

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INITIATIVE FOR YOUTH IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

END OF PROGRAM REPORT 2009



Reproductive Health Initiative for
Youth in the South Caucasus



This Programme is co-funded by the European Union



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Population Fund



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Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in the South Caucasus (RHIYC)

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The publication reflects the 2006-2009 results of the “Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in the South Caucasus” project (RHIYC), co-funded by the European Union (EU), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (EPF) and implemented by UNFPA.

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Glossary of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACU	Action Coordination Unit
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AYPRH	.....	Association for Young People Reproductive Health
CAC	.....	Country Action Coordinator
CSMA	.....	Caucasus Social Marketing Association
CSO	.....	Civil Society Organizations
DEY	.....	Development and Empowerment of Youth Public Union
EC	.....	European Commission
EP	.....	European Parliament
EPF	.....	European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development
EU	.....	European Union
FAQs	.....	Frequently Asked Questions
FLE	.....	Family Life Education
FP	.....	Family Planning
HIV	.....	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDP	.....	Internally Displaced Person
IDP/Rs	.....	Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees
IEC	.....	Information, Education, Communication
IPPF	.....	International Planned Parenthood Federation
KMS	.....	Knowledge Management System
MEP	.....	Member of European Parliament
MoE	.....	Ministry of Education
MoH	.....	Ministry of Health
MoLHSA	.....	Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs
MoYS	.....	Ministry of Youth and Sports
MP	.....	Member of Parliament
MTV	.....	Music Television
NAYORA	.....	National Assembly of Youth Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan
NGO	.....	Non-Governmental Organizations
NRHO	.....	National Office on Reproductive Health and Family Planning
PAFHA	.....	Pan-Armenian Family Health Association
PCC	.....	Parliamentary Cooperation Committee
PCM	.....	Project Cycle Management
PTRS	.....	Project Tracking and Reporting System
RH	.....	Reproductive Health

RHIYA	Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in Asia
RHIYC	Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in the South Caucasus
S&RH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SAMSA	Scientific Association of Medical Students of Armenia
SCFWCA	State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs of the Azerbaijan Republic
SRH&Rs	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
ToT	Training of Trainers
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNFPA CO	UNFPA Country Office
UNIA	United Nations Interns Association
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization
YAP	Youth Advisory Panel
YFC	Youth-friendly Centre/Clinic
YIC	Youth Information Centre
YFHS	Youth-friendly Health Service
Y-PEER	Youth Peer Education Electronic Resource
YSG	Youth Support Group
ZIHR	Zhordania Institute of Human Reproduction

Background and Objectives

Background

The “Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in the South Caucasus” (RHIYC) project is a comprehensive, multifaceted and partnered initiative implemented by UNFPA aimed at improving the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) of the most vulnerable young people in the three South Caucasus countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

The project is co-funded by the European Union (EU), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (EPF). The total budget of the project for three years is EUR 2.9 million, of which EUR 2.5 million is from the European Commission delegation to Georgia, EUR 350,000 from UNFPA, and EUR 50,000 from EPF.

Project Management

RHIYC project is implemented by UNFPA Country Offices in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia; UNFPA Georgia Country Office hosts an Action Coordination Unit (ACU), which provides the overall management and technical assistance to the operational partners, coordinates and implements inter-country collaborative activities and manages the functions of monitoring and evaluation.

The UNFPA Representative in Turkey, the Country Director for Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia has overall responsibility for project management and supervision; UNFPA sub-regional office for Turkey and the South Caucasus is responsible for project inter-country communication and collaboration.

European Parliamentary Forum (EPF), the partner of RHIYC, facilitates regional and inter-regional networking and knowledge-sharing, supports annual multi-sectoral regional forums, publishes comprehensive quarterly activity newsletters, facilitates outreach and public relations activities in EU member states, and liaises on behalf of the ACU with European institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Youth Advisory Panels (YAP) and Youth Support Groups (YSG) in each country, comprising young professionals, students and volunteers, provide technical expertise, advise UNFPA and partner NGOs and are involved in planning, implementation and monitoring of project targets, activities and results.

Objectives of the RHIYC End-of-Programme Assessment

The objectives of the end-of-programme assessment are:

- assessment of progress achieved in programme outputs at the end of the project;
- analysis of regional and country-specific constraints and bottlenecks confronted throughout the duration of the project;
- dissemination of the knowledge acquired and lessons learned;
- elaboration of recommendations for achieving sustainability of project deliverables.

Review Process

The review process included:

- collection of information and data for the end-of-programme review;
- review of Annual Standard Progress Reports from each country within the programme;
- analysis of outcomes of UNFPA Annual Programme Reviews in three countries and Mid-term review meeting;
- review of annual EU monitoring mission reports;
- monitoring visits by UNFPA RHIYC ACU to Armenia and Azerbaijan;
- data analysis at UNFPA RHIYC ACU; and
- preparation of a review report.

Participants

Information and data collection was conducted by the UNFPA RHIYC staff in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia and EPF. Data analysis was conducted and a compiled regional report was prepared by the UNFPA RHIYC ACU.

Observations and Conclusions

Activity 1a - Facilitating peer-to-peer communication and education

Armenia

Over its lifetime, RHIYC project trained a total of 319 peer educators, thus exceeding the programme target of 300 young people. The activity covered the entire country, including the capital city of Yerevan and the ten regions. The trainings were conducted by the Pan-Armenian Family Health Association (PAFHA), an Associate Member of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). The training sessions covered a variety of topics, including puberty, sexuality, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV/AIDS, gender equality, and peer-to-peer communication patterns.



As a major follow-up to peer training, outreach visits were conducted at the sites where the training was delivered. Overall, over the duration of the project, 853 young boys and girls were reached through formal and informal contacts at various points in time following the training sessions which lasted several days. The usual ratio for female to male participants in the outreach groups was around 1.5:1 in favour of females.

One of the objectives of the outreach was to liaise with vulnerable young people in particular. The total number of trained peer educators included 76 vulnerable young people, which exceeded the initial target of 70. The group of vulnerable peers included street children and youth, institutionalized youth, and a limited number of men who have sex with men, injecting drug users, and sex workers. A considerable number of teenage boys and girls (77 in total) employed in their adolescence – a group which can be considered as para-vulnerable – were also trained. As part of the outreach activities, 218 especially vulnerable young people were part of the target group.

Azerbaijan

Over the three-year duration of RHIYC, the Azerbaijan programme targeted 448 youth volunteers from more than 20 regions and trained them as skilful peer educators in youth sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Among them, 153 were most-at-risk youth, namely 52 young internally displaced persons or refugees (IDP/R), 31 migrant workers, 25 street children, 20 sex workers, and 25 institutionalized youth representatives. To ensure better involvement and increased motivation of newly trained volunteers, a total of 50 young people, mainly from the regions, attended the advanced course in the framework of 'Final Trainings of Young Leaders' in the capital city of Baku.



The National Assembly of Youth Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan (NAYORA), an umbrella organization of more than 60 youth NGOs in the country specialized in different fields, served as core implementing partner and contributed significantly to the achievement of the project's objectives. A thorough selection process performed by NAYORA aimed at examining the

eligibility criteria and relevance of the young people who applied to be efficient advocates capable of successfully addressing sensitive issues of youth SRHR to their peers.

Georgia

During the project implementation period, 476 young peer educators were trained on youth SRH issues in the peer education component; this number included 84 from vulnerable groups, i.e. homeless or institutionalized youth etc. Training courses were organized by the NGO 'Tanadgoma'. Youth Peer Education Electronic Resource (Y-PEER) training materials, methodology and techniques developed by UNFPA were used during the courses. The training covered STIs, HIV/AIDS, puberty, sexuality, gender equality, communication with peers, and other topics.



Overall, around 33,000 young people were educated at youth summer camps spread across Georgia by UNFPA implementing partner CSMA on SRHR within the innovative programme developed by UNFPA Georgia in 2005. Seminar and lecture participants included students, adolescents from schools, from internally displaced families, with disabilities, and ethnic minorities from various regions. Topics discussed during the seminars/lectures included risky behaviour, STIs, HIV/AIDS, contraception, harmful habits (drugs, tobacco, and alcohol), healthy lifestyles etc. Information,

education and communication (IEC) materials were distributed among the participants. Youth from ethnic minority groups received IEC materials in Russian. This activity proved to be the most efficient and cost-effective way of delivering the appropriate messages to youth. The success of the activity largely depended on a fruitful cooperation with the Georgian State Department of Sport and Youth Affairs strengthened by special Memorandum of Understanding signed between the UNFPA Georgia and the Department of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia to ensure full support and cooperation from the side of the management of summer camps.

Regional

Throughout the three years of the project, EPF established close collaboration with the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe, of which the three South Caucasus countries are members. EPF ensured the participation of RHIYC peer educators and members of youth advisory boards at four study sessions and trainings to ensure international exchange of best practices and learning. Among the highlights of this cooperation was the youth SRHR awareness-raising campaign that RHIYC peer educators conducted during the Council of Europe 'All-Different – All Equal' Youth Symposium in Monopoli, Italy (June 2007). Another example on the level of Council of Europe youth policies was the participation of RHIYC staff in the study session devoted to the creation and development of the European Youth Charter on Sexual and Reproductive Health¹ (July 2008), which will serve as an advocacy and awareness-raising tool on youth SRHR at community, national and international levels.² EPF has also involved young decision-makers from other European



¹ The final text is available at <http://www.youact.org/>

² Other activities included: participation of RHIYC peer educators: study session 'Social exclusion of young people and participation, from local to international' (November 2007, Budapest); study session 'Equality Required – Working with Young People for Equality' (Budapest, April 2008) etc.

countries in RHIYC events in the South Caucasus – for example, Young Social Liberals and Young Social Democrats from Denmark participated in the RHIYC Youth Festival ‘Caucasus Healthy Wave’ and the RHIYC Youth Forum, conducted in Batumi in September 2007. Participation in these events and being a member of an international community working to improve SRHR empowers young people. By sharing their experiences at an international level they can use in their local work the knowledge they gain, adapted to their local situation.

Activity 1b - Developing and updating IEC materials addressing youth, including vulnerable groups

Armenia

A set of IEC materials was developed, including 11 booklets covering the topics of sexuality, fertility regulation and birth, STIs including HIV/AIDS, and rights. Booklets were printed periodically in various quantities according to the needs of the target groups. A total of 66,000 copies of one publication had been printed up to April 2009. By the time the project closes, another set of more than 200,000 copies will be printed for use in every major city, town and village in the country. The previous sets of brochures generated an incredibly positive response from the entire spectrum of RHIYC beneficiaries. Development of these IEC materials has been very timely, as it has responded to a gap in the knowledge base on SRH.



An exhaustive list of promotional materials, including overall 19 distinct positions, was developed, based on relevant market survey and beneficiary preferences. A total of around 10,500 items ranging from T-shirts to notepads to mouse pads and briefcases were produced. The promotional materials mostly targeted the partnering institutions as part of RHIYC implementation, as well as select audiences attending seminars and training sessions.

