for young woman, so they were conducting a study on PrEP if you are not HIV positive you qualify to take part in the study where they give you the PrEP pills and check up on you on how the PrEP is treating you. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

PrEP Journeys

In this section are presented AGYW PrEP journeys, outlining the experiences of those respondents who disclosed that they were currently using, or had previously used PrEP. These journeys illustrate their decision making processes, their experiences accessing PrEP, and experiences using PrEP.

PrEP Journeys amongst AGYW currently using PrEP

A participant in Mbombela, Ehlanzeni heard about PrEP and the clinic when she went to get contraceptives. She was intrigued so enquired further about it. She decided to start taking PrEP, and states that she feels fine, and intends to carry on using it. She spoke to her partner about PrEP and he initially told her that he would be happy to take it too, but has not fulfilled his promise to do so. She said that at the beginning she was given her PrEP in a non-confidential manner and was worried that people would think she was receiving ARVs. But she said that the privacy of the PrEP services improved.

(At the clinic) I wanted to find out more about it (PrEP), about what it does and how? So I asked.... I was told they are pill, prevention pill... that you have to take one pill a day... I am taking PrEP... Because you can't trust anyone these days. People will get tested today but when they get sick tomorrow they will not tell you... it was a self-decision. I didn't talk to anyone about it... That day I just went to the clinic to get my contraceptive injection and I heard some guy talking about PrEP so I asked him about it... I feel alright... I will continue to use it... at first, I got very dizzy taking the pills,

and when I asked about it, I was told it is just the side effects... I feel alright and normal now... I set a 6 PM alarm so that I do not forget (to take my pills)... I did tell them (my family) and they did not have a problem with it... they told me it was a good idea... I have (also spoken with my partner about PrEP)... He said he was also going to take PrEP but he has not... He did not go, he always gives me excuses... I did ask and he said, he does not have time... I do have a friend that I talk to about everything... (When I spoke to her about PrEP) at first, she laughed... She asked why I did not share such news? ... I tried to convince her to also take it... She has not started taking PrEP, I will accompany her to the clinic once she is off from work... (When I get my PrEP from the clinic)... I feel like people are looking at me... At first, the PrEP was issued to me in public in front of everyone, but now it is issued in a private room and no one can see... at first it was taken where a crowd of people could see you. Before we were mixed with those collecting HIV treatment... (The containers/packets) They are almost the same.(Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

Another participant in Mbombela related her PrEP use story. She initially decided to start using PrEP in order to protect herself as she did not fully trust her partner. She spoke positively of her experience taking PrEP over the prior 3 month period, saying she'd never had side effects. Her partner took PrEP briefly too, but then stopped as it made him sick. She disclosed her PrEP use to her mother, who was supportive.

I am (still using PrEP)... I felt great (when I first heard about it) because I knew that I will be protected, even if my partner can do silly things behind my back... I told myself that people are not trustworthy, I will not know what is happening in my absence... I feel good... I never had side effects, everything is going smooth... It has been three months now... I would like to continue... I do not want to get sick, not knowing how I got sick... I talked to my boyfriend (about PrEP)... He took it and decided to stop using it... He decided to stop because he was not feeling well after using PrEP, he felt dizzy... I (also) talked to my mother (about PrEP)... She asked me about this PrEP and I explained to her... She encouraged me to continue if I feels it will help me... It was easy because we chat about anything and everything with my mom... I have only talked to my partner... I do not want to talk to people because they can use the issue of taking pills against me... (To get my PrEP) I go to Plaza complex because they are always there... They treated me very well... everything is fine. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

Another participant from Mbombela started taking PrEP that she received from the HTSI programme, after seeing how sick some of her relatives who were living with HIV, she was motivated to protect herself. She said that although she did experience unpleasant side effects when she first started using PrEP she continued to use it as taking PrEP makes her feel safe, particularly living in communities where there is sexual violence. She said that she shares her PrEP medication with her brother, as she explains she is given more than she needs for herself.

I know that PrEP is the tablet that is used to prevent HIV but it does not prevent pregnancies... PrEP has to be taken daily, at the same time. PrEP is similar to HIV medication... For the first 7 days of using Prep, there will be side effects that a person might feel and thereafter you will be fine because it will be effective and used to the body... I got this information from HTSI. After they have done the

HIV testing then they will give you information about PrEP... I am using it... I thought PrEP was an HIV tablet because what I knew was that everyone has HIV, the difference is that other one is HIV negative whereas other one is HIV positive; it only depends on the immune system of the person... I thought they were trying to tell us that we all HIV so if we want to stay negative we should use PrEP but if we are positive then we will use ARVs... They are good it is just that you have to ensure that you do not miss them for a long time because you might experience the side effects again... (I did experience side effects) I had headache, vomiting and had nausea as if was pregnant. I had unusual pains in my body... (What made me decide to use PrEP) I do not want to get sick due to HIV because I had seen my relatives who are living with HIV so I did not want to see myself living that kind of life... it was my own decision... (Now) I am feeling fine and protected. ... Lot of things are going on around us; we are young so we go out for drinks and anything can happen on the streets so I feel safe when I am taking PrEP... I like it... (I do plan to continue using it)... I have talked to my brother (about PrEP). I sometimes give him some of mine... In the HTSI programme, they only give PrEP to girls not to boys... (My brother is now using PrEP too) He gets it from me... They give us three packs per month... they give us more (than we need)... I gave him (brother) some information because I can see that he is fast (he likes girls) so I told him about PrEP so that he can protect himself... I do not (talk to my caregivers/family about PrEP)... I have all the information I need so there is no need to talk to them. If there is something that I do not understand, I search it on Google...I do talk to the guys that I live with...They are also willing to take PrEP, if the programme can provide PrEP for boys too... (I have not talked to my partner about PrEP)... I do not even know where to start when I start talking about PrEP... he will ask me lot of questions that would be difficult to answer. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

One participant in Rustenberg shared her experience of having been provided with injectable PrEP by the Aurum Institute programme. She articulates her happiness at the protection it provides her with, stating that she doesn't trust her partner, and that these days so many people are infected with HIV. She also discloses that she shares her PrEP supplies with her friends. She asserts that she would like to continue taking PrEP for the rest of her life.

*They only injected me at Aurum, with that PrEP (injectable PrEP)... They said it prevents HIV, if there's any male partner even if it's a male partner who is sick, it won't infect you... It was best because recently people are sick, and they are dying...Aye! They (PrEP) are treating me well; I feel just okay... There is nothing I don't like... (I chose to use PrEP because) I don't want to get sick.. I feel just fine, and I'm happy... I'm not sick... **(I am planning to use PrEP in the future) until I die... I'm saying till I die...** People are sick currently, right now 70% of people are sick (with HIV/AIDS)...it's no longer safe... (I did discuss PrEP with my parents) They were just fine, they were happy... I was talking to them that as a person what you must do so that you cannot get diseases... (I have discussed PrEP with my partner) ... Aye! he was not fine, he is horse (Whore) he also knows... He is a whore ... mm it was difficult because he did not approve... he did not approve at all, I don't know why he did not approve, I don't know whether he wanted to infect me or what he wanted to do...(I have discussed PrEP with my friends)... They also wanted it, I even gave them mine, they would always come to me*

to take them, just because they did not want to get sick... I did not want to bury anyone; I was just telling them what should we do...I don't want to die. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

A participant from Nyandeni shared her experiences taking PrEP, which she receives from the Songe Social Teen programme. She explains that she loves taking PrEP and feels that it keeps her safe and healthy. She is encouraged and supported in her PrEP use by her mother and sister.

PrEP are pills you get from clinics or programme such as Songe Social Teen. PrEP is not used by someone who is already positive because they are already infected, PrEP is used by someone who is HIV negative so that they prevent being infected so PrEP prevents that... (At Songe) they do offer PrEP if someone wants to use it they receive it... I was offered PrEP and am still using it... they told me that PrEP prevents me from getting HIV, and you need to first use PrEP for seven days so that you don't get infected with HIV you use PrEP you see... I feel protected and happy because I know I will stay negative and happy, and PrEP is very helpful to us youth and young girls. Because young girls like me at this age like 20 years they already have a boyfriend and at times you don't know the boyfriend's status because they don't want you to know... so PrEP is important to protect yourself... I am not thinking of stopping using PrEP, I will continue using it... there is nothing that I don't love about PrEP... the reason I decided to use PrEP is because PrEP helps us as young girls from being infected with HIV, so the person that helped me to make that decision was my big sister and my mother. They really encouraged me to use PrEP because they know PrEP is very helpful in preventing HIV... it was easy to talk about PrEP to my sister and my mother because they do understand a lot, and they do want to talk to them when I have something that is bothering me... The person that was giving me PrEP, shame was nice also encouraging that not to stop using PrEP, while she/he encouraged me to use PrEP she/he encouraged me not to stop using PrEP because it is important to protect myself you see... I was happy (to receive PrEP) because I knew it is going to help me with life and my protection, I was happy... Ever since I started taking PrEP I am not infected with HIV and am proud to test every time when the services arrive here at the village Songe or am at the clinic I test so that I always know am happy. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)

PrEP Journeys amongst AGYW who have discontinued using PrEP

One participant from AbaQulusi, Zululand explains that she was offered PrEP at the clinic when she was pregnant, and decided to take it to protect her baby. She explains however that the clinic did not support her adherence, did not monitor her and she had to chase up to get refills. As a result she stopped taking PrEP. She says she would like to take PrEP again in the future as she doesn't trust her partner.

*(I have heard of PrEP) when I was pregnant the nurses at the clinic told us to use it, to protect ourselves from HIV... . They said they will prevent me from getting HIV, even if my partner has it...I used it only when I was pregnant... (I have stopped taking it)...I took PrEP when I was pregnant because I was protecting my baby... It was my decision to stop... I did not (notify the clinic that I stopped taking PrEP). **At the clinic they did not care whether you take it or stop, they don't check if I'm still taking it or not...** I even asked for it myself... At the clinic they explained that boys are*

good at hiding their illness. Even the father of the child can hide it. If you take the pills you will be protected... (I didn't tell the father of my child) because the father of my baby works in Mpumalanga province so I did not tell him... (At home) My sister told me that people who take these pills are people who are already sick and I told her that it is not how it was explained to us at the clinic, I explained to her that these are prevention pills... I used to constantly remind them (healthcare workers) about giving me the pills, I would remember when I have almost left the clinic to ask for them... I was thinking of going back to taking them (taking PrEP again)... Because I am in a long-distance relationship and the father of baby lives in Mpumalanga, I don't know what he is doing behind my back. So, it is important that I am also protected... I will hide it from him because he will tell me stop taking them. [Laughs] (AbaQulusi, Zululand, AGYW 18-24 years)

One participant from Tshwane 1, Gauteng said that she was given PrEP at school, but stopped using it as found taking a large daily pill tiresome. She never disclosed her PrEP use to her parents and would hide it from them. Her key concern was that people would see her taking PrEP and assume that she had HIV and was taking ARVs.

(I have been given PrEP)... they came at school... I said I want it... I used that once, I never wanted another! ...it's tiring drinking it every day! ... (What is) positive (about PrEP) is that I am protecting myself in case anything happens. The negative is that you have the feeling that you are sick, why I am drinking this thing every day?... it's big in size and you drink it every day... (what made it easy for you to take it on time)... I was setting an alarm... (I have not spoken to my parents about PrEP)... when you drink it you must make sure they do not see you so that they do not ask you a lot of questions... (I did feel) Awkward ... apparently the containers shape and size are the same as the HIV containers... It's because if someone can you see have it or see it in your bag he/she can assume the worst and strike lies about you... (Receiving PrEP services) was easy because they came to school. (Tshwane 1, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Another participant who stopped taking PrEP was from Govan Mbeki, Gert Sibande. She explained that she once accompanied her partner to get an HIV test. Her partner tested positive and was started on ARVs, whilst she tested negative and was offered PrEP on the spot. However after she and her partner separated, she stopped taking PrEP after 2 months. She said that whilst taking PrEP she experienced side effects.

I have heard about it (PrEP)... I went with a friend of mine... to check our HIV status, she found out she was positive and should start her ARVs and I was negative and was offered PrEP...(they gave me PrEP instantly)... I stopped taking it... Because we (her and partner) had an altercation with him and we are no longer living together... We separated... (When they gave me PrEP) They told me about side effects... I felt dizzy and tired all the time... I stopped taking it when my boyfriend went to the village to visit his family. We broke up two weeks after he returned from the village and so I stopped taking it... I was always dizzy and tired... I cannot say much because I did not use it long... Plus, I did not take it every day. I only took it for two months. (Govan Mbeki, Gert Sibande, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Mbombela, Ehlanzeni first received PrEP from the Seed of Hope programme, and was eager to protect herself from HIV infection. However, after a short period she stopped using PrEP due to side effects. Her family and partner were supportive of her discontinuing PrEP if it made her feel sick.

PrEP is used to prevent HIV... I got it (info about PrEP) from Seed of Hope... (When I first heard about PrEP) I felt good... It is good to know that there is something that can be used to prevent HIV... I used it (PrEP) for a short period of time and I stopped... They were not good for me... I had nausea, headache and was feeling dizzy... I told them (at the Seed of Hope programme) when I went for my contraceptive methods and then gave me PrEP and I did not take it... They said I should not stop; it does happen when you just started using them, I will get used to them... (But) I did not take them... (I won't take PrEP in the future) It made me sick... (I did speak to my family/caregivers about PrEP) They said I should stop using it if it is not treating me good... (I did also speak to my friends about PrEP) They do not want PrEP... They just do not want it, they have no reason... (I did speak to my partner about PrEP) He said I should stop using it if they are not good for me. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

In Rustenberg, a participant had received PrEP services through what sounded like the Aurum Institute. She explains that she was excited about the protection that PrEP offered, however experienced unpleasant side effects and felt very sick, so she stopped taking PrEP. She recounts that she had been concerned about PrEP stigma related to people mistaking PrEP for ARVs, and also the assumption that PrEP users are promiscuous.

