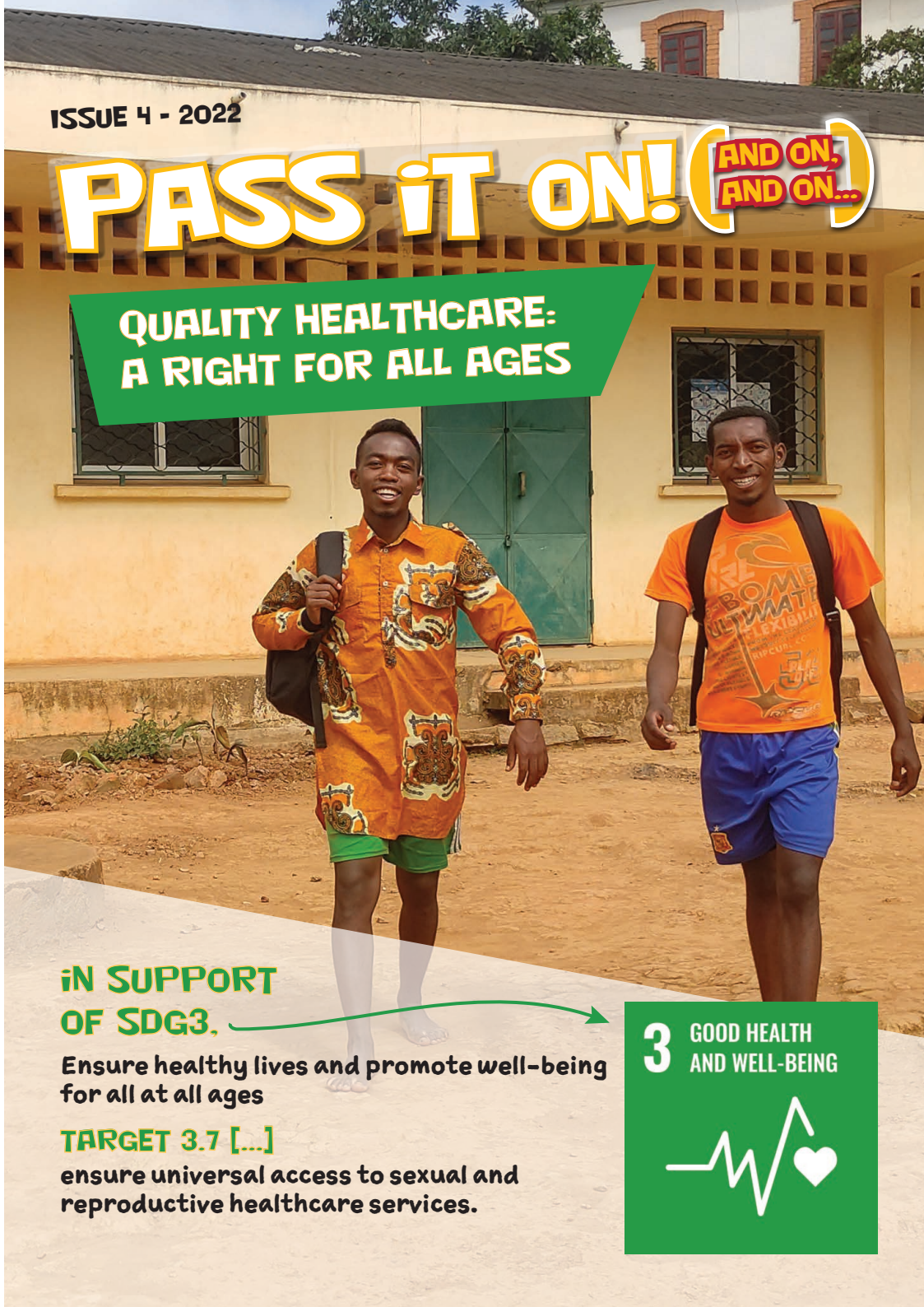


ISSUE 4 - 2022

PASS IT ON! (AND ON, AND ON...)