Azerbaijan

Six brochures targeting issues of puberty, sexuality, fertility regulation, pregnancy/parenthood, STIs and HIV/AIDS, and gender equality, as well as four triplets on puberty, STIs and HIV/AIDS, smoking, and drug abuse, were developed in Azerbaijani and Russian. More than 100,000 copies were printed and actively used in all activities facilitated by the project staff, implementing partners and volunteers.

Because of the medical, mental and sexual sensitivity of the topics, they were subjected to repeated revisions by the initiative’s counterparts from the National Office on Reproductive Health and Family Planning (NRHO). The experts concentrated particularly on the ways in which young people could present the material to their peers, considering youth mentality and society’s cultural sensitivity. Two editions of IEC materials were developed with the aim of better adapting them to meet the needs of young people.



The promotional materials (six types of posters prepared by young people for RHIYC youth-friendly clinics and youth information centres, wall clocks, calendars for 2010, caps and T-shirts for peer education training etc.) were developed to address the immediate needs of the various activities and to secure better visibility for RHIYC in Azerbaijan. Special sets of promotional materials for IDP/R and young people living on the streets (raincoats, vacuum flasks etc), suggested by the Youth Advisory Panel (YAP), were developed and distributed during the training events.

Georgia

The regional IEC review meeting organized in Tbilisi during the initial stages of the project was attended by six IEC experts from Georgia. Three youth focus groups and three expert discussions



were organized on the design and development of materials. Texts for IEC materials were approved by youth (during a focus group) and the local experts and translated into Georgian. Six pocket-size brochures were developed and printed, on puberty, sexuality, pregnancy and maternity, fertility regulation, STIs and HIV/AIDS, and gender equality (in Georgian and Russian versions). Five thematic leaflets on STIs, HIV/AIDS, drugs, tobacco, and puberty, together with a calendar on SRH rights, were also developed and printed. In total, more than 105,000 copies of brochures and leaflets were printed and distributed among young

people and all stakeholders (including parents, teachers etc.). All materials were prepared and edited in partnership with the Zhordania Institute of Human Reproduction, CSMA, NGO Tanadgoma and YAP.

Due to the increased demand for and interest from the entire society on a unified national approach towards healthy and harmonious education (including education on SRH) for young people, a special working group was created, comprising physician-reproductologists, paediatricians, psychologists, specialists in pedagogy, Church representatives, parents and young people. In 2008 the 'National Concept and Curriculum on Healthy and Harmonious Education' was drawn up, reviewed by major stakeholders and now needs further adoption by corresponding governmental and legislative bodies as well as countrywide implementation.

Regional

A regional South Caucasus meeting to develop/update youth-friendly IEC materials on SRH was organized by UNFPA in Tbilisi on 18–21 September 2006. Six experts, youth and key implementing partners from each South Caucasus country took part in the meeting, which was facilitated by a consultant from the similar European Commission co-funded project 'Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in Asia' (RHIYA).

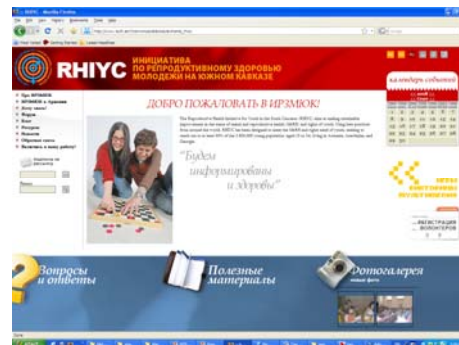
All three South Caucasus countries developed texts for IEC materials on puberty, childbirth, fertility regulation, STIs, HIV/AIDS, gender equality, and gender-based violence.

The best strategies for reaching IDPs with the IEC materials were also discussed during the regional meeting. Distributing materials to IDPs through those NGOs which already work with them was considered the best channel for communication.

Activity 1c - Fostering communication among youth through the Internet

Armenia

A fully functional country website (www.4uth.am) was developed with multiple modern features (including forums and blogs). At the time of reporting, the website had received around 12,000 visitors. The website solicits applications from potential applicants to join the networks of youth peer educators or simply socially minded young people concerned with the status of SRH in Armenia and the South Caucasus region.



The website has been serving as a good tool to disseminate relevant news on RHIYC and UNFPA Armenia other projects. Of special value are the blog and forum sections of the website. There is a clear trend of an increase in interest in online discussions and the use of modern methods of communication to share knowledge. It is anticipated that more young people, including those from the remote regions of the country, will participate in the online events. Four formal forums have been conducted and facilitated online by RHIYC/UNFPA staff.

By the time the project closes, the website may have some alterations/improvements introduced to its interface.

Azerbaijan

The RHIYC Azerbaijan web project (www.4uth.az) was launched in late 2007, and has been constantly improving its performance. It is maintained by the active participation of young volunteers. It represents a source of accurate information where young people can easily express their views free of judgement and prejudice. The website currently contains updated SRHR materials, numerous web forums on SRHR topics, frequently asked questions (FAQs), as well as attractive downloadables, pictures, puzzles, contacts, useful links, and videos. The forum's one-month statistics for December 2008 showed 33,465 page views and 2,170 new posts.



On 17 May 2008, www.4uth.az was recognized as the best website in the 'Society' category and awarded the National Internet Award in IT communications: 'NETTY-2008'.

In May 2009, the website introduced a new service, 'Ask an expert', aimed at providing medical consultations. Medical experts – master trainers and doctors from the NRHO – answer different questions asked by young people. All consultations are provided free of charge and under conditions that ensure the full anonymity and

privacy of the customer. In addition to offering general advice, this tool is extremely effective for those who are seeking confidential face-to-face consultation with a doctor in a youth-friendly environment without being obliged to present his/her name at any time in the process.

The website was extensively advertised through the project's events, depicted in the IEC, promotional and visual materials, and referred to in different local media (newspapers, radio broadcasts and television shows).

Georgia

The RHIYC project Georgian website (www.4uth.ge or www.foryouth.ge) became popular among youth due to interactive tools, such as forums and quizzes incorporated. The structure and design of the country website for Georgia was discussed during the focus group meetings, and the UNFPA Georgia Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) provided continuous feedback and recommendations during the website development process. An online media specialist facilitated a constant update process and discussions on youth SRH topics in forums. From 2008, interactive tools, such as forums and competitions (quizzes) have increased the interest of young people and their involvement in an active discussion process. A contracted reproductive health specialist gave professional counselling and answered website users' questions. RHIYC's website became increasingly popular (more than 15,000 visitors in 2008). Maintaining the site and ensuring its efficient functioning do not require significant funding, making it a truly cost-effective tool to reach more young people. Therefore UNFPA Georgia CO will maintain the web-site after project closure. Peer educators also play a significant role in popularizing and promoting the site and developing web forums.



Regional



The RHIYC project regional website (www.4uth.net) is operational and is being promoted through all promotional and IEC materials produced in the framework of the initiative. RHIYC dedicated web-facilitator provides efficient technical assistance, which will be continued after closure of project.

Activity 1d - Utilizing the media for educating the public, especially youth, and generating further demand for similar services

Armenia

Over the course of the programme, three short films/visual public service announcements and five radio clips/audio public service announcements were developed in the Armenian language. At an early stage of development of these materials, a series of focus groups was held, utilizing the inputs of young people representing various youth organizations and from various regions of Armenia. The short films were aired over two consecutive months by two local television channels with national coverage. One of the TV channels willingly incorporated the clips into its weekly programme for youth. Radio clips were



aired by a leading radio station over three consecutive months, with a frequency of 15 replays daily in their commercial/infomercial slots.

In June 2008, RHIYC/UNFPA conducted an unprecedented cultural event in the capital city of Yerevan, featuring the most popular pop stars in a non-stop concert. The RHIYC films were played during the entire duration of the concert, accompanying the show. All singers performing at the concert communicated to the audience a message about the importance of an informed choice in SRHR, discouraging abortions and emphasizing gender equality. As a follow-up action to the June concert, project funded inclusion of the short films in the DVD version of the event. The films were placed at the very start of the DVD programme, thus capturing the most attention of viewers. In the first round of sales immediately following the presentation of the DVD, a total of 5,000 copies were produced and subsequently sold in a number of countries with a large Armenian diaspora (for instance, the USA, Russia, and Ukraine) on top of the local market in Armenia.

In 2008 and as part of the activities focused on mass media, 23 journalists were trained. While the participants in the training increased their awareness on SRHR with the help of presentations and discussions, they also were engaged in some practical work to produce tangible outcomes. These included articles written and edited in groups.

In August 2009, RHIYC Armenia started sponsoring a very popular, especially among youth, radio show on the Ararat FM radio station. The five RHIYC radio spots are being broadcast again, on average six times a day. Before the project closes, it is anticipated to show the TV spots again on at least two leading TV channels.

Azerbaijan

For the RHIYC programme in Azerbaijan, two TV spots on HIV/AIDS and one on gender equality and parents' participation were developed and actively aired on TV to better promote the project's goals in Azerbaijan. The spots were also presented during almost all RHIYC events, especially in those attended by the general public.



In addition to offering a social message, media was actively used to reflect the particular achievements of the project. The results of public events (e.g. town hall meetings), surveys and trainings were continuously shared with TV-, radio-, and Internet-based media outlets. Cooperation with the public television station (itv) and non-government Space TV provided added value to promote RHIYC.

As part of the RHIYC initiative envisaged in the proposal document, on 29 February to 1 March 2008 the UNFPA RHIYC in Azerbaijan facilitated the training of media representatives. The aim of the two-day training course was to build the capacities of journalists on how to properly address issues related to youth SRH in local mass media. About 30 journalists and future journalists from different Azeri TV channels, radio stations, news agencies and magazines participated in the event and gained a deeper knowledge and skills on media coverage and reporting of these issues.

To strengthen the advocacy component of RHIYC, the Azerbaijan programme conducted three youth reproductive health festivals locally, which commemorated World AIDS Day (in 2006 and 2008) and International Children's Day (2007). The first festival was held jointly with NAYORA on 1–2 December 2006, the second – jointly with the Ministry of Education (MoE) – on 1 June 2007 and the third – with the Ministry of Youth and Sports – on 1 December 2008. The aim of the

festivals was to promote a healthy lifestyle and youth participation, and to increase awareness on the impact of HIV/AIDS on young people and young people's possible contribution to prevent the AIDS pandemic.

Georgia

In Georgia, 13 TV and two radio spots on SRH issues were developed and broadcast; one TV spot focused on HIV/AIDS, while the other 12 covered SRH rights. At the initial stage, youth focus groups selected four role models who composed a special piece of music for the HIV/AIDS TV spot and radio clip.

In addition, five TV talk shows dedicated to youth SRHR were shown on nearly all popular TV channels (Rustavi2, Mze and Public Broadcasting).

The project utilized the existing popular TV programme formats by convincing TV producers of the importance of youth SRH issues.