(I have been offered PrEP) at Oram (Aurum Institute?)... First time they explained what PrEP is and what it does and then they gave it to me to drink... For me it was a positive feeling because I did not think that there are pills that could prevent one from not being HIV positive... For me PrEP is a good thing it prevents one from getting the virus and the virus is a permanent thing so PrEP is good... (But) PrEP used to make me sick, I used to vomit, I got a strong headache so at times I took them and other time not because they use to make me sick... I have stopped (taking PrEP now)... maybe your friends are visiting you and it's time to drink them you do not know what to do or react so you take them in privacy... Because some of them do not know PrEP... most people know about ARV's and not PrEP so the embarrassing part is just there... And when you drinking PrEP most people think that you are promiscuous like maybe you are not dating your boyfriend alone or you do not trust your partner, like there are a lot of things about PrEP... What made me take PrEP? ... Well actually when I was dating at that time I could not confirm my boyfriend and neither can he, so to be on the safer side I thought let me take the PrEP to be on the safer side... (No one) helped me... I just went by myself to collect it... To be honest I felt good because I knew I was on the safer side... What I don't like about PrEP... The fact that they have side effects, some also used to say it makes them gain weight for me it's the fact that it gave me headaches on the one side of the head or made me want to vomit but the headache are the main one... For now am no longer dating the person I used to date so I think I would give myself a break from dating... if am not dating I do not see the need, but there is still a need because we live in a country where you can still be raped but let me not talk about rape... (There is no reason I would not want to take PrEP) ... It's just that it makes me sick if I

could be helped when it comes to that... (With my partner) I asked him if he knew PrEP he said he knows them... He asked me what would be the reason why we drink PrEP if we both know our statuses and I said no you might never know if you catch it and I think you are fine, he said no and I said I am going to drink them and he said its fine... He also felt that on the other side I am not only dating him and said oh maybe you are cheating ,I said no its good to drink them and you too can drink them. I just know that am not doing anything that is makes me unfaithful... Me and my partner am talking about my last year relationship, we are people that are free about everything, we do not hide anything and even these programmes I did tell him that am on a PrEP study... we open to each other about everything... It could be that these partners could think that this one is unfaithful I too would be sceptical... Why would you want to protect yourself if we are people that test and know our statuses? ...(I did speak to my parents about PrEP)... my mom knows about it... It's just that is a good thing because there is something that protects us from being sick... My mom is one person that likes to talk about HIV saying you know "whosoever" has HIV and if it happens that one of you have HIV it's better for one to take the medication and accept one self, so it's something that makes it easy for me to tell my mom because it's something she talks about at home. So when I came home with the pills she was happy saying that at least there are pills that prevent this virus unlike having it in your body forever that would not be nice... (Discussing PrEP with my friends...) my friends they know we use to go to Oram all of us they know I used to encourage them... They know... I do not know, maybe if they could help me with the headaches but vomiting it's okay because we all know not all things settle the same way in people's body my only problem is the headaches. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Also in Rustenberg, another participant recounted that she was provided with PrEP by the Love Life programme. She said that she was given an initial supply but she didn't end up taking them all because she was using other medication at the time and was concerned about contraindications of using two medications at the same time.

PrEP... I had some pills but I did not drink them to finish them, I was given by the Love Life people... PrEP is about when you drink it, it stays for up to 72 hours in your blood, it helps prevent sickness if you sleep with someone who is sick without a condom, it can help you not to get infected... (I heard about PrEP when) They came at home to collect blood form me for a HIV test and it's where they gave me it... they were going house to house though I gave them my numbers and they could not get through to me they ended coming to my house... I heard that day about PrEP... I can say it's My Journey the programme... They gave me PrEP... they did give me the PrEP but... I do not have them I think since they expired... They have expired, they gave me one, but I did not drink them much so they ended up expiring... (They gave me) just one bottle of it... I felt okay because I also agreed for them to give it to me after they explained to me what it is about... Am still feeling the same way even after I have drank them... No I am not using it anymore.. I did but I did not drink it for a long time... (I stopped because) I was drinking something else and I heard you not supposed to mix other things with pills, so that day I drank PrEP and that particular thing I then got disorientated, so I thought let me stop using PrEP for a while. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Another participant in Rustenberg received PrEP from the Aurum programme, but stopped taking it without much reason other than experiencing some side effects. She never disclosed her PrEP use to either her family or partner. She said that she would consider using PrEP in the future to protect herself.

PrEP is something that while you are taking it and you have sex with someone who is HIV positive, won't be transmitted to you... (I heard about it) At the clinic and from Aurum.. They were saying... should the condom burst then the virus will not affect you... (I have been offered PrEP) from Aurum and from the clinic.. it prevents the virus... (I was using PrEP but) Ah-ah I stopped using them...(When I first started using PrEP) I ate too much eish...I was sleeping a lot...I was the one who decided (to use it) I was thinking that if I'm ready to get in a relationship just in case I have sex with someone I would be safe, so that he won't infect me with the virus... PrEP used to make sleepy... I just stopped without a reason... I would like to use them again.. I just want to protect myself... (I never discussed PrEP with my partner)... I was scared that he would ask me questions whether I'm sleeping with other people or not, you see... He doesn't know anything... (No I didn't discuss PrEP with family/parents) I was scared that they would judge me or something... Aye! you just tell them, they will tell you what they think about it... (I did discuss PrEP with friends) They were just happy... (When I was taking PrEP) Aye I felt like I was sick... (I got it) From the clinic and from Aurum... I felt like I was sick...like because of the pill you take every day, everyday. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

A participant in uMhlathuze, King Cetshwayo received PrEP from the Phumelela programme, but stopped taking it after just 7 days due to the side effects she was experiencing. She said that she would consider using it again in the future and giving it another chance.

(I know PrEP) It is a pill that is used to prevent HIV... I once attended a programme called Phumelela and that is where I got the information... I learnt about PrEP and got the knowledge of it... (I was offered PrEP) and I used it once and I could not continue using it because of the side effects that I experienced... I had headache, nausea and felt dizzy... I got it from Phumelela, there was a nurse that checked us and asked whether we wanted PrEP or not... I used it for seven days... I did not (report to Phumelela that I was stopping)... I talked to my family (about PrEP)... They were fine, they did not have any problems with that... I think I might use it (PrEP) in the future... Maybe I can see how will it be affecting me then. (uMhlathuze, King Cetshwayo, AGYW 18-24 years)

PrEP refusers: decisions not to use PrEP

Amongst those AGYW who had heard about PrEP, and been offered it, but had decided not to take it, reasons included not being sexually active, being 'too busy', fear of PrEP after hearing scary things about it including negative side effects, concerns about PrEP stigma related to it being confused with ARVs by others, dislike of having to take a pill daily, and concerns about mixing PrEP with other medications.

Fear of Side Effects

The quotation below from a participant in Klipfontein, City of Cape Town illustrates the fears relating to potential side effects after hearing stories about PrEP.

I've been offered it but never used it... (I decided not to use it because I was) afraid of a lot of stuff, because a lot of girls had different reviews about it... they got sad... some of their hair fell out, and some of them lost weight... everyone gave different reviews, and it made me feel anxious. I was scared about how it might affect my body. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 15-17 years)

A participant from Rustenberg had conflicting feelings about PrEP. On the one hand she was intrigued about trying it, but was also scared of side effects.

(My thoughts) firstly, I was like, why are they teaching about PrEP? ...because there are condoms out there... I've never tried it, I wanted to but I never tried it... I have confused feelings towards it even now, and I'm gonna try. I wanted to try... but I haven't... I don't know [chuckles]... they say, it has side effects. So, I'm avoiding things like that...Like nausea and dizziness and vomiting... they say it has side effect like nausea which leads to vomiting... so I'm avoiding all of those things. That's why I'm not even considering taking it. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Medication burden

A participant in Tshwane 1 was offered PrEP in the My Journey programme but decided not to take it. She explains her decision not to do so:

(I have been offered PrEP in this programme My Journey)... We were talking about this topic of engaging being sexually interactive and they asked me if I am aware of it and then they suggested that it's this type of medication since right now we are facing a high rate of persons that are sick such and then they explained to me that there is this medications called PrEP and how it works and then their offered me... (I did not take them because) I drink a lot of medication so no and on top of that am conscience of things that I take in, am more in control of myself I am my own Ma Ntuli in my life (a character on a drama series) so no I did not see a need to take them... I was looking at the fact that what effect could they do, what if it does not work...I could recommend them (PrEP pills) for other people but not for me. (Tshwane 1, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Tshwane 1 said that she'd decided not to take PrEP as she knew that she'd forget to take a pill daily, but also because she has a stable long-term partner. She said that if PrEP was delivered through a longer acting method such as an injection, then she'd consider it.

I was offered PrEP (but didn't take it) ... I thought that I'm not too sure if I want to take them or not because, hey, I'm not a consistent person. I know I would forget the pills and another reason why I chose not to take... I don't think I'd be able to take pills every day. Basically, if it was a one-time shot, or one-time pill for a certain period of time, I'd take... I don't think I should take it because, number one, I'm not consistent. I know I'm going to forget it. And then, number two, because I've been with one person for the longest time, and I stay with them. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Delivery Mechanism: Dislike of oral tablets

A participant in Mbombela explained that she would not consider taking PrEP as a daily oral pill but would take PrEP if it was offered as an injectable.

I am not ready (to take PrEP)... I won't use it in the future... My problem is taking pills every day... I would (take it if it was an injection)... if it would take a month for me to get the next injection. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

Similarly, a participant in Dihlabeng shared her reluctance to take a daily tablet, and also articulated her fear of the size of the pills.

They offered it (PrEP) to me at CCI... I did not take it because I saw that they are these big pills... I do not like pills, and I thought I should not take them and just store them at home when there are people who need them... Sister asked me if she can give me PrEP... Because she knows that we as girls nowadays we don't take care of ourselves, we get involved anywhere... Then I said I will come back for them... Then I didn't collect them... I couldn't believe that there was a pill that you could take daily in order to prevent you from taking another pill every day... I did not believe it at that time. (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Confusing PrEP with ARVs

A participant in Mbombela explained she did not want to take PrEP because in her understanding it is the same as ARVs. It was unclear whether she was concerned about stigma.

I did not take it (PrEP)... (because) I heard the pills are the same as ARVs. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

Intentions to use PrEP in the future

Several respondents said that they would consider using PrEP in the future. PrEP was regarded as a useful product amends important to look after one's own health and not trust sexual partners, as articulated by one participant from AbaQulusi, Zululand:

I have not (used PrEP)... Because I am not yet sexually active... I see it as a good product... it prevents you from getting infected with HIV even if you have partner that is infected with HIV, still it prevents you... It could be that the person whom I would be sleeping with could be sleeping with other people behind my back. (AbaQulusi, Zululand, AGYW 18-24 years)

AGYW experiences participating in Behavioural Layered Services

Experiences with Psychosocial support and services

Respondents across sites described their experiences and interactions receiving psychosocial support services through the programmes, inclusive of individual and group counselling, peer group support, and access to social workers. Specific narratives of AGYW's perceived psychosocial benefits of participating in such services can be found in the section on perceived benefits.

In Tshwane 1, a respondent explained that she had some experience with the ChildLine programme's counselling support and services. Despite being limited, the interactions she'd had with staff from the ChildLine programme had made her feel welcomed, and cared for.

*They mentioned that it is a safe space where I can feel comfortable to vent or anything if I have any problem... I have only been there once... I felt okay because at times I cannot speak with a family member, so if I have someone I can talk to outside it is better... I felt welcomed... If someone reassures me that if you join us, my information will be safe with the programme and no one will know about what was said and that it is a safe space... **I felt like that there are people out there that care, I felt cared for, that there are people that take effort for me.**(Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)*

Another participant in Tshwane 1 felt that she'd benefited from the psychosocial support she'd received through the My Journey programme, however she would have preferred to receive face to face counselling rather than telephonic support.

*It was a nice experience to be involved in such a programme... I was so happy to get to speak to someone who I can talk to, and I did get help... **I felt like a loved person.** I felt like I was growing for taking such a step also to identify if I have a problem and to take that step to find help by joining this programme... I felt okay after the session where I spoke to them... getting out of my cocoon and speak about that which was bothering me... the sessions were made over the phone perhaps if we would have met to do it one on one. (Tshwane 1, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)*

Another respondent in Tshwane also described her positive experiences participating in group counselling sessions with ChildLine.

(I did receive counselling services with ChildLine) it's group counselling... With group counselling, we get other people speaking their experiences, who experience the same thing but in a different way... each one of us... talks about how theirs went... It also helps the other one to prevent that if it were to come, so it was very helpful... people were encouraging and they would comfort you... honestly, you leave them with a clear chance, with a clear mindset because you have opened up about everything... We have also learned about everything from other people's experiences and stories. So, it was nice, it was very nice. And very helpful. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

In Abaqulusi, Zululand, a respondent shared her experience of participating in a programme that provided psychosocial support and access to social workers.

They were good people who were able to speak to young girls... if you have a problem at home, there are social workers to help. (AbaQulusi, Zululand, AGYW 18-24 years)

Experiences with Substance Use Support & Awareness programmes

The majority of participants who shared their experiences participating in substance use support programmes were in Tshwane 1 in Gauteng province.

One participant in Tshwane 1 described her participation in a substance use support programme raising awareness and in turn becoming more well informed herself.

Once (I participated in substance use programme), it was for one day, we were spreading awareness. It was a march with billboards written "stop smoking"... it was a one day thing... I was happy... we were spreading awareness and also obtaining information because when you do something you must get information first... about what you are talking about. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Another participant in Tshwane explained that she'd participated in a substance use programme called Kimoja in which she was encouraged to stay away from drugs.

(I have participated in a substance use support group programme)... regarding the use of drugs... The programme name is Kimoja... Kimoja's meaning is "I am fine"... the programme teaches you to say "I am fine with drugs and drugs is not a step of life", it tells about how drugs bring a change in character, your physical appearance and how people who smoke drugs change their behaviour. Some steal, some don't listen in school their life becomes miserable... So, the programme is mostly based on saying no to drugs and talking about how the use of drugs does not only impact you but also society and our parents, siblings... The programme affected my life because as a programme they taught us that when friends offer us a smoke we should say that, we should say Kimoja... with drugs whereby I know Kimoja I am fine with drugs and I know that drugs are not meant for me... I am so grateful with the service they offer. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Another Tshwane respondent had participated in a programme that provided education to young people about recognising and supporting parents and caregivers who have substance use issues, which she found very helpful and educational.

The experiences I had (with substance use support programmes)... there were a lot of people my age that had experiences or history of their parents being the ones who do substance abuse... their parent or aunt or elder people... they also taught us how to help the person to realise that they abuse the substance, and how to make them feel as if you understand them, and to accept them the way they are – that they don't feel unwanted, that they don't feel unsupported. So, they can be comfortable themselves, and also make it a mission to stop and see that it's risky for their health... So that's amazing, it was very good... It has affected me in a good way because it was very educational, very educational. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Setsoso attended a programme in which she learned about substance use challenges and their effects on society.

My experience was good, it was good and I was able to hear about abuse, how drugs destroy people's life, what they end up doing or how friends are able to influence other children to use drugs and they are affected really bad, they are affected really bad because...their lives end without reasons and become thieves...around the streets...I have learned many things... we were taught about dagga, the use of drugs, the use of cigarettes, to use, the use of alcohol...to say no people

who use them they end up having a damaged brain, and they are unable to watch...television... they are oppressive, they are oppressive, they oppress feelings ...I learned a lot. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Experiences with Parenting / Teen Mothers' Support programmes

A participant in Cape Town described her engagement with a teen parenting support programme in Hanover park called "Goals for Girls". Her experience with the programme was very positive, and she lamented the fact that the programme no longer exists.