QUALITY HEALTHCARE:
A RIGHT FOR ALL AGES



**IN SUPPORT
OF SDG3.**

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being
for all at all ages

TARGET 3.7 [...]

ensure universal access to sexual and
reproductive healthcare services.

3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



OUR CHILDREN NEED ACCESSIBLE, INCLUSIVE HEALTHCARE TO THRIVE.

Around this goal, we are **united.**

Let's spread and amplify our work to achieve this goal and target.

Adolescents need a range of supports to remain well, to transition safely into adulthood, and to adopt lifelong healthy behaviors. **This includes comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information.**

This has been recognized in the Malagasy law. In fact, **Law #2017-043** on Reproductive Health and Family Planning, passed 25 January 2018, states in Article 5:



LAW #2017-043

"Independent of their age, every individual has the right to full services: information, education, communication, care, and referral in matters of Reproductive Health and Family Planning."



Health centers are – and *should be* – one of the most important places a young person goes to receive this support and information. Health care providers can provide fact-based, youth-adapted help to address adolescent's health problems, big or small. This is help that many adolescents do not get at school, from parents, from friends, or others in their support circle.

- ✓ When adolescents go to a health center, they deserve **support in decision-making** and **respectful treatment** from a **qualified health professional**. With this inclusive, quality access to support and services, they can grow into well-rounded adults.
- ✓ When individuals access **voluntary family planning** and **improved opportunities in life**, the benefits ripple through families and communities, and across society and generations. This contributes to a more prosperous nation where every single person can have a happy life and family.

What do our school communities think?

In 2022, NGO *Projet Jeune Leader (PJL)* created and circulated magazines for their local partner communities in the Haute Matsiatra, Amoron'i Mania, Vakinankaratra regions around key "hot topics" related to youth and their health. One of these magazines focused on youth-friendly health services.

Magazine readers – youth, parents, community members – wrote back their ideas and opinions through **8,498 paper comments**, which the *Projet Jeune Leader* team then collected and analyzed.

This magazine shares comments received on the topic of healthcare and youth-friendly services.

536 comments received related to the topic of healthcare

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Social and cultural challenges such as fear and stigma remain major obstacles to youth seeking healthcare.** Many health centers and health care providers are not friendly to youth due to lack of confidentiality.
- One challenge – and one opportunity – is how youth feel about accessing health care services. **With more guidance, information, and support from peers and trusted adults, youth said they were more likely to utilize health services.**

Through the "Pass it On" magazines, young readers wrote back honest and personal comments about their own experiences accessing healthcare services in their communities, and why many of them feel they cannot access those services.

Their perspectives give us valuable insights into the gap between the **availability** of services (which, while a clear ongoing need, was not the most prominent theme in the comments received) and the **accessibility and usage** of services in Madagascar, which rural youth told us remains a challenge due to social stigma, lack of knowledge and guidance, unwelcoming personnel and infrastructure, and more.



What does the research say?

In 2018, Médecins du Monde conducted a scientific study on health care for youth in Madagascar and published the results of their research in the report **“Sexual and Reproductive Health of Adolescents and Youth in Madagascar: Socio-Anthropological Approach.”**

On the following page, we summarize some of the **key findings** that are reinforced by “Pass it On” readers in local communities in Vakinankaratra, Amoron’i Mania, and Haute Matsiatra regions.



Looking for the full report?

Search « Santé sexuelle et reproductive des adolescent.e.s. et des jeunes à Madagascar : Approche socio-anthropologique » online.



In regards to

youth’s access to reproductive healthcare and family planning

the Médecins du Monde report¹ found that some of the main challenges in Madagascar include:

Lack of confidentiality

Some of the causes of this problem are:

- Waiting rooms open to the outdoors
- Consultations for reproductive healthcare take place on fixed days
- Many interns often attend consultations

Value conflicts and unwelcoming environment

The research found that many healthcare providers do not believe that adolescents should access sexual and reproductive health information and services. As a result, many refuse to care for youth patients seeking services and/or judge young patients, despite Malagasy law such as Law #2017-043 on Reproductive Health and Family Planning.

Limited opening hours and long waiting times

Adolescents who go to school struggle to obtain a consultation because the school and clinic hours overlap.