In 2007 a 'Free Hugs' campaign was organized to commemorate World AIDS Day, with the active participation of the UNFPA Georgia YAP and young volunteers. About 50 young activists took part in the performance, which was videotaped and posted on the web.

About 30 Georgian journalists were trained on specific aspects of reporting on health and reproductive health and the importance of youth SRH coverage. A three-day training organized for local journalists from TV and radio stations, newspapers and news agencies was conducted by an expert from the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management in the framework of the 2nd South Caucasus Youth Festival.

The project ran two contests for journalists highlighting youth SRHR issues in mass media, and the best journalists were awarded diplomas and financial and special prizes.

Regional

For the first time in the South Caucasus region, UNFPA proposed new partnership initiative – South Caucasus Youth Festivals. In the frame of RHIYC project South Caucasus I Youth Festival dedicated to World AIDS Day on 1–2 December 2006 was organized in Tbilisi. On 12–14 September 2007 and 12–13 September 2009, respectively, South Caucasus II Youth Festival 'Healthy Wave' and South Caucasus III Youth Festival 'Caucasus Wave for Future' took place in Batumi, focusing on the importance of a healthy lifestyle and safe environment.

The festivals included several indoor and outdoor activities and were very important regional events where resources from all social groups, including governmental agencies, NGOs, the private sector, youth groups and media, were mobilized and directed towards raising the awareness of the target population on SRHR and healthy lifestyle issues.

The Festivals were the unique opportunity to build new partnerships between youth, various partners and institutions from three South Caucasus countries.



Activity 1e - Conducting town hall meetings and workshops

Armenia

Over the course of the project, 13 town hall meetings were conducted in various parts of the country, with a total of about 1,200 to 1,300 participants. Normally, the number of participants at each meeting exceeded the required target of 100. In line with the requirements, town hall meetings targeted local authorities, NGOs, parents, physicians, and a small number of other key stakeholders. The activity was implemented by the Scientific Association of Medical Students of Armenia (SAMSA), with inputs from qualified trainers further sub-contracted.



The list of participants included representatives from local governments and communities, physicians and parents, as well as delegates from locally active NGOs. Prior to the training, the prospective participants were sensitized on major SRH issues and briefly introduced to the goals and objectives of RHIYC. Most of the topics for discussion focused on the best ways of communicating with youth on SRH, including youth-friendly techniques. IEC materials were distributed to the participants, with some extra copies which could be passed on to other interested parties. Pre- and post-test evaluation was conducted, producing some positive results. For instance, the level of awareness post-test reached 88%, which was 33% higher than pre-test.

Over the project period, 12 workshops were conducted, covering almost the entire country, with more than 300 participants, primarily SRH professionals and officials. A further six workshops were held that targeted especially vulnerable youth in the most risk-susceptible regions of Armenia. Each workshop, which mostly focused on unemployed youth and street adolescents, brought together around 30 participants. The main approaches used in conducting town hall meetings were also applied in the workshops.

Azerbaijan

Over the course of the RHIYC project in Azerbaijan, 20 town hall meetings were conducted in 19 different regions (Baku, Absheron, Gobustan, Masazir, Sumgayit, Masally, Imishli, Khudat, Mingachevir, Khachmaz, Guba, Goranboy, Sheki, Shuvalan, Devechi, Agdam, Agdash, Yevlakh, Goychay, and Khizi) jointly with the RHIYC partner, the State Committee on Family, Women and Children's Affairs of the Azerbaijan Republic (SCFWCA). A total of 1,430 representatives of civil society and community groups (local authorities, teachers, doctors, psychologists, parents, youth leaders, local NGO representatives, IDP/Rs etc.) were sensitized on addressing the challenges facing youth in terms of their SRHR. Additionally, the issues of youth participation, early and closely related marriages, parent–teacher–youth communication and inter-relations, and STIs, including HIV/AIDS, were major topics during the meetings.



In total 21 workshops for healthcare professionals were organized in 13 different regions of Azerbaijan (Baku, Sumgayit, Ganja, Lankaran, Guba, Khachmaz, Shamakha, Mingachevir, Sabirabad, Sheki, Ter-Ter, Gazakh, and Zagatala). The meetings were facilitated by master trainers from the NRHO, the project partner for improving youth-friendly services in Azerbaijan. The participants (391 health professionals and 150 youth representatives) were given information about the existing youth-friendly health centres, operating principles and specificity of those facilities, and exchanged views on the main aspects of adolescent and youth counselling. Participants emphasized the necessity of premarital counselling, which may serve as a substantial basis for the promotion of those health centres among the general public.

Georgia

During the project implementation period, 12 town hall meetings were conducted, with participation of more than 1,200 people from different social groups.

During the town hall meetings and workshops the information about the RHIYC project and its activities, as well as topics related to youth reproductive health and the importance of education for youth on reproductive health issues have been presented. Presentations and IEC materials distributed raised great interest among attendees, and after fruitful discussions all participants at the meetings agreed on the necessity of further intensive collaboration.



This activity has been linked and strengthened by other UNFPA supported projects in Georgia, which created a strong basis for successful implementation of the RHIYC town hall meetings. UNFPA Georgia CO existing national partnerships and regional contacts and the target population's keen interest in youth SRH issues served as enabling factors for the effective implementation of this activity. UNFPA in the frame of project "Talking to Women" organized a series of advocacy and awareness-raising meetings with women in 12 different regions of Georgia, in partnership with the First Lady of Georgia, and with the involvement of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoLHSA) through its Public Health Department, its branches in regions and Health Care Department. Overall, around 900 women of various age groups and professions – including government officials, civil society representatives and teachers – attended

the meetings. The topics discussed included women's reproductive health, family planning, youth reproductive health problems, the role of the family and teachers in education and behavioural changes in youth, healthy lifestyles, and other issues, and IEC materials were distributed. In addition, the meetings were used to identify the needs and concerns to be addressed in future interventions.

Activity 1f - Identifying role models popular among youth and utilizing their services for spreading the message of the programme

Armenia

RHIYC Armenia embarked on the process of identifying role models for the programme at an early stage of its implementation in the country. Initially, under the supervision of SAMSA, a series of focus groups was conducted in selected regions of the country which were deliberately chosen to provide a representative sample. Each of the proposed celebrities on the list was rated based on the total number of votes received and then assigned a special score. The top-rated celebrities were then contacted and introduced to RHIYC and its objectives. As a result of the action, a total of six role models – four men and two women – were trained and provided with promotional materials.



Over the course of two years, two distinct events were organized with the direct participation of three role models. One was a TV show hosted by two of the celebrities, featuring the Armenian Country Action Coordinator as the guest to talk about the situation of SRH issues in the country, and the other was a roundtable with the leading youth NGOs in attendance, an event which received substantial coverage in the mass media.

In June 2008, RHIYC/UNFPA sponsored an unprecedented cultural event in the capital city of Yerevan featuring the most popular pop stars in a non-stop concert. As a part of this event, three new celebrities were sensitized on SRHR issues and introduced to RHIYC, its objectives and methods. Subsequently, the selected pop stars, in cooperation with the director and producers of the show, developed messaging for the target audience. The messages were approved by RHIYC/UNFPA before they went public.

In July 2009, another celebrity event was sponsored in Yerevan, gathering the young fans of the Ararat FM radio station to celebrate its growing popularity. This opportunity was successful in getting more celebrities to communicate the key RHIYC messages to young people as the key target group of the project.

Overall, more than a dozen celebrities were sensitized on SRHR issues as part of the RHIYC.

Azerbaijan

From the beginning of RHIYC, the YAP members identified four young people from the Deyirman rap band – popular with young people – as youth advocates in Azerbaijan. Role models were actively involved in the majority of media and outreach activities that involved the participation of young people. A song composed for the RHIYC project, called ‘Firuz caught virus’, became popular and was included in the band’s new album.



The role models actively participated at the RHIYC Second (Zagatala, 2007) and Third (Baku, 2008) Youth Reproductive Health Festivals, where they performed the song and conveyed messages about responsible behaviour and attitudes with respect to HIV/AIDS.

The celebrities have been in close collaboration with the RHIYC team. They have special blogs at the RHIYC website (www.4uth.az) and participate in forum discussions.

Georgia



The project in Georgia trained ten role models on youth SRH issues. The training and information sessions focused on the importance of youth education on SRH topics. Role models took part in various project activities, i.e. youth festivals, press conferences, talk shows etc.

The sole obstacle in this activity has been the highly commercialized nature of the Georgian entertainment industry, where most of the celebrities have an extremely busy agenda and require high cash payments for their involvement in project activities.

Activity 1g - Establishing partnerships with institutions and individuals from various walks of life with an influence on the youth

Armenia

More than 530 organizations were contacted and sensitized on SRH and RRs (three to five key individuals at each organization) to qualify as ‘partnering institutions’. The key officials at the partnering institutions received promotional materials and underwent introductory training on RHIYC, its objectives, and the SRH situation in Armenia and in the region as a whole.

After a careful review and mapping of the potential spectrum of partnering institutions, the following ratio was developed as a target: two Internet clubs/cafes, two religious/community centres, two beauty services, two



sport clubs, one travel agency, and one night club/cafe.

Mapping the potential partner institutions, beginning with Yerevan and then replicating the same exercise in some of the regions, facilitated the process of outreach. The genuine interest in SRH of the staff in most of the locations also proved to be beneficial.

Azerbaijan

Over the course of the project, RHIYC expanded its networking with youth drop-in centres in the capital city, Baku. Volunteers distributed IEC and promotional materials to Internet and sports clubs, discos, libraries, travel agencies, wedding houses etc. Locations such as bars, night clubs, hotels and motels, guesthouses and saunas that may be associated with high-risk sexual activity were also targeted by the project team. In addition to distributing the IEC materials, these locations were considered as non-traditional retail outlets for distributing the project's COOL condoms.



Certain difficulties were observed while targeting young people in the regions, especially young girls, through partnerships with drop-in centres used by the general public. The situation was aggravated by a lack of infrastructure and insufficient living standards among the target population. In this regard, the strategic collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports was helpful to strengthen the network of RHIYC partnering centres with the existing network of popular youth locations operated by the Ministry in the regions. More than 300 youth drop-in centres were contacted in the capital city of Baku and 20 regions, among which 109 locations were identified as programme partnering centres. More than 300 people were targeted and sensitized on the importance of youth SRHR. The RHIYC web resource (www.4uth.az) was extensively promoted at Internet clubs in the regions.

Georgia

The expansion of networks has been strategised through the active participation of youth: the youth focus groups suggested setting up distribution points in the vicinity of locations where young people spend most of their time waiting for various specialized services, such as hairdressers, car repair centres etc, and have spare time to get familiar with the content of the IEC materials.

Pocket-size brochures and leaflets on various SRH topics in Georgian and Russian were produced and distributed at popular cafes, hairdressing saloons, car repair centres, wedding houses, and youth reproductive health medical and information centres opened by the project. IEC materials were also distributed during several project activities i.e. the Batumi Youth Festival, town hall meetings, UN Week in Georgia, different training courses etc. IEC materials were also included in 'youth kits', which were distributed among young IDPs.