I was in a programme with my first child, hmmm what is the name now again? Goals for girls in Hanover Park... pregnant and dropouts... that was a really nice group... that really helped girls to open up and talk and just like a second home for us girls... they don't have it anymore... the Goals for Girls was really nice because our the head, the person who funded and everything was a really nice person we could speak to her about anything and she didn't judge you, and she was like a second mommy. She made everything nice for us... Goals for Girls, that's gone... that was like a safe space, the only safe space I know of I attended. It is not here anymore. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

Experiences with Physical Activity / Recreation programmes

A few respondents described sports activities that they had participated in their community. One participant in uMhlathuze described playing women's soccer with the Lungelo Youth Development programme. She'd also participated in activities such as litter collecting, and assisting elderly people in the community.

(What we do with the Lungelo Youth Development programme) varies, sometime we meet up to go to a sport ground to play ladies soccer, but lately they have also included the boys because they saw that boys also need it to get away from drugs. They give a little something for the winning team and also for the losing team... We gather on some days to collect litter, we also help the elderly people, we go to houses where only grannies live, we assist where we can. (uMhlathuze, King Cetshwayo, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Dihlabeng described having participated in netball matches and competitions organised by the CCI programme.

I took part in sports there (with the CCI programme)... I love sports, I took part in netball... I feel happy because it is what I like and it makes my mind to be active... the experience that I had in recreational activities; they organise friendly match for us, like the CCI from Clarens will bring the girls here, and we will go to another CCI branch, then there will be matches, then the winning team gets the CCI Attire. (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

AGYW experiences participating in **Structural Layered Services**

Experiences with Safe Spaces

Those participants who were aware of, and had attended Safe Spaces in their communities, described services received and activities participated in at Safe Spaces including SRH services, counselling, educational and career support services, and connecting with peers.

SRH services at Safe Spaces

In Tshwane 1, a participant had attended a Safe Space and had a very positive experience. She found the health and social worker staff there to be welcoming and warm. She received HIV testing and SRH information at the Safe Space

I have (attended a Safe Space)... It was very welcoming, very good, very good. It was very welcoming and very nice people... welcoming with warm hearts... My experience was very good because the people are very welcoming. The people are very nice with you. The people give you full information from whatever you want to know, they explain everything into detail... each and every person working in a different program, or different field, are very welcoming – even the health workers there. They are not so harsh, everything is nice... I prefer the SafeSpace with the health workers and social workers rather than the clinic health workers. They very much want to help, it's nice wanting help... without judging you, without being rude... The information and services I got from SafeSpace and ChildLine regarding those topics – I'm fulfilled... I feel very knowledgeable about it, I have more information... I applaud them to be nice people. And then, for giving information, being dedicated to their work and knowing how to speak to a person, and also helping a person. So, my experience is good. I would recommend and also applaud them for the treatment they gave us... receiving the HIV testing and information, it was so easy because the person that was giving us the help there was someone our age group. So, we could relate on a lot of things, and he knew how to ask questions, and how to advise, and also recommend some things. And then also, with the other things it was full of knowledge and information because out of everything, with anything, with health, our education, you need to have full information, so we were informed about it and we know about it. So, knowing about everything else, it's a bonus. Also, receiving services regarding that, it's a complete bonus because you're helped... my experience was very good. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Setsoso explained that she utilised the HIV testing services at the CCI Safe Space and was impressed by the caring staff and nice environment.

(Safe Space) It's where there are services, where you go to if you do not feel good they are able to help you... It's a nice space, the people there are good people with good hearts; when you there one feels at ease... I received HIV testing. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 15-17 years)

Also at a CCI Safe Space in Setsoso, a participant shares that she was tested for HIV for the first time, and found the staff very friendly.

I did get there (CCI Safe Space)... people from there they are friendly...they know how to communicate with people in a good way, even when you're not feeling well, you're able to tell them... they advise you maybe to motivate you... I went there for the first time for testing for HIV. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Dihlabeng attended the CCI Safe Space and received contraceptives and HIV counselling and testing there.

I did (attend the CCI Safe Space)... I was interested in knowing what CCI was all about and the kind of services they offer that can affect my life... I got contraceptives... I did it before I got HIV results... I arrived there scared, then they did counselling first. (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Counselling services at Safe Spaces

At a Safe Space provided by Aurum in Rustenberg, Bojanala, a participant received weekly individual counselling, which she felt helped her address her anger issues.

(I did go to the Aurum safe space)... It was good...they are open... you also should be open... I realised... things that they were talking about, I saw that they are raising points... I was happy, I realised that those things I need them as a girl child... (The services) they were good... I also could see that I need counselling... I have a lot of anger... I did individual counselling... I used to go there on Mondays and Fridays only... every week. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Peer connection and support at Safe Spaces

A participant in Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo described her experiences attending a Safe Space provided by the Songe Social Change programme at which she received peer support.

When I attended Safe Space I was scared because I didn't know if I can speak with something that is bothering me, if they won't share it with others but on my first day I saw that here is a right place for someone to share what is bothering them so to get other people's views and advices on how to solve the problem, so I continued attending... We give each other advice on how to solve the problem maybe the other person is being abused at home but didn't know how to tell friends and family but there you can say what you want and you will get advice on how to solve your problem. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)

Educational and Career Support provided at Safe Spaces

A participant in Nyandeni attended a Safe Space and received career and skills training. She said that educational support, and help with applications, were also provided at the Safe Space.

At safe space I was attending for counselling, and there was career employment... if there is a work opportunity they will come and give out the information and there was also skills training... The was a training that we did about Fourth Industrial Revolution from NEMISA, the is another training that is going to take part that is about Business management and Grant programme but we were told the will be other trainings for unemployed people to improve their skills and also help to look for schools for the ones who have taken gap year so they will be given application forms. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)

What could have been improved about Safe Spaces?

One complaint was that Safe Spaces were not fully equipped and lacked resources. For example a participant in Setsoso complained that she had not been able to print out her CV due to a lack of printing materials at the programme.

The shortage there is things regarding CV's, those are the things that has a lot of shortage, they do not have sheets (Printing materials) so if they had things (Resources) that print out CV's all my things should have gone well... I should have printed my CV by now, the way they should have... I would say they... not met my needs that much because I have not held my CV until this today and I still need it... it is still an issue of CV and now... I haven't received it till today... I was able to get help... but at the end it was bad because I realised that... I mean when they explained that I must have CV I will have to print it out myself, I then realised that this people could have explained to me in the beginning so that I can know that I will need a CV before I could do this before, now I must...wait first to get the CV. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Experiences with Homework Support - After School Programmes

Several respondents across the sites shared their experiences of having participated in some form of After School Homework Support programmes.

In Tshwane, Gauteng, a respondent described a group she was part of that provides reading support and help with school topics to assist with school exams.

We assist each other with reading, writing homework. I was a part of it before and after I finished school... I am finished with grades, and am in first year now... I think it does help because there are people have obtained degrees and honours where I can ask for advice about how I can do something... I benefit... secondly my marks improve, I can find certain ways of how to study and manage my time when I study. (Tshwane 1, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

In AbaQulusi, Zululand, a participant described her interactions with a programme that helped her with homework.

(There were Homework support programmes) fortunately I am doing well in school... I have no problem... (when they helped with homework)... I felt free, I also took advantage of things I can't do by myself... there was difference (in my studies)... I can now ask for help from people and they help... I am in grade 11... I would like it (Homework support programme) to continue... For when I need assistance. (AbaQulusi, Zululand, AGYW 18-24 years)

In Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, a respondent described a homework support programme offered at her school after classes.

(after school homework support programmes)... I do take part in them... because I realised that I need a lot of help with my schoolwork... We were told (about the programme) by teachers that there are people who help with schoolwork and that we should come after school for help... It has helped me in such a way that I now can do some of my homework without help and I'm now more able in my studies. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 15-17 years)

Another participant in Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana was aware of an after school support programme but had decided not to join as she felt she needed to spend more time at home and less time at school, although she did recognise that it would be valuable.

There is (an after school work support programme) but I have not joined... (because) My time at school is more than the time I have at home... (however) it could help me...so that I could be helped with school work. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 15-17 years)

In Dihlabeng, a participant knew of a homework support programme that assisted students with assignments and academic support, and also provided internet access.

(the After School Homework Support programme) It was introduced when I had finished my matric... They said it is for students who have homework that need help with assignments or with anything to google, or internet... Anything that need a lot of data, or if there is someone good in for example, maths then that person will be able to help. (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

In Mbombela a participant had received homework support through the Service Hope Programme, who assisted with applications to colleges, and provided access to laptops and internet.

(The Service Hope programme) they help you with homework, they even had Wi-Fi, they lent us laptops if we needed... I asked them to make an application for me because I wanted to go to school, so they did... I was happy... I applied at a TVET. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

In Rustenberg a participant had attended homework support classes at her school which she'd found helpful.

At our school, there were periods to do our HomeWorks, research and everything... it made my life easy because when I was struggling, I was able to ask... they were extra classes. They are afterschool

classes, and I was able to chat with someone that had more information than me... I learned a lot... it gave me information. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Experiences with Economic Strengthening programmes

Several respondents described economic strengthening programmes that they had participated in. The most common type of support received was assistance writing CVs, job applications, and applications for higher/further education.

I received it and I'm still receiving them even now because they help us to do a CV, they even tell us if there are posts available, they call us to come and apply, even when the institutions of higher education open they help us apply even for NSFAS. (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

(At Aurum) they once gave us a link to create our profile. If there is a job that came out, then you will get a notification then you apply. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

In uMhlathuze, a participant who participated in the Lungelo Youth Development programme, explained that she had a small business and had received support with advertising, and meeting other AGYW in her position.

I am happy because it helps us as girls and we get to meet and to know each other especially if you have a small business like me because I sometimes ask them to advertise my business and they support my business, basically we support each other. (uMhlathuze, King Cetshwayo, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Rustenberg participated in a learnership with the Yes Programme, which helped young people develop business plans.

The "Yes Programme" where I was attending a learnership the "Yes Programme" came there to approach us... It was Afrika Tikkon, it was for agriculture helping the community... We use to play some game, and then they told us they want to help us open businesses and gave us business plan as a home work and then amongst us the one who comes up with a brilliant plan or can explain her business better it was R5000 wins... honestly... creating a business plan defeated me [giggling] but at the end they gave us fruits... I liked the business plan competition even though I did not make it but there are other people that really want to get that opportunity to open business but do not have the finances, I really liked that part... I think that they could have something else except for the business plan competition, they could have had something else where we can win a learnership because it's not all of us that are business minded... They could have maybe expanded in that particular regard... there were games we played where we clapped hands, sang and danced only and the business plan. I am not a business minded person so I failed in that regard... It was fun also being with other kids it was good and I was comfortable they made us feel at ease... Since they

taught us to do business plan if you want to make a Salon for example they help you go about it. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

A participant in Tshwane had received support to apply for further education, in addition to receiving business coaching and support.

I do have career support, where when I want to apply at schools, they'll help me to apply... we also got the support of starting a business on how to run a business, on motivation around business and workshops around businesses. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

In Rustenberg, a participant said that the Rise Programme had organised after school paid work activities for young people from poor households. However she found the work exhausting and that it detracted from her studies.

The Rise programme they take unemployed youth, where they come from poor homes... Youth that are from poverty stricken homes they give them jobs such as cleaning, some do gardening, some clean roads others at schools, help kids with home works after school such things... (The first time (I participated) it was hard because they kept on taking us everywhere, making us clean this and that, until after two months they found a place for us where we can work from for six months until the contract ends there... When I joined I asked what type of programme is this and what's being done in this programme, they then told me what's the programme is about and that they offer jobs, jobs around our community and that are not specifically the same... I have participated it also was a programme where we use to clean schools, clean classes but I did not last in it because I was no longer interested... Okay that programme did not help us with homework, if it was after school we use to clean, do gardening at the grounds, cleaning classes, when you get home you tired to write homework also do not have time to do homework, we do not even study so you see we do not do well because we do not have time for our books and then we eat, bath, sleep and tomorrow again it's the same thing. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Experiences with GBV Support / Self-defence programmes

Several respondents from across various sites described their involvement with programmes or activities related to gender based violence and self defence, inclusive of self-defence classes, abuse counselling and support, and GBV education and awareness programmes.

GBV Education and Awareness programmes

Also in Setsoso, a participant explained that she had gained useful and important information about abuse and violence from the GBV programme she'd participated in.

(Attending the GBV programme) It affected me...Int affected a lot because rape is something that is too bad regarding us, it's bad and it is painful... so it affected me a lot... It affected my life in good way because I learned about many things about abuse... even when someone is doing something they might be doing abuse or not (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in uMhlathuze who attended the Lungelo Youth Development programme took part in GBV activities, which she found very helpful and informative.

We are taught about GBV and independence because GBV is directed at women at times we cannot defend ourselves, we get together at the community ground, they ask questions to those in relationships, they ask about their show signs of violence? Or show any signs of verbal abuse because GBV is not only a sign of physical abuse... Is someone is being abused, they usually refer them to therapists... If you are afraid to report your partner, they will link you with the police and everyone relevant at the time... It helped me a lot because I didn't know some things. If it happens I have a relationship with a man or women, I will be able to avoid many things. (uMhlathuze, King Cetshwayo, AGYW 18-24 years)

In Rustenberg, a participant noted that she had gained knowledge about the importance of taking action to preserve one's own safety.

Iyo! Iyo! (from the GBV programme) I also realised that iyo! As a girl's child you must behave well, you should not walk around at night, because of at night there are not good, who are out are there looking for girls. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Another participant in Rustenburg described a GBV and human rights education programme offered by SASSA.

There was (a programme for GBV) but it's finished now it was a programme from SASSA... It was a programme from SASSA which wanted girls in the ages of 20 to 25 which was the programme I was a part of which it educated us with GBV, HIV testing... The programme I was a part of is from SASSA, where they taught us about Gender Based Violence and how to get out of such a situation... That's the programme I entered around Boitekong was for SASSA. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Also in Rustenburg, a participant described a GBV programme she'd participated in at school that was offered to all students in Grades 11 and 12. She felt that the programme had positively impacted her self esteem and confidence.

(I have had interaction with a GBV programme)... There was a programme that I was assigned to as learner especially to grade 12's... Our principal assigned that programme to us only grade 12 and 11... at school... it boosted my confidence and my self esteem. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Self-defence classes

A participant in Setsoso participated in a self-defence programme and learned about taking action to increase her personal safety.

I participated in it (GBV support / self-defence programme)... in that programme they could tell you what you may encounter in life, and when you have problems whom to encounter. You can protect yourself as people like to abuse others and they talk about such abuse that is happening... They said someone may just attack and injure you for no apparent reason... and that we should stop being on

the streets at night because it is not safe there are a lot of things happening outside... I knew about it (the GBV programme) from school... they also stood on the streets and as you pass by they would call you and tell you about it... I know that it happens a lot of times in our community even in my street such can happen. Now as teenage girls they would come to me, and we talk about it and make each other feel well. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Rustenberg shared that she'd attended a GBV programme with LifeLine and learned self-defence skills.

At LifeLine there is a woman there who teaches us on how to protect us when we get mugged... "no means no" like when they want to rape you, how you must fight...then get the certificates...we do "No means no", they show you...They teach you that when a man... wants to rape...what you should do, how you must fight, your feet mind you even now I'm doing it...You choke him, you can hold him down there and twist, you roll you see they demonstrate to us...they taught and get certificate after; I have a certificate for that at home...It's defence...The one where you defend yourself... self-defence... (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

In Mbombela, a participant had taken part in a self-defence and GBV activity offered by the Service Hope programme.