In addition, waiting times for consultations are long. People visiting the clinic need to go to school, work, care for their families and as such do not have the ability to wait for hours for an open consultation time.

¹ Médecins du Monde (2018). “Santé sexuelle et reproductive des adolescent.e.s. et des jeunes à Madagascar : Approche socio-anthropologique.”

To grow and thrive, our youth need...

WELCOMING, PROFESSIONAL HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

What do our school communities think?

Readers shared that a lack of confidentiality, openness, and sensitivity to youth are major obstacles to accessing care.

"I have been hesitant to go to a doctor. The reason for this is that the doctor does not close the door and **everyone can hear all of my secrets**. In my opinion, health workers should be given **regular training**, especially about how to receive people. Also, there should be a campaign for young people to raise awareness about their rights **so that they are not afraid** to ask about things happening to them."
(Student, Amoron'i Mania)

"Yes, I was hesitant to go to the doctor because I **afraid of being talked about** and looked at by other people and that maybe **someone will hear** what is being said."
(Student, Haute Matsiatra)

"I have hesitated [to go to the health clinic] because many of the healthcare workers **seem angry**. They might not give a satisfactory answer when you get there. Maybe they will **tell others** why you went there, and you will be **ashamed**. These are the reasons for not going there. To help youth achieve their right [to healthcare] it would help if healthcare workers raise awareness... add a sign to the door that says 'Health center open to youth.' Workers that are **kind**, good at receiving people, and **meet the needs of youth** should work there."
(Teacher, Amoron'i Mania)

"[Doctors] should **not be aggressive**, they should use **assertive communication**... The health center should work with PJL."
(Student, Haute Matsiatra)

"There are many reasons why young people do not dare to visit health centers. For example, some people think that it is **shameful and taboo** to talk about sexual health. There is also **a lack of trust** because there are doctors who **do not keep things confidential**; so much so that it makes young people **fear** talking about their problems with these doctors."
(Parent, Vakinankaratra)

"I have doubted going to the doctor because sometimes they are very **close-minded**. My suggestion to improve health centers in Madagascar is to **properly monitor health center staff** to ensure they are able to receive young people and that young people are enjoying the health center."
(Student, Vakinankaratra)

"[Healthcare workers] **need to have skills to treat and counsel youth in a positive way without being rude**. They should take responsibility for guiding youth on a straight and true path."
(Parent, Haute Matsiatra)

"The reason for hesitation is that **the doctor is mean** and there are **other people listening** to what you are discussing with the doctor."
(Student, Vakinankaratra)

"I have been scared and hesitant [to go to the health center] because I am **afraid of the doctor** and I am **afraid of my parents**. What the health center should do is that the people working there should use assertive communication and **no one should listen to your 'secret' except the doctor alone**."
(Student, Vakinankaratra)

THOUGHTS INTO ACTION ↓

Train healthcare providers in youth-friendly services, including on adolescent communication techniques and adolescent needs.

Introduce "School Health Days" (similar to "Journée des Écoles" [school spirit days]) and host health care providers to introduce themselves and offer one-on-one consultations with students.

Make health centers more welcoming and safe by improving the privacy of consultations, establishing and posting confidentiality standards, and making low-resource improvements such as improved signage about opening hours and services.

To grow and thrive, our youth need...

CONFIDENCE AND GUIDANCE ON HOW TO ACCESS CARE

What do our school communities think?

As readers shared, navigating healthcare can be challenging due to lack of information and confidence, but referral from a trusted adult can help.

"My suggestion is to help all young people **have a strategy** for reaching out and talking to health workers, and explain to them to **not be ashamed or afraid** when something is wrong."
(Student, Amoron'i Mania)

"Strategies to help young people talk to health workers: **Young people of the same age group should encourage each other** to go to the health center."
(Student, Vakinankaratra)

How have PJL's Educators helped youth access health services? Read on Page 12!