Activity 2a - Training healthcare providers on youth-related SRH services

Armenia

Over the course of the project, four distinct groups of healthcare providers (including nurses, general practitioners (GPs), gynaecologists, and military doctors) were targeted in particular. Overall, 302 nurses, 194 GPs, 180 gynaecologists and 189 military doctors were trained in various aspects of youth-friendly SRH services, surpassing the targets for each of these groups.



The activity aimed at having as much geographical coverage as possible, and thus was implemented in all ten regions and Yerevan. Moreover, the focus of the activity lay heavily on the regions, with a ratio of 3:1 in their favour. Most of the trained medical personnel were successfully engaged in servicing the youth-friendly

centres established at various healthcare institutions.

Azerbaijan

In close cooperation with the NRHO, the RHIYC programme contributed to the training of 885 medical professionals. The training tools were based on the World Health Organization (WHO) Orientation Programme ‘Adolescent Health for Healthcare Providers’, which was translated, adapted to the local needs and circumstances in Azerbaijan and endorsed by the Ministry of Health (MoH).



In total, 187 GPs, 310 school nurses and midwives, 191 military medics, including doctors-in-training from the Military Medicine Faculty of Baku Medical University, and 197 obstetricians-gynaecologists attended the trainings. Three-day courses were organized for nurses, military medical personnel and GPs, while gynaecologists attended five-day intensive trainings. All courses focused on general aspects of youth SRH with an emphasis on building healthcare providers’ counselling skills.

Georgia

After the consultations at sub-regional and national levels WHO Orientation Programme ‘Adolescent Health for Healthcare Providers’ has been translated into Georgian; the training modules have been modified to meet the capacity building needs in provision of youth friendly SRH service provision in Georgia. The needs assessment survey on youth-friendly reproductive health services was undertaken in cooperation with Georgian Opinion Research Business International (GORBI). The training programme was modified, reflecting the needs defined through the survey.

The training programme developed by project, has been accredited in Georgia. Ten master trainers from various regions of Georgia completed ToT training courses, organized in Tbilisi by the Zhordania Institute of Human Reproduction.



About 1,100 healthcare providers (gynaecologists, reproductologists (259), family doctors (240), nurses, midwives (394), and military medical personnel (190) were trained during the project implementation period by certified master trainers in partnership with Zhordania Institute of Human Reproduction, the Association of Young People's Reproductive Health and NGO 'Tanadgoma'.

Regional

After consultations, all the three South Caucasus countries agreed that instead of developing a new training programme for healthcare providers, it would be more effective to use the recently developed WHO Orientation Programme 'Adolescent Health for Healthcare Providers'. On 11–15 December 2006, a regional five-day intensive training of trainers on this course was organized by UNFPA in Tbilisi. Fifteen trainers, five from each South Caucasus country, were trained, and four specific training programmes for nurses, general practitioners, military doctors and gynaecologists were developed.

Also, based on mutual agreement, country-level training was organized for ten trainers from the regions in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Trainers from the regions worked as co-trainers during the training courses, and also served as focal points for trainings in the regions.

Activity 2b - Ensuring uninterrupted accessibility to contraceptives for sexually active youth through various available means, including social marketing of affordable condoms

Armenia

Over the course of the project, a total of 6,000 gross of three new types of condoms (XXL, form-fitted, and silver) were procured at an overall cost of USD 27,404, thus increasing the spectrum of available types of 'SS' condoms to seven. All new condoms were introduced onto the market under the already locally well-established brand 'SS'.

In mid-2009, a contract was signed with a local supplier to manufacture and help install 35 condom vending machines, primarily targeting public places in Yerevan that are heavily visited especially by young people. Installing vending machines will help to promote the SS brand and facilitate easy and affordable access to condoms.

In addition, in the same period, USD 12,600 was allocated to SAMSA to help it organize and carry out some of the packaging functions in its social marketing activity.



Azerbaijan

Since a social marketing initiative constituted a completely new strategic direction for Azerbaijan, this programme sub-component started from comprehensive marketing research aimed at identifying prospective consumer groups, purchase and usage preferences, suggestions for the condom brand name, pricing etc. Packaging and logo designs for condoms were developed and approved by youth focus groups, and the trademark COOL was registered with the National Patent and Trademark Office and constituted the property of the UNFPA office in Azerbaijan.



Over the course of the programme, 12,000 gross of condoms (1,728,000 pieces) were procured.

To meet local market requirements, RHIYC contributed to registering a new local NGO, the Development and Empowerment of Youth Public Union, eligible to provide fully fledged social marketing in the country.

With the aim of promoting the acceptance of condoms as a lifestyle choice, increasing their availability and improving demand from youth, the RHIYC condom distribution strategy effectively combined usage of the commercial pharmaceutical sector with non-traditional retail sales outlets that were uniquely accessible to priority target groups. As a result, more than 235,000 packs of COOL condoms were distributed to regional depots operated by major pharmaceutical wholesale companies. Wholesalers sell COOL condoms – on a credit or a fully cash-based system – to more than 1,200 private retail outlets throughout the country, which include pharmacies, clinics, and medical vendors.

Based on suggestions from customers and youth focus groups, the Azerbaijan programme developed a new design of condom logo, foil and condom packs in late 2008, and introduced large delivery boxes for 21 condom packs, shelf wobblers, and roll-up banners for pharmacies. The implementing partner also applied different stimulus plans for distributors and pharmacists, as well as distributing condoms at numerous public events attended predominantly by youth (summer camps, seaside concerts, rap/DJ festivals), which proved their efficiency. In total, more than 150,000 packs of condom were distributed using non-traditional distribution channels and partnerships.

Georgia

The Caucasus Social Marketing Association, an NGO and a partner of UNFPA, has been sub-contracted to strengthen the condom distribution system in Georgia through social marketing of condoms. To ensure project support to promote the affordability of high-quality condoms, 1.3 million condoms were procured for a condom social marketing project. Approximately one million condoms have already been distributed through existing pharmacy chains as well as non-traditional distribution channels (supermarkets, gas stations etc.). Due to the official Social Marketing Strategy, the price of the condoms procured for the social marketing activity was so low that it allowed to include four condoms in a pack, instead of the originally planned three, at a lower price of 1 GEL.



One hundred and ten pharmacists from various pharmacy chains were trained in youth-friendly services and on modern methods of contraception.

Due to the successful Social Marketing strategies, developed by UNFPA and CSMA, the condom sales reached very high figures already during the second year and the revolving fund has been established in 2008 instead of 2009, as it was planned by the Action.

At this stage the condom social marketing project is already self-financing and can continue working with its current turnover, even expanding coverage of the target population and adding new distribution points. Condom vending machines were purchased and installed at alternative distribution venues in order to increase and ensure young people's accessibility to high-quality, affordable condoms.

Regional

On the regional level, project partners that are implementing condom social marketing components in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have a quite intensive collaborative partnership, sharing best practices, experience and lessons learned, one of the successful examples of collaboration was the technical assistance of CSMA provided to Social Marketing new initiative in Azerbaijan. The option of cross-border exchange and distribution of national condom brands (SS, Cool and Favorite) was discussed and agreed during management meetings, in order to increase variety and thus marketing and distribution options.

Activity 2c - Strengthening the capacity of civil society, educators and community groups, to meet the S&RH needs of youth, with a special emphasis on developing counselling skills and essential knowledge on safe habits and harm prevention

Armenia

Over the course of the project, a total of more than 1,300 people (including civil society representatives, educators, and religious leaders) were trained in youth SRHR. Among these, active school teachers and teachers-in-training represent the greatest share. Educators have been playing a further important role in advocating for young people to use the recently established youth-friendly centres in their localities. Also, through their close contact with adolescents they have been and

remain in a position to showcase and facilitate a healthy lifestyle in schools and beyond.



The pre- and post-test results demonstrated a significant increase in the level of participants' awareness and knowledge of SRH (from around 50% to over 80%). Most of the topics for discussion have focused on the best ways of communicating with youth on SRH, including youth-friendly techniques. IEC materials were distributed among the participants, with some extra copies that could then be passed on to other interested parties.

In mid-2009, RHIYC Armenia teamed up with other projects of the UNFPA Armenia CO in implementing an awareness-raising programme aimed at religious leaders and clerics, most notably communicating closely with the local population in their respective regions.

In particular, as part of RHIYC, 20 selected priests attended a three-day seminar on key issues in adolescence and youth health, with special emphasis on SRH. Some of these priests, paired up with an authorized master trainer, have been conducting one-day awareness-raising campaigns in their localities. By the time the project closes, a total of around 75 young people affiliated with the Church will have undergone SRHR training/awareness-raising.

Azerbaijan

With the aim of contributing to training civil society, educators, and community groups on youth SRH, UNFPA provided a two-day training of trainers for four people (two lawyers, one educator and one doctor) in November 2006. The training tutorials were grounded on the reproductive manuals developed under previous UNFPA activities in Azerbaijan: Family Life Education curricula for 9th–11th grade secondary school students and training modules for healthcare providers in communities.



Over the course of the programme in Azerbaijan, 1,520 people were covered by the trainings organized jointly with the RHIYC counterpart SCFWCA, predominantly in remote regions of the country.

Six hundred civil society representatives attended trainings in six different regions (Sheki, Shuvalan, Gobustan, Devechi, Goygol, and Yashma).

Seven training sessions were organized in seven different regions in Guba, Lankaran, Mingachevir, Imishli, Sheki, Guba, and Baku for a total of 920 educators and students of higher educational institutions.

Georgia

To strengthen the capacity of civil society, educators and community groups to meet the SRH needs of youth, a local NGO ‘Panacea’ conducted training sessions for representatives of civil society, teachers, and teachers-in-training. Training modules were based on the WHO Orientation Programme ‘Adolescent Health for Medical Workers’. In total, 1,172 teachers and 1,707 community leaders from Tbilisi and different regions of Georgia took part in the training.



Successful implementation of this project component would not have been possible without the target population’s keen interest in SRH issues, and active participation in training and information sessions.

Activity 2d - Contributing to the expansion of youth-friendly SRH services, information and counselling

Armenia

Of the 32 youth-friendly centres established, half are affiliated with a healthcare institution (of either primary or secondary/tertiary level), with the other half founded as part of (or within the premises of) either an NGO or quasi-state institution. In any case, special effort was taken to observe all four models of centres (healthcare, educational institutions, NGOs for drop-in centres, and ‘uniformed services’ institutions) required by the proposal document throughout the country.

Virtually all youth-friendly centres observe the major requirements for similar centres, such as privacy, confidentiality, and friendliness of the service.

In the early stages of the project, healthcare and educational institutions and relevant NGOs were evaluated, and, based on the scores assigned to each, the first batch of potential host institutions was identified, followed by negotiations and agreements.

Many of the non-healthcare institutions contain health reference offices (or affiliated nurses) ready to deliver any first aid, if needed, as well as first-hand counselling.