(The Service Hope programme did have GBV activities) We learnt how to defend ourselves from abusive boyfriends, what to do if someone wants to rape you... I was happy, because I needed to know in case I come across that situation... I learned how to live my life in order to protect myself from the opposite gender.(Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

A participant in Cape Town describes her interaction with the self-defence programme, which she enjoyed and found engaging - however she felt that it would have been even more useful if she'd been taught how to physically defend herself from an attacker.

The self-defence programme... That was one really great programme because... you could talk things, we could talk in the group and we wrote down our feelings... we got something to eat. So it wasn't like you just sitting there and doing nothing, it was really nice. We talked and we even learned some stuff... the self-defence... we did also, it is good and stuff but it is not enough... I want to be able fight back against a man, because... that isn't enough because I want more... it was nice but I want to be able to defend myself... because I then still can't. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

In Rustenburg, a participant had taken part in a GBV and self-defence programme, which she couldn't recall the name of, but felt that she learned a lot from the programme. In addition to the physical self-defence classes, she would have liked to also receive a printed manual or video links so she could practise at home.

(I do know a GBV programme)... I forgot what it was called... It was fine... They asked us questions if it was this or that would happen what would you do and then we answered... I did not know a lot of things like when a person rapes you what do I do ,I did not know a lot of things but now I know

when a person does this to me what do I do. We used to do activities on top of sponges (padded mats?)... I was thinking the demonstrations they make us do on the sponges maybe they could also print out booklets for us to read up on at home also record clips so we can see it visually. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Counselling and support for victims of abuse

A participant in Klipfontein explained that she had learned a lot through attending a programme in her local library that focused on GBV and intimate partner violence activities for young women.

I used to go to activities... for counselling and for abusive boyfriends or girl or family member someone abuses you, or you're going through a lot, you can go there...also in that centre there were a lot of programmes... for young girls it was very nice, it help you a lot to things that we go through... (gender based violence prevention programmes) I was in that one here by the library... GBV... it was about how man treat woman verbal abuse, violence abuse like how they treat you, and about how do you feel about it, what do woman do about it. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

It was suggested by some respondents that GBV programmes help to empower and teach abused women “that you shouldn’t allow this to happen, put yourself first, know when to leave”, as explained by a participant in Tshwane 1.

Only experience (I have of GBV programme activities)... having history of being affected by gender-based violence. Having that happening... The social workers, people who want to put a stop to that... I love the fact that they want to stop this thing and keep on educating these people that this is wrong... that you shouldn't allow this to happen, put yourself first, know when to leave. So even if there's that gender-based violence programmes to stop that or to prevent that... I loved it. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

AGYW perceived benefits of participating in programmes and services

Respondents described various ways in which participating in programmes and activities had benefited them, including positive behaviour changes, financial and material benefits, increased SRH information and knowledge, health benefits, mental health and psychosocial benefits, and educational and career benefits.

Positive behaviour change benefits of participating in programmes

Respondents listed various positive behaviour changes that they perceived as a result of participating in the programmes and activities. These included increased self-esteem, self-confidence and awareness of

rights, improved attitudes towards life, reduced homophobic and homoprejudicial attitudes, and adoption of healthier behaviours such as using spare time more constructively, and drinking less alcohol.

Increased self-esteem, self-confidence and awareness of rights

A participant in Tshwane explained that her involvement in the programmes had given her a sense of direction in life, had provided her with important SRH information as well as increased her awareness of her rights.

Participating in the programmes have given my life a sense of direction because I know what my rights are and the health I know that there are different types of contraceptives and I know that I have the right for, like I can take right based on my health and also given a sense of direction in my life... I feel that it made me a strong and wise person because I am knowledgeable, and I have uhm I have knowledge let me say I know... what my rights are and what I can do and you know I can decide for myself. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Rustenberg felt that the GBV programmes she'd taken part in had also increased her awareness of her rights.

It helped me a lot that if someone does not respect your rights as a human, you need to leave that because it will lead to a person sleeping with you without your permission, it has helped me that we as human have rights and the other human have to respect that. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Increased adoption of healthy behaviours

It was noted by a participant in Dihlabeng that after receiving counselling through the programme she realised she should cut down her alcohol consumption.

Haai, (participating in the programme) it has helped improve my life like stopping to drinking a lot of alcohol, I got counselling whereby I was told that drinking alcohol was not the solution to my problems. (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

A respondent in Rustenberg who'd participated in various programmes - Show me Your Number, the Yes Programme, Aurum - felt that in addition to gaining valuable knowledge, she had the opportunity to spend her time constructively instead of watching TV or spending time on her phone.

(Participating in these programmes - Show me Your Number, the Yes Programme, Aurum) It affected my life in a positive way... because some things I did not know and so my knowledge got expanded I have learnt a lot of things... I ended up liking the things they were talking about, that they do exist and the fact that they teach us something, plus there was nothing better I was doing at home so at least it was something to do, extending my knowledge to know more things rather than watching TV or being on the phone not learning anything.(Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Reduced homophobia / homoprejudice

A respondent in Nyandeni explained that through participating in the Songe Social Services programme she had learned about gender and sexuality diversity and had subsequently been more accepting of different people.

In the programme that I was attending (Songe Social Services) I found out that as we are different people because we are not created the same and our genders are not the same, there are gays and lesbians... I found out that it is important not judge anyone but accept the person the way they are created because they cannot change themselves, there are so many things that can help when you participate there. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)

Increased ability to contribute to household finances

A respondent in Rustenberg said that the supermarket voucher she'd received for her participating in a programme had provided some relief in her economically insecure household.

It has helped me a lot because that day when you guys came with the voucher I got I managed to help my Dad with things that were needed in the house and that's how it helped me. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

SRH education benefits

Increased access to sexual and reproductive health information and education and improved SRH knowledge, was a key perceived benefit of partaking in the programmes. AGYW felt that they had gained SRH knowledge that they are unable to get from parents/caregivers, particularly pertaining to safe sex, adolescence, HIV and PrEP.

Gained SRH knowledge unable to get from parents

A participant in Nelson Mandela Bay explained that the programme she took part in benefited her because she learned about SRH matters that she'd been unable to discuss with her parents, and now understood the importance of using contraceptives and delaying childbearing so that she could finish her education.

Most of us in Grade 9, our parents never used to talk to us about sex and things like that. So, the programme helped us understand what is to have sex before a young age and the consequences, like you can get pregnant, you can get sick. So, it benefited us a lot, especially me... we learned about... body parts and things like that... it's not nice to fall pregnant when you are in school... they told us if you are sexually active and you are maybe 15 or 16, you can go to the clinic for injection or you can tell your partner or whoever you are having sex with to use protection... we learned about all that stuff. (Nelson Mandela C, Nelson Mandela Bay Metro, AGYW 18-24 years)

Learned about condom use, contraceptives, puberty, and delaying childbearing

In Rustenburg, a participant explained that having attended both LifeLine and Aurum programmes she had learned the importance of condom use and protecting herself.

(Participating in LifeLine and Aurum programmes) They helped me a lot... they taught me as girl when you meet a man you must use a condom... you need to take good care of yourself as a girl child. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Another participant in Rustenberg also shared her view that the Aurum programme had taught her a lot about life and about protecting oneself.

It changed my life. I now know a lot of things... Like diseases and falling in love with just anybody... they took so much care for us and made sure that we were safe. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 15-17 years)

A participant in Rustenberg shared that in learning about delaying sexual debut and contraceptives, she'd also gained knowledge about planning for her future .

(I learned) if you're a girl you must prevent (use contraceptives) and have a child at the right time, don't just do things because currently our youth, young girls, teenage girls same age as me they have kids, they don't know the fathers of their children, others the fathers run-away...Currently I'm taking care of myself, I don't have a child, I don't have to sleep with a boy... I should not sleep with a boy I don't even know... I want to study further my studies. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Also in Tshwane a participant said she'd taken part in a LoveLife programme where she'd gained knowledge about SRH, puberty and adolescence.

(The LoveLife Programme) it felt like an open space where teenagers could feel safe talking about growing up and challenges we face like talking about having sex, menstruating... The experience I have with the programme is that it is a safe space and it provides support especially to youth... it teaches a lot to young girls who are still in adolescence growing... it teaches us what to expect with life sexually, that is my experience... I read the pamphlet and gained more knowledge and learnt about different kinds of preventions and ways on which you can prevent pregnancy... I gained knowledge. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Gained knowledge about HIV and PrEP

A key benefit related to SRH education gains cited by respondents was learning about HIV and PrEP. A participant in Nyandeni explained that through the Songe Social Services programme she had learned about HIV prevention and treatment, as well as about contraceptives.

At Songe Social Services... you are given information about things we don't know diseases such as HIV/AIDS, STIs, things like that. I received so much information by going there... we were asked how

would you feel if you find out that you are HIV positive, the solution... ARVs. Then if you're not HIV positive you are able to use PrEP... how to avoid early teenage pregnancy, we found out there are contraceptives, condoms and also get injection so I found out Songe Social Service is very helpful to us that are still young. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)

In Tshwane, a participant who attended the ChildLine programme said that she'd learned about ARVs, PEP and PrEP through creative drama activities.

The (ChildLine programme) activities were very productive and educational because it taught us—it taught me, personally, about medication that I didn't know was there... they also taught us... side effects of the ARVs and the PrEP and the PEP... it was very educational... I was excited and, as a person who is always wanting to learn and willing to learn... it was very exciting... there was a lot of things that I didn't know... The activities was to work in a group where we could have a scenario, do drama to say that there's other people who learn visually. So, we had to do a drama to explain certain things. And then there was also an activity where we had to prepare a speech on explaining other topics, such as HIV, STIs, PrEP and what-not. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Tshwane who felt that she'd learned a lot from the ChildLine programme shared that she now feels equipped with valuable knowledge to help inform and advise other AGYW.

Participating in the ChildLine programme has affected my life in a positive manner because I know a lot of things that I didn't know, I'm aware of things that I was not aware of... I can give information... on things that I've learned there... I can definitely help other people going forward with things that I learned there in different aspects of health, of PrEP, of HIV, of gender-based violence and of contraceptives. I can give my two cents advice that I got from the programme there... going forward I can help other people. Going forward, I can answer someone asking about something with findings that I've learned there. Going forward, I feel educated... it has affected me in a good way... I'm educated about things that I didn't know... going forward, I'm going to teach young girls, and also recommend them to join if they can still join so that they can also learn about things that they didn't know. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Mental health and psychosocial benefits of participating in programmes

One key area in which respondents noted benefits of programme participation was that of mental health. Benefits described by participants included improved access to psychosocial and emotional support from trained staff and from peers, improved ability to articulate mental health needs as a means to access support, and reduced feelings of emotional isolation. AGYW narratives suggested an improved mental health resilience, with respondents describing having a more positive outlook on life, and more hope.

Improved access to psychosocial support - “Having someone to talk to”

A participant in Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana described how she was provided with emotional support by programme staff.

*They (programme staff) are able to soothe your feelings, **if you went there sad you come back happy**, they chat with you so that you heal... They take you out so you can have a breather or go outside to get fresh air, and if you still feel sad you can tell them then will they call a social worker for you, until you are fine... I felt very good... Even if you were troubled and did not want to say they could see that, and even if you would want to hide it they would see and attend to it and you would end up telling the truth... They would tell you that whenever you don't feel right you should go to them and talk about it and that even yourself when you meet other teenagers troubled you should help them as well and not leave them like that. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)*

A participant in Mbombela said that she benefited from participating in a programme not only because she gained information but also because she felt like she had someone caring to talk to.

*At first I was not sure exactly what I was doing but as time went by I realised that the programmes were for my own benefit because they gave girls all the knowledge about issues of life that they should be aware of... I felt good, if you are a child; it is a good thing to have someone who will ask you about your life... **I felt like I got a friend with whom I can share anything and everything with.** (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)*

For those AGYW who are unable to access support at home, psychosocial support received through the programmes can be beneficial, as described by a participant in Setsoso.

I felt good because some of the things we are scared to tell at home we were able to share with them and they help us... what they were doing was suitable for teenage girls; when you had problems it could be easy for you to share with them. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Another participant from Setsoso described the way in which she feels she benefited from the emotional support she gained from participating in the GBV / self-defence programme.

*(GBV support / self-defence programme) had a positive effect on me... **you could talk to them, and they would not give up on you.** You could talk of what happened to you until you are fine and until they get help for you to ensure that you have overcome the problem. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)*

Connect with peers and access emotional support

A participant from Tshwane said that through the ChildLine programme she'd managed to connect with peers and access emotional support.

It (affected me in) a good way because I was able to share, even though it was emotional... I don't like going back to emotional places, or things that trigger me emotionally because I instantly cried and then shared my story... So meeting them... made me feel good, that I might be helping someone else. I might be helping someone to leave whatever they are going through. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Tshwane spoke of how the ChildLine programme activities had given her the opportunity for peer group sharing, peer motivation, and co-learning.

(In the ChildLine programme) we worked in groups to do activities of explaining or drama, and also motivating... There was also an activity... whether you have personal experience you want to share... by sharing that you are going to help other people... There was also activities of going to the field outside to do exercises to awaken our minds and then going at class back to learn more... I learned a lot because there were some aspects that I didn't know... answering other things to other girls that they also didn't know. So, it was a teaching-learning experience that was nice. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Improved ability to articulate mental health needs as a means to access support

Respondents' narratives suggested that participating in the programmes also improved AGYW help seeking behaviour and ability to access psychosocial support. Respondents shared their views that through participating in the programmes, they had learned to talk about their problems.

I also love it (the CCI programme) because sometimes you find that there is a young person who is depressed... You just ask for counselling; they do have social workers... For me it was difficult because by then I was not a social being, I was not that someone who talks or converse with people... I learnt to converse there at CCI but at first it was difficult... I saw a lot of people telling their story and then I learnt that I might as well take part when such activities take place. (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Rustenberg said that she benefited from participating in the My Journey programme as she was able to discuss her problems and get help.

I've experienced a little (of the My Journey Programme)... I have some situations, I went to talk to them and then I got attention from them and told them everything, I got help. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 15-17 years)

Good rapport with programme staff, who built trusting and caring relationships with AGYW, meant that AGYW felt safe to speak openly about their challenges.

They were good people... I felt safe enough to tell them about all my troubles and problems, what I'm going through.. And everything that is happening to me. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Nyandeni spoke of how the Songe Social Change Teenage Service programme had given her the opportunity to share her challenges, which had a positive impact on her.

(At Songe Social Teenage Service) I felt protected and happy that I will also be able to share my story... when there is something bothering me I will be able to talk. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Rustenburg explained that she now understood the importance of reaching out for help and assistance, rather than facing her challenges alone.

They showed me that in life I must have my own options on how I live my life in the community and at home and also to speak to someone that am close to if there is anything am not comfortable with or need help with... If I am comfortable. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

A participant who had attended the Songe Social Services programme in Nyandeni similarly spoke of how she learned the importance of reaching out to others for help and support.