"I was scared [to go to the health center], but **now that the PJL Educator is here**, I'm not scared anymore."
(Student, Haute Matsiatra)

"For all young people to enjoy this right [to health], there should be a **peer educator** in each area and those who already know [how to access healthcare] should **advise and teach each other.**"
(Student, Amoron'i Mania)

"I was not afraid and I did not hesitate [to go to the health center] because I had self-confidence. We should **clearly explain and encourage** young people to not hesitate to seek medical help... Health centers should have quality standards and offer specialized and safe services for young people. **Regardless of age**, individuals have the right to full services."
(Student, Haute Matsiatra)

"The reason for my hesitation is that I am **afraid and shy** to tell the doctor my problem, but I should be confident. The doctor should **visit each community**, or they should do outreach with the "Pass it on" magazines."
(Student, Vakinankaratra)

"It is necessary to **inform young people especially in rural areas** that every person has the same rights."
(Parent, Vakinankaratra)

"My suggestion on how to help all young people talk to health workers is to make posters about it in the market or on the streets to **build awareness.**"
(Student, Vakinankaratra)

"Suggestion: talk to a **trusted adult**, go with a trusted adult to the health center."
(Student, Vakinankaratra)

THOUGHTS INTO ACTION ↓

Train and equip adults in adolescents' immediate environment – such as peer educators who may already serve the community, teachers, and school monitors – to make referrals to health services.

Dedicate resources for specialized Educators teaching life skills and sexuality education in schools who can provide information on sexual and reproductive health and can connect students to services in the community.

To grow and thrive, our youth need...

TO BE INFORMED AND EMPOWERED WITHOUT JUDGEMENT.

What do our school communities think?

Many young people are afraid to see a healthcare provider. Reasons for this fear include real and perceived stigma as well as a lack of knowledge.

"Youth need to know that this [family planning] law exists and [that their right to healthcare] **is not limited by age**. Your responsibility at the health centers: youth are to be received even if there is no permission from the parents. I was afraid to go to the doctor. The reason for my hesitation that **I am afraid that the doctor will tell others about my problem**. In my opinion, we young people should not have any hesitations about our right to be healthy."

(Student, Amoron'i Mania)

"I have also hesitated to go to the doctor because I am afraid to talk to my parents. The doctor needs to **visit the village and talk to the parents**, then the parents can encourage their children to go to the health center. Society needs to encourage youth and educate them."

(Student, Haute Matsiatra)

"I have been embarrassed and afraid to talk to the doctor. We should sensitize youth so they are not afraid to enter the office of a healthcare provider. Youth also need to be brave to talk to the doctor so that they can be healthy. We need **doctors who are able to talk to young people** so that young people do not feel threatened. Doctors also need to be able to **accept people as they are** so that people can approach them without hesitation and without fear of them."

(Student, Vakinankaratra)

"I have been afraid and hesitated to see a doctor. The reason is: **not knowing how to talk about and explain things** that are bothering me. Examples are different body parts and menstruation. We should encourage young people out in the community, especially in secondary schools or with magazines like this. Parents and teachers should also be informed. My suggestion to improve access to health centers in Madagascar is: **provide knowledge** to young people, parents and teachers."

(Student, Amoron'i Mania)

"I was afraid to go to the doctor because I'm not used to going there alone but I have to be with an adult, because if I am I might be **very afraid of what the doctor will do to me** and that's why I hesitate to go to the doctor."

(Student, Amoron'i Mania)

"I've previously hesitated [to go to the health center] because I **feared the doctor**... My advice is that all youth should share their challenges. The community should help one another, share their experiences, and talk with and advise youth to access healthcare."

(Student, Vakinankaratra)

"We were afraid and hesitated to go to the doctor because **we thought it was a taboo matter** and we could not discuss it with the doctor."

(Student, Amoron'i Mania)

THOUGHTS INTO ACTION ↓

Continue to expand and integrate curriculum-based life skills and sexuality education delivered by a specialized Educator in the 2023 National Education Strategic Plan in order to provide students with the knowledge and skills to seek help and advocate for themselves.

Provide information and offer trainings to parents about adolescent health and health services so that they can be a motivator, rather than an obstacle, in youth receiving care.

Update healthcare providers on Madagascar's family planning laws, including Law n° 2017-043 which states the right of all people, irrespective of age, to receive family planning services and removed the parental authorization requirement for minors to receive care.