The experience of this project could serve as a helpful point of reference for UNFPA COs’ other initiatives in this field.



Azerbaijan

At the initial stage of this programme sub-component, RHIYC considered thoroughly the appropriateness of the network of 28 MoH/UNFPA reproductive health centres available in Azerbaijan to serve as pre-existing medical facilities to be upgraded for the provision of youth-friendly services. As a result, only five of them – located in Baku, Ganja, Sheki, Goychay, and Gusar – were considered eligible. In particular, to increase attendance at the facilities by male youth, all centres were assessed for the availability of a separate entrance.

To ensure fully fledged and comprehensive coverage of the youth target audience with youth-friendly services, it was suggested to split the 24 centres into 12 youth-friendly clinics and 12 youth information centres, so 12 sets of medical equipment and 24 sets of IT equipment and furniture were procured.

With the aim of better coordinating and monitoring the work of youth-friendly clinics in the country, RHIYC established a network of youth-friendly medical facilities guided by a newly established clinic – the leading facility opened in Baku on a site refurbished at the expense of RHIYC counterpart the NRHO. The clinic comprised seven different rooms: conference room, library, training centre, Internet room, gynaecologist and psychologist offices, and manipulation room. The other 11 subordinate clinics were opened in Baku, Ganja, Sheki, Mingachevir, Coychay, Shemakha, Gazakh, Gusar, Khachmaz, Sabirabad and Jalilabad regions and receive young customers.



Twelve youth information centres were opened in

educational facilities (three in the secondary schools of Baku and four in Baku universities) and at five crisis centres for victims of violence established under the joint initiative between UNFPA, SCFWCA and the Heydar Aliyev Foundation called 'XXI Century Without Violence Against Women' in the Shuvalan, Goranboy, Lankaran, Zardab and Ganja regions. The crisis centres were commissioned under the patronage of the First Lady of Azerbaijan and have pre-determined staff of medical doctors, psychologists and lawyers, which provides added value to the issue of sustainability and effective provision of services.

An efficient handover of the established facilities is ensured by the fact that youth-friendly clinics constitute the officially endorsed property of the MoH, whereas youth information centres are being operated under the protectorate of the SCFWCA.

Georgia

To ensure youth accessibility to high-quality reproductive health information and services, 12 youth-friendly reproductive health medical-information centres (in the Mtkheta-Mtianeti, Shida Qartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Imereti, Guria, Samegrelo regions, the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, and Tbilisi) and four youth-friendly reproductive health information centres (in Shida Qartli, Adjara and Tbilisi) were opened and are operational. In addition 3 medical-information and 1 information centers will be opened by the end of 2009.

The youth reproductive health centres provide young people with free reproductive health counselling, contraceptives, affordable diagnosis and treatment, as well as a wide range of information on reproductive health issues.

The privatization of healthcare facilities in Georgia changed the environment and initial plans of establishing youth-friendly services in Georgia. Meeting the challenges of current processes and privatization of healthcare facilities, UNFPA deployed a new partnership strategy with the private sector to develop youth-friendly services. The geographical coverage, capacities, gaps and development opportunities were considered in all cases. At this stage the sustainability of the services is ensured by partnership agreements of a



minimum of five years between UNFPA and the hosting facilities. Under these agreements, to ensure the affordability of youth-friendly services for young people, the organizations are obliged to provide young people of both genders with information and services free of charge, while UNFPA will provide facilities with free contraceptives, testing kits, IEC materials, etc. based on budget availability.

Activity 2e - Encouraging the participation of parents in removing barriers to the utilization of SRH services by young people

Armenia

Over the course of the project, a total of 535 parents received training or education on particular SRH issues, with an emphasis on behavioural and communication aspects. All ten *marzes* (regions) of Armenia were covered, with more emphasis placed on regions than the capital city.



A special IPPF-endorsed tool, ‘Speak Easy’, was used throughout the activity. The tool communicates the basic patterns that parents are advised to use while speaking with their children on various issues of SRH. This activity was implemented by the Pan-Armenian Family Health Association.

Parents have traditionally been viewed as one of the most conservative target groups in SRHR. However, with a special (and careful) approach taken by the parties in charge, it seems perfectly feasible to convey all key messages to the audience.

Azerbaijan

To ensure better outcomes from the initiative, this project component was merged with the training sessions for civil society and educators and was implemented under the technical expertise of the SCFWCA. At town hall meetings from the programme’s first-year activities, youth reported that their parents were the main preferred source of SRH information.

Six one-day training sessions were organized in the six regions of Sheki, Shuvalan, Gobustan, Devechi, Goygol, and Yashma, involving a total of 500 parents over the course of the RHIYC programme in Azerbaijan. The SCFWCA regional offices served as a basis for successful organization of the courses at a community level.

The only constraining factor was bad weather, which caused a slight delay to the start of the activity.



Georgia



Local partner NGO ‘Panacea’ utilized the services of expert trainers trained by RHIYC in organizing training sessions for parents in Tbilisi and the regions. The training module for parents was based on the WHO Orientation Programme ‘Adolescent Health for Medical Workers’; training emphasized the importance of youth SRH, SRH education, available resources and services, signs of distress, and techniques for communicating with youth on SRH. In total 567 parents attended the training sessions.

The population expressed a keen interest in topics related to youth SRH, so special attention was paid to the importance of youth education in this area.

Activity 3a - Strengthening the existing SRH-associated networks and congregating stakeholders in an annual Reproductive Health Initiative Forum, encouraging regular Internet dialogues and knowledge-sharing events with the participation of all three countries, and enhancing legislation, policies, standards and programme frameworks related to youth-friendly SRH services

Armenia

The 2009 multi-sectoral meeting was held in conjunction with the meeting of parliamentarians and youth. SRH attracts and leaves significant space for multi-sectoral dialogue, and as such the area lends itself to hot debate. In Armenia, there has been a long history of NGOs wanting informal education in SRHR, and along non-existent state-led/authorized SRHR education in schools. Over



its lifetime, RHIYC encouraged and facilitated the building of trust and cooperation with regard to relevant inter-sectoral activities. The first multi-sectoral/parliamentarian meeting was a major success, with direct intervention for the first time ever with leading parliamentarians and relevant ministers on major SRHR issues. In particular, SRHR brochures were provided to parliamentarians, and they gladly engaged in a constructive dialogue on why both formal and informal SRH education is important, and possibly how they can come to complement each other. At the most recent

meeting, the progress of the past two to three years was clear. Among the major issues under discussion were the potentially new legislative initiatives upholding the right of adolescents and youth to full access to information. Of particular significance was the issue of what could/should be done to initiate/facilitate the expansion of the successfully established network of youth-friendly centres (of all types).

Azerbaijan

Taking into consideration the availability and improved access of educated young people in Azerbaijan to contemporary means of communication, the RHIYC Azerbaijan programme introduced the Acting Center of Young People (ACYP) to foster cross-sectoral dialogue and exchange of best practices and learned lessons. ACYP was an interactive communication network established under the RHIYC YSG in Azerbaijan to engage the largest possible number of the most progressive youth in Azerbaijan to advance, advocate for and better promote the programme's goals. The network has been operational under the country website (www.4uth.az) as well as through numerous web engine tools: Yahoogroups, Google, Facebook etc.



Numerous parliamentary events organized by EPF, as an official partner of RHIYC, in different countries paved the way for equipping the Azerbaijani MPs – members of the EPF All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Population and Development – with new advocacy skills to better

promote youth SRHR, and enabled them to share best practices and lessons learned from the progress of the RHIYC initiative in the country.

As a direct consequence of the RHIYC advocacy campaign and bringing together key stakeholders, experts and leading decision-makers in the process of coordinated advancement of shared commitments with regard to youth SRHR, specified at the RHIYC first national multi-sectoral and parliamentary meetings (7 March 2007), a new national reproductive health strategy was drafted and further adopted by the MoH in January 2008. The main advantage of the new document covering the period of 2008–2015 is that for the first time in Azerbaijan this national priority document regarded SRH of adolescents and youth as a separate dimension with clear targets and tasks.

Georgia



UNFPA Georgia, in collaboration with the Parliament of Georgia, facilitated the annual national multi-sectoral meetings, which aimed at strengthening the networks within the sector and advocating for the importance of youth SRH. Meetings were attended by international and local governmental and non-governmental organizations, experts, healthcare providers and youth organizations. Discussions addressed various problems for young people in the country. As a direct consequence of the RHIYC project advocacy campaign

and bringing together key stakeholders, experts and leading decision-makers in the process of advancing shared commitments with regard to youth SRHR, several recommendations for improving youth SRH in Georgia were put in place, including policy recommendations, and recommendations for improving healthcare provision, for capacity-building and knowledge-sharing in the field of reproductive health services, and for youth awareness-raising and improving access to information.

Due to the increased demand and interest from the entire society on a unified national approach to healthy and harmonious youth education (including SRH education), a special working group was set up, comprising physician-reproductologists, paediatricians, psychologists, specialists in pedagogy, Church representatives, parents and young people. Focus group meetings were conducted, including parents, teachers and youth. As a direct consequence of experts' invaluable contribution, the 'National Concept and Curriculum of Healthy and Harmonious Education' was created, which needs further adoption by corresponding governmental and legislative bodies, as well as countrywide implementation.

Major factors leading to the success of this activity were the invaluable support from the Committee of Health and Social Issues of the Parliament of Georgia and the active involvement of youth and experts.

Regional

In the frame of RHIYC project, EPF and UNFPA Georgia jointly organized the First South Caucasus Annual Youth Reproductive Health and Rights Forum on 23–24 March 2007, which took place at the Parliament of Georgia in Tbilisi. The two-day event gathered more than 100 participants, including governmental officials, parliamentarians and civil society representatives from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and the EU. The forum held discussions on the challenges to

improving the SRHR situation of young people in the three South Caucasus countries. The participants drew up National Frameworks for Action for each country and signed the Statement of Commitment for achieving sustainable improvements in the field of SRHR of young people in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Due to the political situation in the region (parliamentary elections in all three countries in 2007 and 2008 and the military conflict in Georgia with the Russian Federation in August 2008), the Second South Caucasus Annual Youth Reproductive Health and Rights Forum was postponed several times and is scheduled to take place on 12–13 September 2009 in Batumi, Georgia.



On 29 May 2009, EPF organized a conference in Brussels entitled ‘Partnering for Youth: EU–UN–Parliamentarians together for a Healthy Future of the South Caucasus - 3 Years of Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in the South Caucasus (RHIYC)’, to present RHIYC’s successful impact on young people’s SRH in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to the project donor – the European Commission – and other invited guests, to identify the challenges faced during project implementation, and to discuss the project’s ‘exit strategy’. As a result of the conference, the project partners decided to continue working on improving SRH of young people in the South Caucasus in a second phase, with possible funding from the European Commission, bilateral donors and the private sector. They also decided that a possible new project must be built on the lessons learned.