By participating there (Songe Social Services) I received so much knowledge... I found out that when you are doing whatever you are doing you can also ask for help from other people but then not everyone can help you and the challenges you face. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)

Reduced feelings of emotional isolation

A participant in Klipfontein related that by taking part in the YDT Programme she: “I realised I’m not alone” - and felt it impacted her life in a positive way.

They make me feel in a better, safe place... They make me feel more comfortable and make me realise that I'm not alone... I felt happier... I just saw my life changing day by day... Positive change. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

Improved resilience: more positive outlook, more hope

Respondents spoke of how participating in the programmes helped them have a more positive outlook on their lives, increasing their sense of hope for the future - suggesting that these programmes can help to bolster AGYW’s mental health and resilience.

A participant in Nyandeni explained that after receiving counselling at the Songe Social Change Safe Space, she now feels more hope in the face of challenges and adversity - with a new sense that things will work out eventually.

My life has changed because now I know there is something I can do... I must not lose hope, I must have hope that everything will work out at the right time, not everything won't work or succeed everything has its time... With counselling (received at Songe Social Change Safe Space) I realised that you are not forced to say anything but you share everything when you are ready and you get

solutions in how to solve your problems you see... there is a difference because I was struggling to accept what happened in a previously in 2017 so I shared there my story and they helped me to accept and move on with my life. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)

In Dihlabeng, a respondent noted that by interacting with social workers at the CCI programme, she'd gained a more positive perspective, had improved self-belief, and hope for the future.

I met social workers, people who can talk to us... people who will encourage us to go to school, people who can tell you that you are still young and the period you have spent at home is little you can still achieve your dreams... I always had negative thoughts about me that I am not good. I thought that maybe God had brought me to come live such life but after going to CCI. I came to a level where I had to change my mindset about my life and love myself, so that I can love others. And live my life, now I have good intentions about my life since I entered that programme. (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Cape Town explained that for her, participating in the My Journey programme activities at school provided an opportunity to try something out of the ordinary and take one's mind off of the problems you face on a daily basis.

It was good to participate. Talk to people... and forget what's going on around you for a moment, it was very nice... My Journey programme and more other programmes its not like everyday here in our community... not things you can always do...if you want to get things off your brain and... you like want to forget about what is going on in your home. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

Also in Klipfontein, a respondent who'd participated in the YDT programme explained that when taking part in the programme activities, she felt happy and was able to forget about all her problems.

*(Participating in the YDT programme) a lot changed, that I became more happy, I became more positive... I could say I can meet a lot of fun people, new people... **that place is like my happy place**... all my problems, they just disappear...(Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)*

Health benefits of participating in programmes

Respondents described a range of perceived health benefits of participating in programmes, including improved access to health and diagnostic tests, improved access to free contraceptives; improved access to high quality, youth-friendly, non-judgemental comprehensive health services; improved access to support and health care for most vulnerable AGYW; and access to menstrual management products.

Improved access to health and diagnostic tests

A participant in Klipfontein felt that participating in the My Journey programme had a positive impact on the health of AGYW, due to the fact that programmes offered participants a range of health and diagnostic tests which they wouldn't have usually taken.

(Participating in My Journey affected my health) In good ways... we did health tests and if there was something wrong with you, you would be offered a service... if they didn't us that services and tested us, many of us wouldn't even know, I would say that helped improve our health. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

Similarly a participant in Setsoso believed that the CCI programme made it much easier for AGYW to get HIV tests.

What is best (about CCI programme) is regarding health... Because we need to know our status, then you are able to get help, if you find yourself positive then you know that you have to go to the clinic. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Setsoso who disclosed being HIV positive said that she benefits from being able to go to CCI and get regular tests and check ups.

Even when I want to test realizing that I need to again to check if I'm still in a good condition, I'm still able to go there... it (the CCI programme) helps many people... people do not know their status, however if they can go there it will help, it help a lot I mean I don't know I can say it influences people to do good things... if I continue to test regularly I will be able to see that my health is in good condition, I should always know my status...and what is happening...it's getting tested, that is what affected my life a lot...because I must continue testing, I must know what is my status. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Respondents explained that at the Aurum programme in Rustenburg, they were able to receive testing and treatment for STIs, HIV and other SRH issues.

(The Aurum programme) helped many girls when you have STI whatever, they take blood to check... Pap-smear they check everything... they provide cure to eradicate such problems (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Another participant in Rustenburg noted that had she tested HIV positive at Aurum, they would have ensured that she received the treatment she needed.

(Participating in Aurum affected my life) in a good way because now I know my status. And if they had found any virus or sickness in me, I know that they would have given me medication and tell me how to get to the clinic. And how to get medication. They give you full information. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Improved access to Contraceptives

The quick and convenient services provided at CCI were described as preferable to the ones at the public clinic, thereby making it much easier for AGYW to access contraceptives.

What made me happy with the programme was that when you go to the clinic for family planning it takes a long time, but at CCI it takes less than 30 minutes... You just get in, get service, and you are gone. (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Nyandeni explained that through the Songe Social Change programme, she has had free, no cost access to contraceptives which has helped her prevent pregnancy.

I was really happy (getting contraceptives at Songe)... it's free, you don't pay. There is nothing you do in order to receive the services, they are free... ever since I used it (contraceptive)... I am still not pregnant and also here in my village I can share about the information and encourage girls my age and older to go at Songe Social Change so they can also feel protected. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)

Improved access to high quality, youth-friendly, non-judgemental comprehensive health services

A participant in Tshwane shared her view that the services provided through Childline are far better than those at the public clinic. Not only are staff kinder and less judgemental, but they also offer social workers and various things like PrEP.

The programme that I became a part of was Childline... the services are nice because you find that at public clinics, the nurses are not so nice towards us. They discourage you on, "Why are you even having sex?", "Why are you even doing this?", "Why are you not preventing?" They make you feel bad, let alone that they know... that this is what people our age do... at Childline, the people are nice. They also offer you a social worker you could speak to if there's something that bothers you. And then they give you, pills... Prevention pills, and then also if you prefer other prevention material, they'll give you... they really listen and are nicer to you than public clinics where you find the nurses are rude. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Similarly, a participant in Nyandeni remarked that the Songe Social Change programme increases access to non-judgemental SRH services.

*Songe Social Change... it brings help a lot because some other things we can not talk about them in the government clinics because of some of the nurses' ill treatment, because they cannot deal with young people and not understand them correctly. But with the programmes that normally comes to the villages they listen to us... you get all the services in the program... it is helpful especially to the young girls... In Songe Social Service there can be services maybe you want to check HIV you can test there, you can also get pregnancy test as well, so **everything becomes easy when there are such programmes here in the villages.** (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)*

Improved access to support and health care for most vulnerable AGYW

It was felt that especially for AGYW from poor families who are usually unable to access support and health services - these programmes provide necessary support and care.

(These programmes do help) if you have problems like being from a disadvantaged family and when you think of asking for help you know that they can't afford to give you the help that you need to get what you need... it's better to discuss with them (programme staff) so that they can help... they are able to support us in all angles, we are even able to know if we are not infected with any diseases because most of the people are afraid of going to the clinic to test... Now they are able to come with those things and tell us how we are, and they even support us by telling us what we should do in life. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana explained that she appreciated the way in which all AGYW were provided with menstrual management products, not just those from poor households - this meant that no one was singled out.

What made me happy was that they did not ask if you had pads or not, they just gave them to you knowing that as teenage girls were not from the families of the same social stance, they just helped... they had their ready-made parcels whenever you arrived, they just gave you and not even ask you what is it that you needed. They gave you everything available. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Access to menstrual management products

The regular provision of menstrual management products such as sanitary pads, was described as a benefit of programmes such as that offered by Aurum in Rustenberg.

(Aurum) they have given pads to us... I need them every time every month. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 15-17 years)

Educational / Career benefits of participating in programmes

Respondents shared their views on the various ways in which participating in the programmes had positively impacted their education and/or careers including assistance with applications to employment and further/tertiary education, assistance and support with school work, and support for entrepreneurship and start-up businesses.

Assistance with applications to employment / tertiary education

A participant in Setsoso explained that at the CCI programme, she'd received assistance with applying for higher education, and had benefited from accessing the internet.

What was best for me (about participating in the CCI programme) was the help I got with application for schools/ institutions of higher learning, because most of us don't have data... they help you

search... and even show you how, they help with everything you need when you arrive there regarding school. That made me very happy... Because for some of us if you don't have data then you have a problem. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Also in Setsoso, an out of school participant explained that she had been able to access data and computers at CCI, and was therefore able to do job applications and write her CV. She felt that this support gave her a chance of fulfilling her potential.

*Things such as applications... I have completed school... data is something that I struggle with, so I was able to go there and be able to do my applications, and finish with that or even apply for a job there... you can find a job and young women like us who have never went to school, you can go there to apply even when you need to data... I felt good about that because I can encourage people that you need help go there at CCI, the people from there can help you so that everything that you need... those things of applying...those are the things that made it possible for me to participate because I will also have to go back there to apply and complete, so that I can go to school.. I felt better because if I could do those CV's I will be able to get a job faster... I would say (participating in the programme affected my life)... in a good way... we need things such CV's most of us, there are children who do not want to schools out there, who only need a job, so now that's where CCI comes in, CCI help with things like CV's... we can get a jobs I mean it help people in a good way, in my view...**it can unlock our lives, and see what to do and how we succeed in life.** (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)*

Assistance and support with school work

Getting help with home work from school was a key educational benefit described by respondents.

A participant in Dihlabeng noted that she'd received help from programme staff who had provided additional explanations to her, enabling increased comprehension of curriculum content, and thereby improving her academic performance.

What I loved was that if you needed help with your schoolwork, they helped, if there is anything difficult for you... they were giving explanation... Mostly it was schoolwork (I got help with) ...they explained to us, when they had us as girls together... They explained what was happening and read books for us... They read us scenarios and then they explained, and we ask questions; it was nice... we gather together, they made us feel free and comfortable... you would feel free even to answer...when they asked you questions... We were all girls, and we were not laughing at each other... I was improving in my studies... There was a change... My marks were improved.(Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

In Rustenberg, a respondent explained that the assistance she'd received through the LifeLine Homework support programme had helped her pass her exams and improve her grades, as well as kindled a desire for learning in her.

(The Lifeline Homework support programme) They helped me a lot at school, very much... I did not like to listen, but they ended involving me at school to a point I would also feel like the school has assisted me... I'm still thankful to those sisters (ladies) wherever they are, I thank them.. (It affected me) In a positive way... I saw changes...I was passing, my report showed changes...They showed us that if you don't understand a word...m you must look for it on dictionary and then so that you can understand the meaning of it. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Support for entrepreneurship and start-up businesses

A respondent in Tshwane spoke enthusiastically of how the ChildLine programme had assisted her with funding to get her business off the ground.

The best one (benefit of participating in the ChildLine programme) is [...] being funded to start my business... being funded to start my business was the best one... the outstanding one out of everything. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Motivations / Facilitators to participating in programmes and activities

What made AGYW want to join / participate in programmes?

Respondents listed the various reasons and motivating factors that encouraged them to participate in programmes and services.

Friendly and welcoming staff

A participant in Tshwane explained that the friendly staff made it easy for her to join the My Journey programme.

(What made it easy to join My Journey) there were people who were engaging... they were helping the youth, friendly with the youth and approachable... I do not think there is anyone that would say they want to stop (participating in My Journey) because they excel with what they do. (Tshwane 1, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

To connect with peers

The opportunity to connect with other AGYW peers and join a “sisterhood” was a motivating factor for one participant in Tshwane 1.

*The people are not rude, they are nice... **we gel together and then it becomes one big sisterhood programme...** meeting new people... getting along with them, doing things in a group so that we*

know each other better, and also creating a sisterhood. And... the friendships there. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Likewise a participant in Rutenberg was motivated to join the Aurum programme to be part of a group with other AGYW.

I was asking myself questions if I should join it or not, but I ended up joining it hearing from others that it's good... I felt okay amongst other girls telling us about our lives... (I joined) Because there are many girls who have joined it... I liked to be a part of them. (Rutenberg, Bojanala, 15-17 years)

Friends already part of programme/s

Having friends who were already participating in programmes made it easier for AGYW to join the programmes themselves.

There was someone who made it easy for me (to participate), it was my friend because she is the one that started with the programme, and then she shared it with me. So, I too became interested in it. (Rutenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

It was my own choice (to join the programme) but seeing that my friends also were all participating... that is what made me more interested to participate. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

There were people that made it easy for me to participate - my friends because I go along with them. (Rutenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Educational support and career advice services

A respondent in Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana explained that she was motivated to take part in the programme by their offering of educational support, assistance with job applications, and free data.

*Even with school related matters, job application, if you have no data, they help you everything is for free... what I did was just to go and test for HIV and they also asked me if I didn't want to use contraceptives, but I was not yet ready for that. Then after a while they explained the importance of using contraceptives and it made sense to me, so I applied and started, even doing a CV because I needed it... **I saw it necessary for me to go to a place where I know that help is guaranteed, and help is offered in a gentle way without aggression and being shouted at...** And that it was important to know your status. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)*

Respondents shared that they joined the programmes because they were motivated by the prospect of receiving support, being welcomed and not judged, and also drawn in by the attractive premises and opportunity to connect to the WIFI.

*It is that thing of knowing that whatever you are going through you can go there and meet someone to talk to them explaining everything like how's the situation at home... **I followed my heart to join it** (CCI programme)... I don't think I will even stop participating... because in many cases they would call you even when you are on your way and explain to you what their mission is. You meet with them many times, so there is no way that I can say I don't want to be part of it... if you arrive at CCI **they help you, they don't look at who you are, and as if you are bothering them**, it is their job to help people... According to me, the place they work in is more attractive because when you arrive there you are shown someone to help, be it applications, they connect you to the Wi-Fi... everything becomes easy at that place. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)*

Free WIFI was a huge motivating factor for many respondents, in addition to homework support and other academic support.

What made me interested in joining the programme was the help they give towards schoolwork... They give free Wi-Fi and help apply for school, that helped me to join the programme. (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

For those AGYW who are unemployed, assistance with finding jobs and writing CVs etc was highly valued.

I did hear about programme called CCI... for me to be a part of the group it was because I wanted to do a CV, so I heard there's a programme that is assisting a lot with CV even if you want to school applications, so I realised that it is important for me to go there to be assisted. I was excited because I really thought I will get help... What made participate is because I am unemployed so now I will need help... I need CV I need to submit my stuff so that I can be fine and work... that is what made me want to take part. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

(I wanted to take part because) They told me it's for girls and that they give help for unemployment. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

A participant in Rustenberg was motivated to join the LifeLine programme for the academic and reading support offered.

(I chose to participate in activities from Lifeline) because I realised that it was helping many children at school, even if those who did not know how to read... you will end up knowing some words and understanding, it was helpful to them, and it helped them to continue with school and know how to read properly. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

A participant in Tshwane was motivated to join the ChildLine programme by the opportunity of attending computer skills classes, so that she could use them to write her CV and get a computer skills certificate.