Throughout the three years, EPF developed close collaboration with parliamentarians from the three South Caucasus countries, using the existing UNFPA Survey of Parliamentarians³ as a basis for its work. In this survey, parliamentarians from the Eastern European region stated that their main constraints in working on advancing the agenda of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) were the lack of information, active cultural or religious opposition, and the lack of political will. According to the survey, parliamentarians wished to take part in various trainings

and international meetings/conferences to learn about international work on SRHR and exchange knowledge. Throughout the three years of the project, based on the recommendations of local UNFPA country offices, EPF involved interested parliamentarians in more than 15 regional and international conferences, study tours on SRHR and trainings. Among the highlights were the 2006 International Parliamentarians’ Conference on the Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action,⁴ G8 International Parliamentarians’ Conferences,⁵ and the international high-level conference ‘The Future of Parliamentary Involvement in Global Health and Development’ (Brussels, Belgium, October 2008). Participants included from Armenia: Hon. Karen Avakian, MP, Hon. Ara Babloyan, MP (current Chair of APPG) and Hon. Armen Melikyan, MP; from Azerbaijan: Hon. Rabiyyat Aslanova, MP, Hon. Malahat Ibrahimgizi, MP (current Chair of APPG), Hon. Vidadi Mammadov, MP, Hon. Fazil Mustafayev and MP, Hon. Nesib Nesibli, MP; from

³ UNFPA (2006) Global Survey ‘Cairo to 2015 – The road to success. Progress made by parliamentarians in implementing the Programme of Action of the international Conference on Population and Development’, available at www.unfpa.org.

⁴ Bangkok, Thailand, November 2006.

⁵ G8 International Parliamentary Conference on the ‘Economic Rewards for Investing in HIV/AIDS Prevention and Health’ (Berlin, Germany May 2007), G8 International Parliamentarians’ Conference ‘Strategic Investments in Times of Crisis – the Rewards of Making Women’s Health a Priority’.

Georgia: Hon. Zaal Gamtsemlidze, MP, and Hon. George Tsereteli, MP (current Chair of APPG). They also participated at the EPF parliamentary delegations to the UN meetings, such as the UN Commission on Population and Development (New York, USA, April 2009), various trainings, such as media training for parliamentarians ‘Making the Media Work for You: Communicating Support for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights’ (March 2008) and study tours to developing countries, such as the EPF study tour to Zambia, focusing on reproductive health supplies (May 2009), and to Cameroon, focusing on following up the country’s efforts on combating malaria.

Through these activities EPF contributed to the creation of parliamentary leaders on SRHR and global health in each country. Thanks to the efforts of EPF regionally and UNFPA locally, the parliamentarians in Armenia and Azerbaijan established solid structures, the APPGs, on Population and Development, in their Parliaments, which became members of the EPF Council.⁶ Hon. George Tsereteli, Chair of the Georgian APPG, which existed and became an EPF member before the RHIYC project, has become a member of the EPF Executive Committee.⁷ These parliamentarians and APPG secretariats participate in EPF internal events, such as the Executive Committee and EPF Council meetings. Having a specifically dedicated structure in the Parliament ensures continuity and contributes to the development of institutional memory.

Activity 3b - Advocating for youth-friendly SRH policies and services with parliamentarians, government officials, public health administrators, educational authorities, and representatives of mass media

Armenia

Two parliamentary meetings, providing an opportunity for direct dialogue between parliamentarians and select youth, took place alongside the multi-sectoral meeting. Both times, representatives of the Y-PEER network and other youth organizations participated in the event and raised their concerns related to national ownership of youth friendly-services, their sustainability, and formal/mandatory SRHR education in schools. Following the second parliamentary meeting, new legislative initiatives are likely to be introduced in the National Assembly of Armenia.



Azerbaijan

Over the course of the RHIYC programme in Azerbaijan, the project established a close partnership with the National Parliament to work together to advance youth SRHR in the country. The RHIYC national parliamentary meetings and the multi-sectoral meetings came together to form national

⁶ The EPF Council gathers parliamentarians from its Member APPGs from the European Region to review SRHR, the ICPD Agenda and the EPF work plan.

⁷ The EPF Executive Committee is comprised of 11 parliamentarians, who are leading European politicians on the issues of SRHR, population and development.

youth SRHR forums, which brought together key decision-makers, youth advocates, experts and the target audience, and gave the floor to national promoters from different levels and backgrounds to communicate effectively with each other. The necessity of establishing a legal regulatory framework for reproductive health in Azerbaijan constituted the main priority area on the agenda of three annual youth SRHR forums held in March 2007, October 2008 and April 2009. The participation of EPF at all events added value for the participants and was helpful for better public recognition of the results achieved.



As a direct result of the annual youth SRHR forums in Azerbaijan, starting in October 2007, the members of APPG from the Standing Commission on Social Affairs facilitated a number of expert discussions and parliamentary sessions in the National Parliament aimed at raising public concerns and elaborating on principles of and advocating for the forthcoming national reproductive health law. Experts from RHIYC partnering agencies made a significant contribution to drafting the law. To date, the conceptual framework of the law, which initially caused a wide range of debates in different circles of society, in media outlets, among religious leaders and even among different MPs, has been accepted by the majority in the Parliament, and its final endorsement is expected in the near future.

Georgia

In the frame of the RHIYC project UNFPA organized three national youth reproductive health and rights forums in cooperation with the Healthcare and Social Issues Committee of the Parliament of Georgia. From the beginning of the project, all three countries agreed that it would be much more cost-effective if annual national multi-sectoral meetings and national meetings with parliamentarians and government representatives were held together. Following this agreement, the First Lady of Georgia, government representatives, Members of Parliament, civil society representatives, experts, UNFPA Georgia representatives, members of the UNFPA YAP, newly trained peer educators and representatives of other international organizations operating in the field of youth reproductive health actively participated in the forums. The forums provided brief information about the progress and future plans of RHIYC, promoted the importance of youth SRH and gave youth, civil society and key governmental officials the opportunity to interact. Several recommendations for improving youth SRH in Georgia were put in place, including policy recommendations, and recommendations for improving healthcare provision, for capacity-building and knowledge-sharing in the field of reproductive health services, and for youth awareness-raising and improving access to information. The mass media always actively covered project events and major activities, which increased visibility and promoted the project.



It must be mentioned that the major factor leading to the success of this activity was the invaluable support extended by the Committee of Health and Social Issues of the Georgian Parliament.

Regional

Throughout the three years of the project, EPF in Brussels followed closely the debates at the European Parliament (EP) on the EU's policies towards the South Caucasus, which are discussed on a regular basis within the EP's EU–Armenia, EU–Azerbaijan and EU–Georgia Parliamentary Cooperation Committees and its Foreign Affairs Committee. EPF identified and worked closely with a number of parliamentarians from these EP bodies and with the EP Secretariat. As a result, the issues of harmonious development of youth, reproductive health, the fight against violence, ensuring gender equality and achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the South Caucasus were discussed at the meetings and were set as a target to be improved and followed up in the next meetings and in national Parliaments.⁸



As the three South Caucasus countries are members of the Council of Europe, throughout the three years, EPF developed close cooperation with its Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) and the Chairs and members of the Committee of Social, Health and Family Affairs, Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population and Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. One example of this cooperation and parliamentarians' awareness is the high level of support they offered in the aftermath of the military conflict between Georgia and the Russian Federation (August 2008). The Chair of the Health Sub-Committee participated in the EPF fact-finding mission to Georgia and notified PACE of the urgent reproductive needs of IDPs, in particular women and youth, in Georgia. Thanks to the support of the Sub-Committee and the overall support of the Committee on Social, Health and Family Affairs, during the debate and adoption of its four documents, PACE urged the Georgian Government and the international community to pay close attention to the reproductive health needs of Georgian IDPs, women and youth and the necessity of ensuring their access to primary medical aid.⁹

Another example of communicating with parliamentarians about reproductive health needs was the fact-finding mission for European parliamentarians, led by EPF and hosted by UNFPA Georgia on 19–20 September 2008 to assess the reproductive health situation of IDPs and to evaluate the health infrastructure needs of the country after the war with the Russian Federation. Parliamentarians from Belgium, Denmark, the EP, Germany, Sweden and the UK and representatives of civil society visited the temporary shelters of IDPs living in schools and other public premises in Tbilisi and the tent city in Gori and met



with governmental and parliamentary representatives and the UN Emergency Response Coordination Team. After the visit, these parliamentarians approached their governments and urged them to contribute to the donors' conference because of the IDPs' reproductive health needs. More than EUR 4.55 billion were pledged by the governments to help reconstruct the destroyed

⁸ Specifically, EPF followed: European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument Budget (September 2006); EP Report on HIV/AIDS in Europe and Neighbouring Countries; EP Report on Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy; EP Report on More Effective EU Policy for South Caucasus: from promises to actions; EU Budget 2009; *Final Statements and Recommendations of the EU–Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia Parliamentary Cooperation Committees (PCC)* EU–Armenia PCC (9th meeting, 30 January 2007), EU–Azerbaijan PCC (8th meeting, 2 September 2007), EU–Georgia PCC (9th meeting, Georgia, 26 June 2007), EU–Georgia PCC (10th Meeting, Georgia, 29–30 April 2008), EU–Azerbaijan PCC (9th meeting, Brussels, October 2008), EU–Georgia PCC (11th meeting, Brussels, 16–17 February 2009).

⁹ PACE documents include (see <http://assembly.coe.int>): Opinion on 'The consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia' (Doc. 11730); Resolution 1633 (2008) on 'The consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia'; Report: 'The Humanitarian Consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia' (Doc 11789) 2009; Resolution 1648 (2009) 'The humanitarian consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia'.

infrastructure, with EUR 2.61 billion initially earmarked for the social sector (education, health and social protection).

EPF also organized a series of meetings with the leading European parliamentarians working on SRHR and the Millennium Development Goals for the First Lady of Georgia, during her visit to Brussels in January 2009. The First Lady, who is a prominent supporter of SRHR in Georgia, updated members of the EP's delegation to the EU–Georgia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee and the Chair and members of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Belgian Parliament about the latest SRHR situation and needs in her country, especially following the recent war with the Russian Federation. Representatives of the European Commission, the EP Secretariat, the UNFPA



Brussels office, selected reproductive health experts and NGOs also attended the meeting. Suggestions on how to improve SRHR in Georgia were taken up by the EP parliamentarians and formulated in Final Statements and Recommendations of the EU–Georgia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee in February 2009, where the EP “calls on the Georgian authorities to continue providing primary medical

aid, access to healthcare facilities and psychological assistance paying particular attention to the needs of children and young people; guarantee that the internally displaced women or children do not become victims of trafficking or violence”; and “notes the importance of well coordinated and adequate donor aid response, taking into consideration the needs stated by the Government and the civil society organizations operating in the country”.¹⁰

Activity 3c - Promoting joint capacity-building events for NGOs and youth organizations to improve their negotiation skills and networking abilities

Armenia

In its effort to promote capacity-building, Armenia was represented by a six-member delegation, as agreed, at two regional capacity-building seminars held in Georgia during the second year of RHIYC operations.

The first meeting saw a gathering of senior management professionals in the area of SRH, along with a number of seasoned youth representatives in the social sector, while the second meeting brought together a much younger generation of aspiring leaders.



Finally, credit should go to the correct selection of the trainer, who was an experienced professional in the field of SRH and project management, for making the event both possible and successful.

¹⁰ Source: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/archives/delEu6/pubSheet.do?language=EN&body=DSCA>.

Azerbaijan



Six representatives of Azerbaijani NGOs and youth organizations attended two regional training courses organized by the ACU in Batumi and Tbilisi, respectively, in 2007 and 2008. The training courses focused on aspects of effective project management and advocacy strategies for advancing youth SRH in the region.

Georgia

In total around 33 representatives of Georgian NGOs and youth organizations attended two regional training courses organized by the RHIYC ACU in Batumi and Tbilisi, respectively, in 2007 and 2008. The training courses focused on aspects of effective project management and advocacy strategies for advancing youth SRH in the region.

In December 2007, a special two-day training course for representatives of various youth organizations was organized at the request of the UNFPA Georgia YAP. During the training conducted by RHIYC project staff, 11 young leaders were trained on modern techniques for project design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.



In general, RHIYC contributed to the capacity building and networking of NGOs by involving them in different components of the project as the implementing partners and participants of different RHIYC events.

Regional

Two regional trainings for NGOs and youth organizations from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia were conducted in Batumi and Tbilisi. In total 57 participants were trained during the three-day courses in project design, management, reporting and advocacy strategies in the field of youth reproductive health.



On 14 September 2007, a regional youth forum was organized in Batumi, Georgia. About 30 representatives of various youth organizations from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia discussed the situation of youth SRH. Participants adopted a special declaration addressed to the governments of the three South

Caucasus countries, calling for a strengthening of joint efforts to tackle the problems in this field.

In general regional component provided an important contribution to strengthen the partnership between different NGOs and CSOs from three South Caucasus countries (Youth NGOs, Medical Doctors and Students' Associations, Mass media groups, etc.).

Activity 3d - Sharing learning resources



From the start of the project, EPF developed the Knowledge Management and Sharing tool hosted at <http://rhiyc.cogels.net/joo/>. The tool developed for the project partners' internal communications aimed to intensify regional sharing of information on project progress and various events and contains the latest news and materials on SRHR in the South Caucasus and the rest of Europe, specifically in 'News', 'Publications', 'Useful Links', 'Newsletter', 'Newsflash' and 'Polls' sections. Each project partner possesses a log-in name and password and can at any time publish the latest news or upload a publication or a link, which are reviewed and validated by the Knowledge Facilitator in Brussels. Among the most visited posts were information on youth events such as youth festivals (more than 300 clicks), interviews with parliamentarians from the South Caucasus, those received by the Knowledge Facilitator (more than 300 clicks) and many others. According to the feedback from project partners, the website has become the best source (sometimes the only source) of reliable information on the partners' project activity and best practices.

For external information and communications, throughout the three years, EPF compiled and circulated the quarterly RHIYC electronic newsletter. Issued in English and Russian, it provides updates on project activities and regional news and includes updates from the EU, UN and the Council of Europe. The recipients include governmental officials, parliamentarians and civil society representatives in the three South Caucasus countries and the rest of Europe.

Activity 4a - Surveys

Armenia

UNFPA RHIYC in Armenia have been engaged in conducting nationwide Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) survey, which would also allow for cross-border, regional comparative analysis.

Azerbaijan

As part of the RHIYC action plan, the Azerbaijan programme conducted the Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Survey jointly with the Ministry of Youth and Sports and with expert assistance from the NRHO – with 1,210 young people aged 15–19 from six cities of Azerbaijan (Baku, Sumgayit, Ganja, Sheki, Guba, and Lankaran) taking part in the exercise. The overall survey results indicated that respondents had a satisfactory level of basic knowledge of SRH. Besides general awareness, the survey was intended to learn about the attitudes and skills of young

respondents related to the sensitive aspects of sexual relations, STIs, abortions, pregnancy and contraception. The majority of young people (76%) reported that a course providing information about the issues related to sex should be taught at schools, and they shared their views on the ways in which they thought it would be appropriately offered to them.

Georgia

Quantitative and qualitative youth surveys on reproductive health were conducted. The main purpose of the quantitative survey was to determine awareness, knowledge, opinions and behaviors connected with reproductive health of adolescents aged 14–19, as well as usage and utilization of reproductive health services. The purpose of the qualitative research was to determine the basic cultural factors for the effective realization of a sexual education and training system as an important aspect of reproductive health. In the context of cultural background influences, the ideas, approaches, values and moods were studied and reflected on (family, family functions, early marriages, children and perspectives, choice of wedding partner, ideal models of a woman and a man etc.) along with gender perceptions (extramarital contacts, virginity, taboos).

The results of the survey were analysed and compared with the adolescent reproductive health survey of 2002, and recommendations on adolescent SRH issues were developed. The results showed that the level of adolescents' awareness on SRH issues decreased over the last seven years, which might have been caused by an absence of educational programmes. The majority of adolescents and their parents consider that they need such information for healthy development and for harmonious families, as the family is seen as one of the most important values in society.

Regional

Comparative analysis of data from all three South Caucasus countries was carried out, offering the possibility of incorporating the results of any country-specific peculiarities (attitudes, behaviour, knowledge etc. in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) in planning new policies, concepts and curricula.

Lessons Learned

Armenia

- There is stigma associated with some segments of the local ‘vulnerable’ population, such as men who have sex with men, injecting drug users, and sex workers. This stigma may be overcome, primarily through a professional and friendly approach to these groups, as well as by using the assistance of specialized staff members and/or organizations.
- It is important to incorporate certain provisions for delayed delivery penalties as part of contractual obligations for such traditional service providers as publishing/printing houses, web developers and alike. This should ensure timely and quality delivery of key products for the project.
- The high and often inflated cost of mass media services (especially the cost of programme-related broadcasts, including public service announcements) may complicate the relevant programmatic action. However, in many cases, negotiations, on the one hand, and careful budget planning, on the other, prove to be helpful. A similar case/logic is applicable to work with celebrities.
- Working with healthcare providers has sometimes proved to be tricky. For gynaecologists and other SRH professionals, it became vital to prepare and deliver more specialized training programmes to keep the group interested and inspired. On the other hand, for military doctors, for instance, it was not always easy to assemble a homogenous group of professionals with a purely medical background. There has also been an uneven distribution of specialists across the country. Relevant decisions to cover representatives of additional target groups and/or merging some of the local groups have been instrumental in facilitating the work.
- Youth-friendly centres have proved to be very much welcomed by the hosting organizations, whether in the healthcare or educational system. However, the limited financial resources of the hosting organizations and only project-related financial support on behalf of UNFPA have raised serious concerns over the issue of the centres’ sustainability. One potential solution has been the option of integrating the services of the centres into the general operational set-up and strategic agenda of the hosting organizations (or their affiliates). One such case is the network of centres affiliated with the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs.
- Building the awareness and capacity of national authorities is vital for ensuring the sustainability of the programme. The National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia has played a key role in advocating for a new SRHR agenda in the country. While the roadmap to this has not been easy or straightforward, consistent and reasonable effort has yielded results. Approaching the champions in the legislative arena and securing their support has been instrumental in introducing an All-Party Parliamentary Group to established European players in the field of SRHR, such as EPF.

Azerbaijan

- The most-at-risk youth and those living in remote areas appeared to have much lower levels of awareness on SRHR and contraception than youth inhabiting the capital and regional centres.
- Although using peer trainings as a participatory approach to education and communications equipped the audience with accurate information on SRHR by sharing their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, efficient monitoring mechanisms to introduce lasting changes need particular attention.
- Youth volunteering and empowerment were critical to successfully achieving the majority of the programme's targets, such as peer education, maintaining the web site, condom social marketing, advocacy events etc.
- Among other mass media sources actively used over the course of the project, the Internet was particularly popular among adolescents and young people. This could be mainly attributed to the interactivity of the tool, as well as the fact that materials presented were designed in the most attractive format for young people.
- The participation of skilful peer educators in training sessions for healthcare providers and civil society representatives proved to be a major factor of success, as it contributed to developing an environment that was conducive to learning the required counselling skills in the field.
- Close cooperation between UNFPA and EPF achieved over the course of RHIYC in Azerbaijan managed to create an enabling environment to strengthen the professional communications and networking between Azerbaijani MPs and the international community. It was also helpful for advancing the legal and policy framework for youth SRHR.

Georgia

- The experience of three and half years proved that peer-to-peer education on SRH issues at youth summer camps within the innovative programme developed by UNFPA Georgia in 2005 is the most efficient and cost-effective way of delivering the appropriate messages to youth.
- Promoting the project website has been a difficult task due to limited access to the Internet in the regions and stiff competition from other websites. However, interactive tools, such as quizzes and forums, and the involvement of experts have increased young people's interest, and at this stage the RHIYC project website has become very popular and is a quite cost-effective and efficient tool to reach young people.
- One of the most significant obstacles for the project component 'Using the Media to Educate the Public' was existing practices in the media industry. TV spots are considered advertising by Georgian media and, consequently, air time on nationwide TV channels is very expensive. As a result, RHIYC only managed to air TV spots on the Georgian Public Broadcasting channel. On the other hand, several enabling factors contributed to the success of the activity, namely: the experience of UNFPA Georgia in social advertising, the keen interest of the target population in youth SRH issues, and active coverage of project events and major activities by mass media that increased visibility and promoted the project.
- The active support of regional authorities and local governments, as well as a keen interest of the target population in youth SRH issues served as enabling factors for the effective implementation of the town hall meetings and workshops;
- Several enabling factors could be identified for training healthcare providers, including the

existing regional contacts and expertise of trainers from the UNFPA partners Zhordania Institute of Human Reproduction, the Association of Young People's Reproductive Health and NGO 'Tanadgoma', and the invaluable active support from the Ministry of Defence. Additionally, the needs assessment survey on youth-friendly reproductive health services that was conducted provided support to identify shortcomings and possible areas for improvement. The training programme has been constantly modified, reflecting the needs defined through the survey and by questioning the training participants.

- UNFPA and CSMA partnership and experience in the field of Social Marketing played significant role in success of the condom social marketing. At this stage, it is already self-financing and can continue working with its current turnover, even expanding coverage of the target population and adding new distribution points. The extensive experience of the implementing partner and the active involvement of the youth in focus groups contributed immensely towards the successful implementation of this activity.
- The introduction of new youth reproductive health centres has been hindered due to the ambiguous status of the ownership of healthcare facilities caused by ongoing hospital and public healthcare reforms in Georgia. Therefore, meeting the challenges of the current processes and privatization of healthcare facilities, UNFPA deployed the new partnership strategy with the private sector to set up youth-friendly services. At this stage, the sustainability of the services is ensured by partnership agreements of a minimum of five years between UNFPA and hosting facilities. The experience of this component has been disseminated as the case study and successful model at the Youth Friendly Health Policies and Services meeting, organised by WHO in Edinburgh, September 21-13, 2009.
- Due to increased demand for and interest from the entire society in a unified system of SRH education, the 'National Concept and Curriculum on Healthy and Harmonious Education' was drawn up to facilitate the policy development process and establishment of a unified state educational system in this field.