I heard about ChildLine from a friend. Then immediately [after]... I went onto Facebook to search about it, and then I got the information from Facebook, then went to their location to go hear more about their services, and then that's how I joined... (What made me go) Because it was offering computer lessons that at the time I needed... first I could do life skills programmes and also after that, there was also a "No Means No" program, and then life skills program, and then computer classes. It

was somewhat educational programmes, so that's how I felt that I'm going to learn something and also get a certificate on the computer side and life skills side... I got a computer certificate after... the thing that made me want to join the programme was knowing that I was going to get computer certificate after to enhance my CV... also you're learning the computer skills... The thing that made me to want to participate is obviously the certificate that I got... the computer certificate called "Computer Classes". (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Psychosocial support offered by programmes

In Tshwane 1, a respondent who was familiar with the brand name "My Journey" said that she has joined the programme specifically for psychosocial support offered.

*My Journey... (I heard about it from) the people working for My Journey, they came with their team where I live and they asked for a few minutes for them to explain to me about this programme and then I joined... I saw that it was a programme that can help me, because in today's age we end up with depression of some sort due to not taking prevention, because of dating, so I also joined My Journey because they said they can assign me someone I can talk to about my problems that I cannot talk to my parents or friends if I do not trust them... They said in this My Journey programme is a where there are social workers, where you can talk to them maybe at home you do not have food or you cannot afford things to buy things like sanitary pads and then you can reach out to them they'll be able to assist you, also when you not well you can talk to them and they can also assist you... **I was happy to know that there are people who are considerate and could come up with such programmes as this that helps people... I feel like it came at point where I needed it...** At that time I was not well and then I met them where I was in need of emotional support and that's where I found out that it is one of their services that they provide so I ended up joining. (Tshwane 1, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)*

A participant in Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo explains that she was motivated to join the Songe Social Services so she could have a Safe Space to talk about her feelings and experiences, sharing with others, and speaking about issues one cannot share with family/caregivers..

*My aim to join Songe Social Teenage was to know about things that are happening to us girls that our parents cannot take note of... if you don't have anyone that you can talk to at home you also get a safe space there... every Thursday there is a safe space for girls where you can share your story, maybe you were sexually assaulted you can speak there. You can also write a letter if you are scared to speak with other people around, meaning that there is also privacy within us... **there you are able to share your story or something that has happened to you or something that you cannot share on your own with your family or friends... we get the safe space.** (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)*

For those AGYW who feel they have no one to talk to, and are unable to speak with their families about their problems, having the opportunity to talk to someone and share challenges they're facing is a strong motivating factor to join programmes.

What made to go to safe space is that I am not able to talk with my family. The person I can talk with is my big sister but she is not always around, but I found out that at Songe Social Change I am able to vent and get advice you see so I thought let me go there because there are things that you cannot talk with family things that have to do with a partner. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)

Being able to speak to an older trusted person who could offer advice was a motivating factor for some AGYW to join programmes.

The fact that they could talk about anything they would want to talk about to an older person who has experience who can offer advice. (Tshwane 1, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Information and education provided by programmes

A key motivating factor for joining programmes described my participants related to the opportunities for learning. Many respondents explained that they wanted to gain knowledge and access information on SRH and other health related topics.

My heart told me to participate and see how your life will improve like and also I will see what type of knowledge I will get. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

By gaining new knowledge, respondents felt that they also gained self-awareness and in the process were able to "discover" themselves.

*It's the services and information that I get, the education... the treatment I get when I'm there. It's most definitely the information of learning about other things that I didn't know... I'm sure I'm going to learn about things that I didn't know... **you discover yourself during the programmes...** you join with the willingness to learn. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)*

A participant in Dihlabeng joined the CCI programme to get information on HIV and pregnancy prevention.

(I joined CCI because) I wanted to learn things there... I wanted to understand issues around HIV infection, and the importance of... contraceptives, so that one doesn't fall pregnant. (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Rustenburg wanted to know more about diseases - she said that she did use the internet to get information, but felt that the "Yes programme" offered her knowledge beyond what she could Google.

What made me want to join (the “Yes Programme”)... The fact that they were teaching us about the available diseases that were out there, the awareness... I am a person that likes to Google... it was something similar, they were extending our knowledge. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

The same participant explained that in addition to learning new things, she was also motivated to join the programme by the easy accessibility of it.

For me it was easy I just wanted to know what are these people about and what are they talking about and there was nothing difficult because they were around me so you just have to walk you do not even spend money of climbing a taxi. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

A participant in Tshwane said that she joined the programme because she was inspired to learn more about her health, her body and her rights.

*The services being offered to our school... the programme and the advisors, the people who came along came with the knowledge of **teaching us in a form of motivation awakening us, so listening to them was inspiring and made me want to learn more about my health and what rights I have regarding my health and my body.** (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)*

A participant in Setsoso felt that through the knowledge she gained at the CCI programme, her self confidence grew, which made her feel more comfortable in her body.

When I go there, I will know that I’m going to learn something each day...They will teach me that... you could avoid by doing this and this... CCI... people from there they make life to be easy... even if I don’t have confidence, I know that if I go there, I will get services, I will come back feeling good and my body feeling good. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Incentives / vouchers / food / menstrual management products / transport

A participant in Rustenberg who had participated in programmes including “Yes” programme and Show me Your Number said that being offered vouchers, snacks, sanitary pads and bags had been a good incentive to join.

If you are promised something you will be willing to do something - they promised us vouchers and snacks and they took good care of us by providing water, they were not rude... At Yes Programme and Show Me Your Number they are the ones that like to give us pads and bags. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Also in Rustenberg, a participant said that at the Aurum Institute study programme they had been offered R600 in addition to a decent meal.

*Oram (Aurum Institute) come to the area where I live... at Rustenburg...we were being assisted without being hungry... (What made me attend) **I just love money.** [Laughing] they give us R600 and a good plate of food to eat. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)*

Another participant who also attended the Aurum Institute programme was given R400 after giving some blood samples - this money was very helpful for her so she could buy clothes and toiletries.

I joined because of money... that the money can boost [Help out] me... Aurum I only joined for R400... R400 for clothes...I need clothes... they sometimes call you from Aurum when you are just to donate blood and you can get R400... you find that you need a pair of shoes you buy shoes, you need whatever a T-Shirt you buy it...at Aurum I was just okay, I was happy, I was happy with the money they gave to me because of it is helpful... to get toiletries, during the month they would just call you, that R400 you spend it to buy toiletries whatever, and they told us that if you don't feel okay after they took some blood, tomorrow again you can call them to say you guys took some blood I don't feel okay, they come over the following to take your blood again just to check on you and all. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Likewise, another Rustenberg participant received R400 from Aurum for participating, which she said was a big motivation as she was 'desperate'. She also said that the shopping voucher she received through My Journey (unclear whether this was the programme or the evaluation survey) was useful.

(The reason I decided to participate in the Aurum programme) I was desperate...for money... It was R400... My Journey like they give to you voucher like you can choose something you can also go to the shop whatever, once you get the money cash aye! you spend it all. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

A participant in Tshwane had been motivated to join by the food offered, the free transport, and the friendly staff.

They offered food and they were welcoming... I knew that I could get services of health... and with help with school, I'll go there because it's near... they were also offering food.... when it's far, they give us transport and they offer us food as well. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

The provision of sanitary pads was cited as a reason why some AGYW would be motivated to join the programmes.

It's the assistance from this programme like sanitary pads (Tshwane 1, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Tshwane explained that she would have not attended the programme if she'd had to pay for her own transport to get there. But on finding out the transport costs were covered, she was motivated to join.

The only thing that was going to stop me to or discourage me to join the programme is the transport fee. Actually, finding out that they have transport where they pick us up and they also bring us home... it was a fee thing that I didn't have to catch a taxi myself with money that I don't have... that's basically it... it was easy, it was nearby... we had transport. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Health services provided by programme

A participant in Rustenburg joined the programme because of the routine health checks that were part of participation. The participant speak of her womb being cleaned, it is unclear what she is referring to.

(I chose to participate because) they check you as a girl.. they would clean you... every two months you're being cleaned... they would the womb. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Similarly, a participant in Setsoto was motivated to join the programme for the HIV testing services that were provided.

(I decided to take part in the programme) because this programme helps with a lot of things especially checking the HIV status. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Desire to empower oneself

In Klipfontein, a participant described a school-based self-defence programme that she'd been part of. She was inspired to participate as she wanted to know how to protect herself. However one concern she had about attending was that people might see her and make assumptions that she is getting abused.

At school, I was with the self-defence (programme)... what made me want to participate is that whenever maybe I get attacked by someone... or I feel I am in danger I would know how to protect myself... against anything that is going to happen. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

To keep busy / be productive / try something new

A participant in Tshwane who was no longer attending school decided to go to one of the Safe Spaces in her community so that she had something constructive to do with her time.

*I have (attended a Safe Space)... It was very welcoming...(I went) because I was not busy with anything, not going to school, not writing. So, **having something to wake up to, doing something again that is productive, that is what made me keep on going and also growing.** (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)*

For those AGYW who are unemployed, the chance to attend regular programme activities was a seen as beneficial to provide structure and something to do.

Not having employment and not going to school, and then getting in the program. Knowing that I can at least make up for a week to go to this place to complete this thing... and also be educated. It's waking up and doing something on a daily basis that is productive... That is what pushed me to keep on going...having something to do on a daily basis because then I didn't have work and I didn't go to school, so waking up and going to do something productive; that is what made me want to (join). (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Some AGYW explained that they were motivated to join the programme to try something new, and get out of their comfort zones.

To be honest at first I was lazy to join the programme (the “Yes Programme”) I do not know why... But I told myself to join because there is nothing I’m doing at home... I am doing something new... (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

What made it easy for me to join was because I saw a lot of other people joining also and then they explained to us what was going to happen... I was actually interested. I liked participating and trying out new things... so I was really eager to join. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

Free to choose whether to participate or not

A participant in Setsoso said that she was motivated to join the CCI programme because she felt that she had agency in her choice to participate or not.

People working there (at CCI) are so good they don’t talk aggressively because it will make one afraid, they don’t force you to do anything. It is entirely up to you to decide if something is right with you or not... That is what made me decide to join. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

A participant in Rustenberg also described the way in which she liked the feeling that she was not being forced to join the programme.

If I don’t like something, I really don’t like it. The fact that they did not force people is what made me happy because they don’t force people. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Parent / caregiver wanted me to join

A participant in Rustenberg explained that she joined the Aurum programme because her mother wanted her to. However she emphasises that she also wanted to join.

With the teenagers one (programme at Aurum), my mom wanted me to have knowledge about young women’s health. And the second one it was me, I wanted it to. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

What would make more AGYW want to join the programmes?

Incentives

A participant in Tshwane 1 suggested that trust needs to be built with AGYW by staff recruiting for the My Journey Programme - this could be assisted by providing incentives.

Most people do not trust word of mouth because when they first met you they take your name and your details I would say to make it more attractive they should put action to their words by following up on what they said they would do, also provide something like sanitary pads create a package have a marketing strategy to buy them. (Tshwane 1, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

In Rustenberg, a participant explained that the programmes should offer AGYW gifts as compensation for the time they were being asked to dedicate to participating in the programmes.

I think other youth, you must attract them by offering them incentives so they can want to attend... For you guys to tell them about the benefit of the programme, that we give you this or that as a thank you gift, because it's not easy for a person to go sit there, sacrificing my time only not to gain anything is not nice, so you guys have to explain to them... Girls like things so I am thinking you guys could give them money as in vouchers or nice t-shirts or snacks there are girls that love good food, such things. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Provision of Food

A participant in Nelson Mandela Bay felt that since many of the AGYW participants came from households with high levels of food insecurity, the programmes should offer food.

For instance, like young girls, I'll maybe on a Wednesday my for example, I'd tell them they must come 3:00, then I will like provide for them with just like 2 slices of bread each and maybe like something sweet because I know in our community there are a lot of children, there's a lot of poverty. So, then there will be more that will be coming, and they like they will be able to listen and take in, So, that's what I will be doing differently. If I had help and sponsorship, you understand. (Nelson Mandela C, Nelson Mandela Bay Metro, AGYW 18-24 years)

Fun activities / events

A participant in Cape Town suggested that the My Journey staff make the programme and activities sound more fun and exciting to appeal to more AGYW and encourage them to join.

When they approach you about this, they must make it sound more fun... because when people like hear about such stuff some people they don't like doing boring stuff... and people talking the whole time. So when they hear it's going to be a fun thing... exciting... then maybe they would be more eager to go... (it needs to be) more interesting. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

It was suggested by a participant in Nyandeni that the programmes should attract AGYW to join by playing loud music.

What could make it more interesting/attractive... I think that it could be music, your thing [musical instruments] must be loud enough to attract young girls, that is where you will have the opportunity to explain your programme to them. Because if you are just quietly handing out fliers they won't

come, but if there is loud music we will follow and hear when we get there about what's going on... I think I would post via internet and explain what this upcoming programme is all about. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 15-17 years)

Providing entertainment and making the activities fun and engaging was suggested by a participant in Nelson Mandela Bay as a strategy for attracting more AGYW to join the programmes.

Now they must make it fun. They must like be straight like, just about speaking about the topic. They are more focused on the topic and must like... if you can entertain the young children like maybe for instance they do a play, so then they will be more interested on learning their lines and like knowing they have to perform a play. So they actually encourage them to come like every week or every two days a week. So that's what I would have done. (Nelson Mandela C, Nelson Mandela Bay Metro, AGYW 18-24 years)

Hosting fun events on public holidays, creating excitement around a programme brand through music and branded clothing, was also suggested as a good marketing strategy for programmes by a participant in Tshwane.

Obviously by doing events. Maybe, if it's Human Rights Day, they do an event to educate us. And then, everyone likes free things, that they maybe give t-shirts or they give free school bags as I've got. And then, events that will give more presents to each one of us. That will definitely do— encourage young people like me to go on because with events there is going to be music and there is going to be hype. So they will be willing to take part. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Emphasise / Ensure Confidentiality

It was suggested by a participant in Setsoso that programmes should do school-based recruitment that ensures confidentiality rather than recruiting AGYW from the streets.

People working in these programmes should be taken to schools... they should call young women to a meeting, and explain to them what they are all about, and tell them if they are abused they can talk to them... If you are in need of pads you can come to us we will help you, because it won't be easy to talk amongst the people... Maybe they will say if you have something to say you may contact us we will leave our contact number. Or they can even say if you want to talk to us you will find us at such and such a place, so you won't tell your friend that you are going to the place because they will judge you... I mean since with them at the streets (staff recruiting AGYW from the street), one may be less interested to hear what they have to say but when they are at school all girls will attend and listen because they will at school... And maybe they will end up changing their mind if they thought that it was not important for them. One may realise that it was more important that they thought. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Provide clear & interesting explanations

A respondent in Klipfontein noted the importance of making the programmes sound fun, informative and useful in order to spark interest and motivate AGYW to join.