Regional

- Numerous regional activities, organized in Georgia, contributed to the building of confidence and new partnerships between the governments, NGOs and mass media from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. From this perspective the project exceeded the planned objectives and created strong networks.
- Regional cooperation is crucial for the exchange of knowledge and best practices, which promotes innovative approaches and efficient implementation in each country.
- Regional cooperation promoted harmonization of IEC materials, as well as NGO and expert networking and collaboration.
- Organizing parallel regional events, such as festivals, trainings, youth forums etc. at the same location was labour-intensive process for UNFPA Georgia, but rational due to cost-effectiveness and new partnerships building.
- A collaborative partnership between project partners that are implementing condom social marketing components in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia is very important for sharing best practices, experience and lessons learned.
- Educational (involving trainings, conferences and meetings) and experimental (study tours to other countries) advocacy methods of working with parliamentarians were two of the most useful tools to make them initially interested in SRHR and become a leader on SRHR in their Parliament, resulting in their initiating changes in policy and mobilizing resources for SRHR programmes.
- It proved very useful to involve parliamentarians not only at the international meetings but also at the regional ones. Often, parliamentarians stated that various international best practices are not applicable in their countries, due to ‘unique’ cultural peculiarities. However, learning from neighbouring countries who share the same past and similar challenges and who have indeed implemented those international SRHR practices in their countries, by adapting them to local realities, intensified the sharing and replication of best practices.
- While working with parliamentarians from the South Caucasus, EPF could identify ‘local champion’ Parliaments when dealing with each legal challenge. The countries have achieved unequal progress in terms of introducing sexual education in schools, health insurance and laws on reproductive health and family planning. Targeted ‘subject’ advocacy and sharing best practices proved to be very efficient ways of fighting the usual argument of ‘cultural unacceptability’ or ‘lack of funds’ for certain legal provisions.
- In doing advocacy work with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), EPF observed a notable lack of awareness on social issues in the South Caucasus region. The sessions of the Parliamentary Cooperation Committees and the Foreign Affairs Committee devoted to the South Caucasus were focused mainly on political issues and conflict resolution, without addressing the necessity of improving the daily life of citizens through measures such as healthcare provision and reproductive health services. Following a series of awareness-raising meetings with MEPs, and EPF constantly providing the latest statistics and developments, MEPs did acknowledge the importance of improving this situation and urged parliamentarians from the South Caucasus in various official documents (see above) to act to improve the situation.
- When working with Parliaments, it is extremely useful to work closely with their secretariats and involve them in information exchange and updates. This contributes to ensuring continuity in spite of parliamentary elections and develops institutional memory.

Recommendations

Armenia

- It has been recommended to print a sufficient volume of IEC brochures (in a revised version) to cater to the future needs of the target population in the respective localities and beyond. The copies of the new stock of brochures will be stored at UNFPA premises and then provided to the primary contacts in the regions (predominantly, at the youth-friendly service centres) to oversee their distribution in the target communities.
- The country website clearly lends itself to a part of the project's overall exit strategy. The UNFPA CO has been advised to take care of any routine maintenance costs, while the facilitation of the website will be provided primarily by the Website Facilitator (a voluntary service) and also by select Y-PEER volunteers.
- In terms of media interventions, it is highly recommended to broadcast radio and TV spots beyond the closure of the project. This will provide sufficient visibility for the project's sponsoring institutions and make the messages which RHIYC has been disseminating over the past three years more noticeable.
- The initial supply of 35 condom vending machines is an excellent starting point for eventually and gradually bringing the social marketing activities to full sustainability. Thus, it is strongly recommended to carefully oversee the production process and timely installation of the machines, as this could perhaps be one of the most significant components of this consolidated exit plan.
- The APPG created at the National Assembly of Armenia is the most concrete element of sustainability, as this body has been integrated into the daily work of a number of lead Standing Committees at the National Assembly. In addition, the APPG has already tried to acquire international visibility through the relevant events organized by EPF.
- All 32 youth-friendly centres represent a strong asset for sustainability. However, for most of them, distinct sustainability plans are still to be developed (perhaps with input from the UNFPA CO as well as the host institution), while for the centres affiliated with the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, a Memorandum is expected to be signed to reflect the long-term intentions for cooperation on behalf of both the UNFPA CO and the Ministry. It is recommended that the UNFPA CO maintain and diversify its relationship with the Ministry.

Azerbaijan

- To operate youth-friendly medical and information centres successfully and sustainably, it is recommended to establish networking relations between those two different types of centres, as is the case with youth-friendly clinics. In particular, continuous capacity-building for parents, as well as students and teachers at the educational facilities, and for health professionals at clinics where the centres were opened, needs to be ensured to maintain the success achieved by RHIYC. In addition, this approach might be favourable for setting up a sound referral system and sharing experiences with regard to youth counselling and running the facilities.
- The pool of trained peer educators (more than 400) is viewed as an advantage for the appropriate performance of and networking between the youth-friendly clinics and educational facilities commissioned as a result of the project. The participation of skilled youth is crucial to build bridges between young service users and senior staff. In addition, to achieve significant progress and sustainability in peer education in the country, setting up a

National Peer Educators Network in Azerbaijan is advisable.

- Given that the project web-site (www.4uth.az) has already become a recognized brand in the country, operated by the team of RHIYC YAP members, the project might be considered as fully sustainable. To ensure better guidance and visibility, the RHIYC web project is recommended to unite with the Y-PEER network in Azerbaijan, a UNFPA-supported global youth SRHR network.
- To ensure full sustainability for the newly established condom social marketing initiative in Azerbaijan, which has started showing significant results, it is recommended to sustain the project for a little longer after the completion of RHIYC. The UNFPA CO in Azerbaijan has committed its support to this recommendation.
- It is recommended that the results of the comprehensive adolescent SRH survey conducted within RHIYC are used widely for youth SRH programming and for monitoring and evaluation of in-country projects aimed at improving the SRH of young people, by taking into consideration the trends and addressing gaps identified in the survey.
- A significant achievement of RHIYC has been the creation of an APPG on Population and Development in Azerbaijan. The collaboration between UNFPA and the international community, particularly with EPF, should be maintained and further reinforced to ensure continuous policy dialogue and networking.

Georgia

- The network of trained peer educators (about 500) can be considered as one of the main achievements of the project. The practical work and experience of trained peer educators might be improved by their integrated cooperation with the youth reproductive health medical and information centres opened by the project all over Georgia. The participation of skilled youth is very important in the development of cooperation between youth and service providers. Also, peer educators can increase their knowledge and experience by working with reproductive health service providers from the above-mentioned centres, participating in different trainings organized by UNFPA or other collaborative organizations. Such cooperation with UNFPA will have mutual benefits, as UNFPA can use the knowledge and experience of these young people in various activities initiated by UNFPA and partnering agencies and projects. Coordination between UNFPA and peer educators should be conducted through the YAP, which will have not only an advisory function, but also a coordinating and organizing function for the entire peer educator network.
- The maintenance and efficient functioning of the RHIYC project website, which became very popular (more than 15,000 visitors), do not require significant funding; therefore, it is strongly recommended to allocate some resources to promote it. To ensure better management and visibility of the web project, it is recommended to unite it with the YAP.
- At this stage the sustainability of the youth-friendly reproductive health medical and information services is ensured by partnership agreements of a minimum of five year between UNFPA and hosting facilities. For the sustainable operation of youth information/medical centres after the completion of the project, it is recommended to integrate them into insurance schemes, where the government and the private sector have already started to offer such services under the supervision of the MoLHSA.
- In the future, to introduce the principle of youth-friendly services to the entire healthcare system, it is recommended to organize special trainings for healthcare providers.
- It is recommended that the results of the comprehensive adolescent SRH survey conducted at the concluding stage of the project serve as a basis for future country-specific programming,

taking into consideration the tendencies and gaps in the field of youth SRH identified by the survey.

- To provide legal support and develop youth policy and new educational directions, it is recommended that the Parliament and Government of Georgian adopt and implement the ‘Youth Policy Recommendations’ document and the ‘National Concept and Curriculum on Healthy and Harmonious Education’ (created by the RHIYC project).

Regional

- Youth festivals and forums serve as the best opportunities for partnership and networking at the sub-regional level. It is recommended to continue such events for South Caucasus and to expand this initiative beyond the sub-regional borders.
- It is very important that partnering networks established by the project continue to collaborate to exchange experience, knowledge, best practices etc.; however, facilitation of this process is necessary, and UNFPA COs can play a crucial role in this regard.
- A collaborative partnership between project partners who are implementing condom social marketing components in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia is very important for sharing best practices, experience and lessons learned. It is also recommended that they provide cross-border exchange and distribution of national condom brands (SS, Cool and Favorite) to increase variety and thus marketing and distribution options.
- Websites proved their efficiency and popularity, and it’s recommended that UNFPA provides support to maintenance and efficient operation of regional and country websites after project closure.
- Throughout the duration of the project, EPF has contributed to the creation of parliamentary leaders on SRHR and global health in each country. National Parliaments in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have formed permanent structures: APPGs on Population and Development, where leading parliamentarians meet regularly and work on the implementation of the ICPD agenda. Moreover, Parliaments have allocated staff to provide secretariats to these groups. It is extremely important that the Parliaments continue to have these dedicated structures, to ensure continuity and to contribute to developing institutional memory.
- The APPGs are members of EPF, and it is crucial to continue their involvement in all activities on international and regional levels and so engage them further in international exchanges of best practices on advancing the ICPD Programme of Action.
- The APPG secretariats, parliamentary bodies and staff are already included on the mailing list, and we recommend further involving them in meetings that EPF convenes for APPGs on a regular basis to foster dialogue and exchange best practices. This will allow them to continue to benefit from being a part of an international community advocating for the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.
- To ensure that all project stakeholders continue their dialogue and information-sharing, published on the Knowledge Sharing Website, it is recommended that EPF encourages them to do so through its main website, specifically under the sections ‘All-Party Parliamentary Groups’ and ‘Youth Policies’.
- EPF has helped to establish contacts and a framework for young people to further exchange knowledge and information and to participate in the regional and international reproductive health community. Their continuing involvement in these events and being a member of the

international community working to improve SRHR is crucial to further empower young people. This can be done by staying in touch with the Council of Europe Youth Division as well as by keeping in contact with their peers from other countries, using other networking tools, such as Facebook.

- It is recommended to prepare a proposal for the next phase for additional funding and to continue project activities, which will require limited funding before the State will take over.