(To make more girls want to join) Probably make them see the importance of the programmes... no-one wants to go and sit and listen to this and that sometimes people do get boring listening to the same thing... so, I think all the questions asked or the explanations must be changed because most of the times we do things and they explained the same things over and over again (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

Provision of information to Parents/Caregivers

A participant in Nyandeni noted the influence that parents, caregivers and family members have on AGYW, and made the suggestion that programmes should engage them and provide them with information in order to encourage and facilitate AGYW joining the programme activities.

Our families are not the same... some girls my age it's hard for their parents to allow them to attend, because they don't the information on how this will help their girls... by also providing the parents with information that no, parents when this and that happen with your young girls this and that can help them. Give the old people the information on how their children can be helped in attending these programmes. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)

Programmes for out-of-school AGYW in rural villages

Expanding programme reach to underserved villages, and out-of-school youth, was suggested by a participant in Nyandeni as a strategy for increasing access to the programmes and activities.

I think if they can provide their programmes more... go to some villages and also add some activities maybe go to other places and expose them to things that are not around us, things that they never thought exist round us, maybe add some activities for young girl who are not at school but suppose to be at school so that in the meantime gain some knowledge and skills you see. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)

Expanded service hours / days

Expanding service hours and days of the week in which programmes and services are offered would help to improve access and enable more AGYW to participate.

These programmes mustn't be offered on selected days like they normally come on Thursdays but not every week. So I think it will be easy for other girls if these programmes can come every week maybe Thursdays or Fridays and also the mobile clinics for those who are not attending school but

for also the ones that are at school because sometimes when you are attending school it is hard to go to the clinic because there is so much school work. I think of these programmes can be done inside the school especially for the grade 12. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)

Better branding and advertising

A respondent in Tshwane made the suggestion of using social media, influencers, as well as physical advertising on billboards and on flyers in order to build brand awareness for the programmes, with a strong message relating to female empowerment.

The programme I would design would also offer support and the programme would be easy accessible and it will be popular and it will be safe space, comforting space for woman where knowledge will be gained and woman will be empowered to take over their lives and be independent... I will make the programme popular by promoting the programme via influencers, social media, like have umm billboards, advertisement, accessible in malls, pamphlets will be handed over, that's how, the companies names will be promoted by distributing pamphlets and promoting the programme's name... to make it more attractive it should be as a promotion and flyers should be eye catching and youthful and shows that it is meant to empower woman. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

It was also suggested by a participant in Setsoso that the programmes advertise on radio, as a key communication platform accessible in the communities.

I think if it can happen that it should be discussed on uh radios...where the community could listen, remember that most of the people are able to listen to radio on what is happening...and I think if that could happen yes...people will be encouraged too much (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Make the programmes easily accessible

Increasing visibility and ensuring accessibility of programmes to AGYW was suggested by a participant in Tshwane, who also noted the importance of emphasising the quality of care that AGYW would receive.

If the programmes are advertised, promoted (and made) available I feel like it is an easy access in which females, teenagers can engage, can join the programme due to accessibility... If they (AGYW) feel, if they feel like they are gaining more knowledge and power and they feel that the services bring more gain to their life and that the programmes are accessible and that the workers are non-judgmental and comforting and they offer a great customer-care and service. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Another suggestion for increasing programme accessibility was made by a participant in Rustenberg, who noted that having physical venues / spaces in the community would be beneficial.

It would be more attractive if they would perhaps have a container [some sort of office space] here in the community and let it not only be in town and all those other places it would be nice to have some one that we could go to, you know that sometime the results don't come out immediately, so if the results do come, you call them and get your results. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

More spacious venues

Improving the physical spaces in which programme activities were conducted was also suggested by a participant in Dihlabeng as a strategy for making the programmes more appealing to AGYW.

If they can find a bigger space, it is too small, it seems like it was someone's yard and gave them the space and house... So, it is small, I think if they can get a free and open space... I think what could make it easy is for them to go to school and tell learners about the programme... They should go to places where they know they will get their targeted age group of women. (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Barriers to Participation in Programmes / Services

Fear / concerns about joining programmes / services / activities

Fear related to blood samples / blood tests

A participant in Rustenburg explained that her reluctance to join a programme was due to her fear of the blood tests required to do so. She said that she found it concerning that AGYW were 'paid' for their blood, did not know what happens with the blood samples taken, and that she'd seen other girls in pain after having bloods taken.

(When I first heard about it) I asked myself what kind of a clinic where they take blood sample from someone and then give that person R400, which means we are selling our blood... I felt a bit scared... I was asking myself how come, you give your blood and get money... It doesn't add up... when I was joining Aurum... I was happy that I was going to donate 7 bottles of blood then I got R400... I felt happy they were talking about R400... but I got scared at the end... I was asking myself what kind of a session this is where they take blood from people, we receive R400... they were taking many bottles of blood...and they give you R400 and then I asked myself that where does that come from for real... I asked myself questions because I went there because I wanted to... it was challenging for me... most girls when they came back from there they would complain that their hands are in pain and are not working well because they took a lot of blood...Eh! it made me feel like if I go there eh, it made me feel bad. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Fear of medical procedures

In addition, respondents cited fears related to injections, and other medical procedures involved in programme participation, alongside fears of potential side effects. A respondent in Rustenberg said that the Aurum study gave participants injectable PrEP in the stomach, which she found scary.

(Things that made me reluctant to join the Aurum programme) To be injected with PrEP on my stomach... I was scared because I was asking myself that since when PrEP is injected on a stomach? ...I know pills, because at Lifeline they gave us pills... to prevent HIV, how come they injected us twice on the stomach... I feared that one of PrEP on my stomach, that's the one I feared...They said it prevents HIV, but for me I did not react well to it...it made lose weight, my body would be so cold, I felt like I had arthritis...I was sick...I did not feel good for three days. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

In addition, fear of having a pap smear proved to be a barrier to enrolment and participation in the Aurum programme.

(Things I did not like about participating in the Aurum programme) The PrEP one, Pap-smear... those are the ones... what was happening it was because when other girls when they were walking out of the examination room they were not walking properly it seems as if it was painful. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

I didn't want to be fingered [chuckles], that's the reason I didn't take part in it (the Aurum programme). (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Fear of being labelled

Eligibility criteria for the Aurum AGYW PrEP programme, as understood by a participant in Rustenberg, meant that only AGYW who reported unprotected sex were being enrolled. As a result, she feared being labelled / pigeon-holed as “high risk” / promiscuous.

It was difficult (to join the Aurum programme) because I was scared; I was scared at first... how they will treat me, they are looking for girls who are sexually active without using protection. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Similarly, a participant in Klipfontein expressed her concern about joining a programme because she was worried about what peers might say/think, and label you as being mentally ill or depressed.

*I felt that maybe like, I'll be made fun of, you know, in high school... There's always this pressure that... Other teenagers will be laughing at you, saying you have mental illness.. You're sick... You're depressed all those things, **I was just scared of what the society would say.** (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)*

Another participant in Klipfontein voiced a similar concern about attending a GBV / self-defence programme, worrying that her peers would assume she's getting abused.

Why I would not [giggle] want to join is because people always tend to judge you, so if I join.. people will probably think that I am getting abused or something. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

Decisions not to participate in programmes / activities / services

Did not feel programme was relevant

When probed, several participants explained that they had not participated in substance use support programmes as they themselves did not feel a need to, not being substance users themselves.

(I have never joined the substance use support groups)... I do not have interest in such things. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 15-17 years)

I wasn't drinking. I don't associate with those kinds of things, that is why I never took part in those things (substance use support groups). (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Similarly, participants said that they hadn't participated in GBV focused activities as they didn't feel it was necessary or relevant to them.

I did not take part in them (GBV prevention programmes), but I heard a lot about them... I did not take part because I have heard a lot of things like if you are being abused at home you should tell a teacher you are comfortable with or go to the police station. But I didn't come to the point of participating in the programme. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

For some AGYW who were not yet sexually active, they did not feel like SRH programmes offering contraceptives would be relevant to them.

I wasn't actually interested (to join the programme)... I was still young, so I wasn't even sexually active... there's no benefit actually for me... for instance if you are not having sex. Why should you listen to someone that tells you to use injection and stuff like that, knowing you are not sexually active... I'm still young, when I'm big maybe I'll go to the clinic or so. (Nelson Mandela C, Nelson Mandela Bay Metro, AGYW 18-24 years)

No need of services

A participant in Tshwane explained that she'd never attended a mobile clinic as she'd never had reason to, there being plenty of clinics in her area.

(My reason for not attending a mobile clinic)... where I live there are many clinics so am never in need of a clinic. (Tshwane 1, Gauteng, AGYW 15-17 years)

Too busy / not enough time

Similarly, a participant in Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana had heard of GBV prevention programmes but had not participated as she said she was too busy.

I have never joined (the GBV programmes)... I could not find time for it. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 15-17 years)

Some respondents explained that the reason they chose not to participate in programme activities as they felt that school work took priority and they didn't want to be distracted.

I did not participate in any (activities)... Sometimes when they were being done, I was at school, and I had to do schoolwork, they would ask for permission, but I didn't attend because I had realised that schoolwork is important. (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

I left (the programme) because I wanted to focus on school. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 15-17 years)

Too shy / introvert to participate

A participant in Setsoso explained that she hadn't attended any Safe Spaces or activities as she's too shy and doesn't go out much.

I have never attended such a thing (safe space)... I am an indoor kind of a person... I think it is one of the reasons why I couldn't attend that program...(Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 15-17 years)

Another participant in Setsoso explained that she personally dislikes participating in group activities - preferring to do things on her own.

To be honest I do things alone, I don't join groups... I don't like groups, I do some thing when I'm alone... I was not able to form a group with people to do my schoolwork because others will have a certain issue and the other one will have a certain issue and I'll end up being confused...however I was able to do it alone, I was making notes for myself alone and see that they are correct that is when I would read them alone, this group thing I thought they were confusing me. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Too emotional to participate

A participant in Tshwane 1 explained that she was too emotional - angry, hurt and upset - to participate in a grief and loss counselling programme, choosing instead to ignore her feelings.

I think there was the "Grief and Loss" programme... I chose not to attend the "Grief and Loss" one (programme component) because thinking about it would get me emotional, and then still to this date

I don't think that I want to speak someone about what happened to me. I think of leaving it the way it is, it's fine. Never once visiting it over and over again... It's the "Grief and Loss" one that I wanted to attend But then the circumstances of my emotions and the hurt and the anger that I had – that's what made me not to go. (Tshwane, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

AGYW Views on Programmes needed

Respondents were asked their views on what kinds of programmes they felt were lacking, or were needed by young women like themselves in their communities. AGYW were asked if they were going to design a programme for AGYW in their community, what kind of programme they would design.

Psychosocial support and counselling programmes

One participant in Cape Town suggested that girls would benefit from motivational programmes, and programmes to offer psychosocial support and counselling services..

I would design a programme where they would give lessons to help girls motivate them... where they would offer help... where young girls could speak to and could feel comfortable without judging them... a person that they could speak to... if they not comfortable with sharing it with their parents or older people... to be there; hold their hand... try to help them... to prevent unplanned pregnancy or abuse or anything. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 15-17 years)

Similarly a participant in Dihlabeng felt there was a need for more counselling services.

They should increase their services... If they can get someone who can help them with counselling; so you can talk to someone and tell all your problems... I would ensure that there is someone who does counselling, who talks to them and that they feel comfortable and free, that everyone feels at home. (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Alcohol and other substance use support and rehab programmes

Several participants felt that there was a need for programmes to address alcohol and substance use amongst AGYW, including rehab centres.

I would open a platform to communicate with young girls, maybe refer them to clinics so they can be drained of drugs. (AbaQulusi, Zululand, AGYW 18-24 years)

I would design one (programme for AGYW) for alcohol and one for drugs, one for fighting and abusing, stuff like that... Like rehabs. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

(If I could start a programme that would help young girls...) Is that I am able to stop something of this sort...the use of drug use amongst the young girls, open a group discussion to consult about

these issues, assist someone in need... (It would be with) My peers... It would be best with peers. (AbaQulusi, Zululand, AGYW 18-24 years)

I would start a programme about substance abuse, drugs... I will also like to work with the social worker who will assist with anything they need. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

GBV support programmes and Safe Houses

It was also suggested that there was additional need for programmes to address GBV in communities, such as the establishment of safe houses for abused AGYW.

I think if there are safe houses... if I leave this person then I know there is somewhere I can go too, it will be much better cause sometimes you get a person that stays where they are abused because she has no back up or anywhere she can go to. (Tshwane 1, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

They should go to school and teach people about GBV protection and what to do in case you fall victim to it, people should stop hurting others. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

A respondent in Mbombela felt that there was a need for programmes to support rape survivors, providing a space for them to share their experiences with others, and in the process, access help and support.

I would like to add the issue of rape because that affects us as girls... I wish there could be a programme in the community that will help us as girls. Others are afraid to talk and end up committing suicide... The programme should be for all girls because it will not be easy if it will only focus on those that have been raped because they might not come upfront, even myself I will not show up... What I have learnt about rape is that, the more you talk about rape, the easier it is to deal with it and if you do not talk about, the more it is damaging you inside... Boys have no shame now, they do it on the streets, taverns. Others when you ask for lift they then take advantage and rape you... I can encourage girls to come because there are so many girls that are facing rape challenges and they do not know what they can do... They can be encouraged to share their stories and they will learn from each other... I got help from my friend who encouraged to talk about rape because if you do not, you will suffer inside, so it is better to talk about it to people that are close to you. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

A participant in Setsoso highlighted a need for GBV awareness programmes in the communities, for both men and women, in order to raise awareness and teach people the importance of reporting.

According to me...if there can be groups within the community... for GBV...Where people can be explained to...about its disadvantages...it can resolve GBV... either for women or for men, where people are explained to about how GBV affect people's life, because people end up maybe killing themselves according to GBV, I mean the way people are being abused... they should be told that "...in this way GBV, can stop" however they should follow the protocol, what they should do and what they should not... they should be able to report when they are abused...so that they can say no

when they are abused or when someone does something wrong to her, she must be able to report or tell that person that I don't like the way you do things...If that person doesn't listen to you, she should report...she should report him so that he can stop what he is doing. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Educational and Career support programmes

It was also suggested that programmes to provide safe spaces housing libraries and offering reading and educational support would be useful, especially for AGYW who have had children and have not been able to finish schooling.

Sometimes children... especially girls going through stuff in their homes... they have no one to turn to... I would start something for girls... even a safe home maybe... where there is all types of programmes...you can spend whole day there... there can be a small library, cause I know I like reading and this library here in Hanover Park is not right, Maybe a small library, free and... classes for girls to improve their education. Some children really want to go back to school... it is really difficult, cause some don't have money... Maybe if they could have free education classes... many young girls have children and that's why they don't want to go back, cause now other people going to look at them... something educational for the children, young woman and girls it will help a lot. Finish their matric. Become something. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

Additionally, respondents suggested that young women would benefit from career assistance and advice, support writing CVs, and job-skills programmes.

(Additional services that I would have like to be included) It is helping people receive jobs, helping them apply, creating CV and all that...when I go there I will benefit something like they say they will help you create your CV then yes I will go, because I know am also looking for a job... Such things. Or they can create skills programmes. (Tshwane 1, Gauteng, AGYW 18-24 years)

Programmes providing AGYW with assistance with applications for further education, scholarships and bursaries was a suggestion from a participant in Nyandeni.

Here in our villages some people do not attend school... and they are still young. They are struggling with applications maybe they do not know how to apply. They don't have enough knowledge or information on how to apply. If there was maybe a programme that will come to assist people, my age that supposed to be at school and also passed matric. Help them to apply and also apply for NSFAS because money is always an issue why people are attending school because it is a struggle when it comes to money. (Nyandeni, Oliver Tambo, AGYW 18-24 years)

Programmes teaching skills such as agriculture and sewing was suggested by a participant in Mbombela.

I would do a programme to minimise pregnancy, and make job opportunities... A programme to help those who want to be in farming, and those who want to sew. A programme to help with homework. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

Another participant in Mbombela felt that programmes offering job opportunities to AGYW would help to reduce the engagement in risk behaviours such as transactional sex and relationships.

I wish there can be job opportunities because girls end up engaging in risky behaviour to provide for their families. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

Programmes to teach technological and IT skills were highlighted as a need by a participant in Rustenberg,

For them to help the youth to look for employment or learnerships, they teach us but do not groom us that when you going to work this is what you should expect, interviews, how to create CV's that knowledge is needed, help us apply for Varsities cause some other people do not have access to the internet besides the money internet sites are very difficult... Let's say the programme is around our area, it would be nice if the classes had tablets, have slides.(Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Provision of menstrual management products

Programmes providing AGYW from poor households with menstrual management products was a suggestion from participants at multiple sites.

To give girls pads because we struggle to get them... it is that thing of being given whatever you struggle to get like pads, if you go there you explain to someone and they give to you. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

I would make a programme for the disadvantaged girls who don't afford life at all, I would do programmes for such people so that they can get help with dignity packs... with things like food... What I wish was in CCI was for girls to receive pads, as I said there are people who do not afford; you find that you're on your menstrual cycle and there is nothing at home. If they can just open that opportunity whereby you know that even if there is nothing, you will get help. (Dihlabeng, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Safe Spaces

Some participants felt that AGYW, but also boys, would benefit from having physical Safe Spaces that they could go to and seek help and support.

To make a place where everyone can go... They should build something like a centre where everyone can go to this person every time... I will encourage them to make a place where they can be free to talk to them, not to be scared and feel lonely... They should have someone who can encourage them. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 15-17 years)

It was highlighted by a participant in Setsoso that the staff at Safe Spaces should be female, to ensure that AGYW feel comfortable confiding in them.

There should be a room where girls, where they will be able to talk about their lives, they should talk to female figure...They should talk to female figure only about their lives, I mean yes, these boys they should have a male figure or a room also so that they can also talk about their lives also. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

“Empowerment” programmes for AGYW

Programmes to empower AGYW and build their self confidence and self esteem was suggested as a need by a participant in Rustenberg, who felt that this would benefit particularly those AGYW stuck in unhealthy relationships.

The programme I would do - I have realised as woman we are in relationships that are not good for us for we are just there for benefits or for the fact that you love someone, so the programme I would design is to build woman up to know their worth. Because I too have been in the same situation so for woman to build themselves up. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Sports and Recreation Programmes

In communities lacking sports and recreation programmes for young people, it was suggested that young people would benefit from such activities.

Where I live there is no sorts of sports like netball or soccer, rather being at home sports like rugby can be played, cultural dancing, that could be good... where I live there is no sport activities or drum majorettes I would create such things and then I would create competitions where they can win. (Rustenberg, Bojanala, 18-24 years)

Abortion support and adoption programmes for AGYW

A respondent in Klipfontein felt that there was a lack of programmes to support AGYW who have unintended pregnancies, helping them navigate the decisions around abortion or adoption.

Firstly I would go with the termination... because there is so much teenagers that get pregnant...they don't want the child or they are not financially stable in life to have a child... so, I would have that programme where you can go to someone that you know supports you with, before you even telling them I need a termination or something, I would have such a programme like that... or if you already had (a child)... keep your child safe or whatever... the second one was basically the same.. but it was almost like an adoption centre... but like when they have the baby already and they feel like they can't provide for the child they can take the child to a place that they know the child would be safe and fed... have a good life. (Klipfontein, City of Cape Town, AGYW 18-24 years)

Programmes to reduce teenage pregnancy

Several respondents highlighted the need for programmes to reduce teenage pregnancy in their communities. In Mbombela, multiple participants felt that more education about preventing teenage pregnancy was needed.

I would teach about teenage pregnancy and the ways of preventing it to avoid getting pregnant at the young age... I will post it on Facebook... I will go to schools and busy places like plaza, where there are most people... I will go to primary schools and talk to them. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

I would start a programme about teenage pregnancy. Most of the girls that get pregnant these days are in the primary school so those kids need knowledge, of where to go if they need any help regarding these issues. Some of the girls get pregnant due to the poverty that they face at homes... I would like to work with people from the clinic and people that have knowledge about these issues, who will be help to assist. (Mbombela, Ehlanzeni, 18-24 years)

Peer Support Groups

A participant in Setsoso suggested that peer groups for both boys and girls, offering support around homework, but also advice and psychosocial support, would be beneficial.

I would do... a study group, I would make something like that, where would meet weekends, uh during weekends, we help each other as children and discuss many things, bad and good, so that we find solution... I would also form boys group... where we can talk and boys would be talking to men and I would talk to girls, something like that... girls to feel free and boys also. (Setsoso, Thabo Mofutsanyana, AGYW 18-24 years)

Discussion

Since the majority of participants interviewed had not heard of the My Journey Programme, and cognisant of the fact that programme components were offered by various service providers under different names and brands, the findings pertain to AGYW perspectives and acceptability of any programmes and services for AGYW in their community which they had participated in, or were aware of. Thus, it is not always possible to determine which programmes and services respondents are referring to, however all interview respondents were recruited from communities in which the intervention had been implemented, and had indicated during the survey that they had participated.

Qualitative interviews showed that AGYW often cannot recall the name of the programme or organisation offering services, however when incentives such as branded clothing, diaries/journals or other stationary or toiletries are provided, AGYW are more likely to recall the programme name and brand. This implies that very clear naming and branding would help to identify programmes and create familiarity.

Findings suggest that during the processes of enrolment and recruitment into interventions and programmes, once confidentiality concerns are addressed and confidentiality ensured, AGYW feel comfortable. During risk assessment screenings, AGYW are reassured when they know WHY the questions are being asked, what will happen with the information they give, and what happens next. Findings indicate that there need to be clear explanations of what the next steps are after risk assessment screenings, so that AGYW clearly know what to expect from programmes, in order to avoid disappointment with and loss of trust in programmes. Our findings add to the evidence showing that AGYW participation in programmes can be impeded by time constraints, lack of availability, and AGYW's competing priorities, such as household responsibilities and educational commitments (McClinton Appollis et al., 2021).

In terms of biomedical services, what seems to be most important to AGYW is quality of care, specifically the feeling of being respected and treated well by staff offering services. AGYW value privacy, confidentiality, accessibility of SRH services, and want to be treated respectfully. To ensure acceptability of SRH services for AGYW, youth friendly comprehensive services need to be provided in youth-friendly accessible spaces, by youth-friendly staff, preferably female.

Knowledge about PrEP in the intervention communities is relatively high. PrEP journeys narrated by respondents highlight the importance of self-motivation to use and continue using PrEP, as well as the critical role of support from family to use PrEP. The decision to use PrEP is not just a once-off; AGYW need on-going support in their decisions around starting, stopping, and continuing to use PrEP, as their life and relationship situations shift and change.

In terms of intervention acceptability and perceived benefits, AGYW narratives suggest that programme participation can result in substantial increases in access to comprehensive SRH information and services, and lead to positive behaviour change, improved self-esteem, and help to bolster AGYW mental health and resilience. AGYW highly value a sense of agency in the decision to join a programme or not, to consider

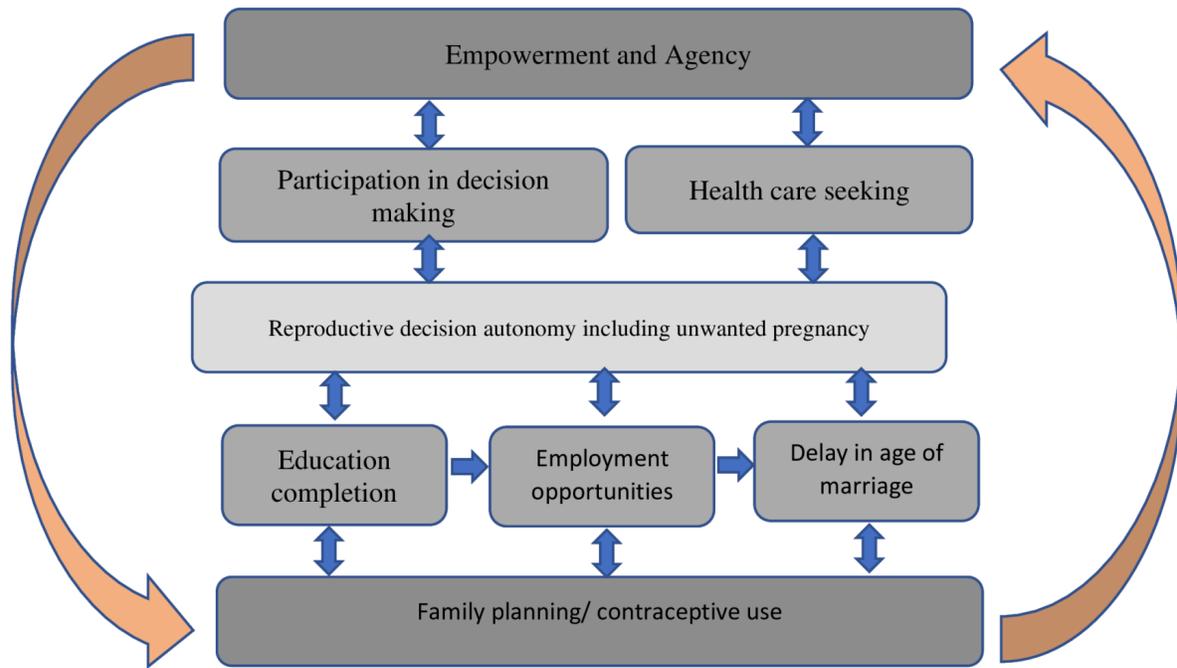
all the benefits, and decide food oneself - this helps to foster a sense of taking one's own health and well-being into one's own hands.

To date, adolescent SRH interventions have focused largely on expanding access to and improving quality of health care services, and enhancing AGYW's SRH knowledge, with a growing need to explore informed decision-making around their SRH. Findings from this evaluation concur with emerging evidence that there is a need to simultaneously enhance the agency and autonomy of AGYW to make informed decisions around their SRH (Duby et al., 2024). Agency entails the ability to make strategic life choices through personal competence and self-efficacy. It implies a belief that the individual has the potential to direct a sequence of events that make the sum of lived experience. The capacity to make decisions about one's own life and act on them to achieve a desired outcome, free of violence, retribution, or fear, is a critical element in achieving healthy and positive SRH outcomes throughout the life course. Agency is often construed as an important part of AGYW empowerment as it is enacted when women and girls use their resources to make key decisions about their lives. A growing evidence base indicates that adolescent girls' agency is related to a variety of SRH behaviours and antecedents, such as communication and norms. AGYW with a perceived high level of agency (often measured as decision-making, freedom of movement, voice and gender equitable attitudes) are associated with lower risk for unintended pregnancy and early childbearing. A higher level of agency amongst AGYW is also associated with higher contraceptive use, fewer births and longer birth intervals.

Closely linked to agency, increasing attention has been given to the extent to which having hope shapes adolescent wellbeing. Respondents in the qualitative interviews described how programme participant led to having a more positive outlook in life, and more hope. Hope is defined as an individual's perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways. Hope is the driver of agency, implicating the possibility to act necessary for the self-actualization of a goal. Studies have associated higher levels of hope with more positive outcomes in young people, including enhanced self-esteem, self-worth and self-care agency. Hope has also been linked to decision-making and risk behaviours. Furthermore, hopelessness and other mental health indicators have been related to SRH amongst adolescents. Evidence on the intersection between mental health and SRH amongst AGYW shows that feelings of hopelessness, depression and diminished self-esteem have a bi-directional influence on young women's SRH.

In light of the positive relationship between agency, hope, and SRH outcomes, it is evident that interventions need to build agency and hope as enablers of positive SRH outcomes among AGYW. AGYW with higher levels of agency, hope, critical awareness, problem solving, self-efficacy and communication skills can better express concerns related to their lives, including SRH concerns and seek SRH information. Interventions designed to foster positive SRH outcomes among AGYW should develop agency and hope as a core program component.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on SRH and Empowerment of AGYW



(Lassi et al., 2024)

Strengths and Limitations

Data Collection Challenges and Solutions

The remote data collection faced some technological challenges including poor internet connectivity, network coverage, and electricity outages which negatively impact the ability of interviewers to screen participants and conduct and complete remote interviews, and record high quality audio sound. In many cases, interviews had to be paused or rescheduled due to loss of phone signal, connectivity or network coverage.

Enrolling participants into the qualitative study also faced some challenges. There was a high volume of unsuccessful calls, with interviewers reporting that the majority of attempted screening calls go straight to Voicemail. Many AGYW share phones with parents / family members, which makes conducting confidential interviews, which can take an hour, challenging.

Additionally, on screening participants, many AGYW appeared to confuse questions about participating in the My Journey programme with having participated in the HERStory 3 household survey. When probed further, the majority of participants reported that they have not participated in the My Journey programme, despite the list of cell phone numbers being generated from those AGYW who indicated in the survey they had participated in the My Journey programme. To address this, the screening script was

amended, and interviews were conducted with all AGYW successfully contacted and willing to participate, instead of only those who were familiar with the My Journey programme.

Reflecting on this barrier, we note that in HERStory2 we sampled AGYW to call straight from SR databases, not through referral from the survey. Since it seems that many AGYW interviewed confuse / mix up having participated in the survey with having participated in the My Journey programme, it may indicate that in future, even though it is more challenging, it is better to not sample just those AGYW who participated in the survey but from all beneficiaries on the SR databases. To address this, the language in the interview guide was adapted, so that instead of asking about the “My Journey Programme”, the guide asked more generally about participation in any programmes and services for AGYW, which seemed to yield better results, as the programmes go by different names with different SRs.

The qualitative findings add valuable insight into the perceptions, experiences and narratives of AGYW living in communities in which the My Journey Programme was implemented. These findings, which illustrate the voices and lived experiences of AGYW, enable a deeper understanding of the ways in which interventions such as the My Journey Programme impact of AGYW’s lives, sexual and reproductive health, mental health and general well-being.

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