A Catalyst, A Resource Linker, a Process Helper

Projet Jeune Leader (PJL)'s Educators teach weekly comprehensive sexuality education classes to students in our partner public middle schools in Vakinankaratra, Amoron'i Mania, and Haute Matsiatra regions. In addition, they provide other essential services to students.

One of these essential services is **confidential counseling**, during which students can discuss issues they are facing with a trained PJL Educator and receive advice. When needed, during these sessions, the PJL Educator can **refer students to the closest public healthcare provider**.

We asked our Educators to share reflections about how they have supported their young students. Here is what we heard and learned.

In their words

Each Educator shared at least one story of a middle school student who sought out counseling regarding painful symptoms of a sexually transmitted infection. The students – feeling that they could turn to no one else for help – were embarrassed and ashamed when they approached the PJL Educator.

The Educators' stories then took similar turns. In all cases, the Educator brought the student to the local government health clinic, where they had to **mediate the discussion** between the doctor and the adolescent. Santatra, a female Educator, recalled how the female student with severe pelvic pain and discharge she brought to the doctor was adamant that she had never had sexual intercourse, but then, after delicate intercession from Santatra, revealed that she had been raped at age 13.

While the doctor's job ended after diagnosis and prescription of medicine, the Educators' work always continued. The students never had money to buy their prescription, so the Educators **explained to students how to best approach** their parents or guardians with their problem.

With tears in her eyes, Educator Sitraka described one student who could not afford the medicine, yet could not convince her neglectful stepmother to help her – tragically, her stepmother decided to take the student out of school because of the inconvenience of her illness. **This is a stark reminder of the odds adolescents are facing in their everyday lives.**



With a more positive story, Educator Naina recounted how after spending nearly an hour trying to help a male student decide to ask his older brother for help with treatment costs, he happily saw the student two weeks later who said he was feeling much better after his brother bought him the medicine he needed.



What we learned

YOUNG ADOLESCENTS NEED...

... A CATALYST.

Peers and trusted adults such as PJL Educators can give adolescents the **courage to seek help** by treating adolescents with **respect** and **empathy**.

... A RESOURCE LINKER.

The PJL Educators helped students **become aware** of and **make the best use** of the health resources that are available.

... PROCESS HELPER.

The PJL Educators did not just bring their students to the clinic, they helped them **navigate healthcare**. The doctor was not able to provide the care the adolescents needed until the PJL Educators intervened, facilitated, and helped the **adolescent and doctor communicate** with one another. This is a role that other members of the community – parents, healthcare providers themselves – should also be trained to do.

IN CONVERSATION

with **RANJARARIMANANA Edmée Juliana**

Regional Coordinator, FISA Fianarantsoa

As the “Pass it on” comments from school communities made clear, young people need strong support and guidance during the period of change that is adolescence. This is a mission that drives two NGOs – **Projet Jeune Leader (PJL)** and **Fianakaviana Sambatra (FISA)** – to work on together.

FISA has been an important partner to PJL’s comprehensive sexuality education program. Ms.

RANJARARIMANANA Edmée Juliana, Regional Coordinator, FISA Fianarantsoa explains: “In communities where a FISA health

center is available, PJL Educators can write a referral ticket so that an adolescent in need of help is guided towards our services. This collaboration has helped many youth to be able to find help without fear. When accompanied by a PJL Educator, a young adolescent grows in confidence; and the referral ticket builds trust between the Educator, FISA, and the adolescent.”

But that’s not all: there is also work to be done before and after the referral, where PJL and FISA’s efforts – individually and together – are key. “Young people think that SRH is only for girls/women, not for men, because they think it is only about preventing early pregnancy,” Ms. Edmée notes. A life skills and comprehensive sexuality education program such as PJL’s gives youth knowledge on their health and makes them aware of the role that health centers play in their daily lives.

When students do approach a health center, health centers have a responsibility to ensure youth-friendly, high-quality services. Ms. Edmée, reinforcing many of the messages we heard from local

communities, explains, “A barrier to overcome is youth’s fear of coming to a health center. This is because they are afraid to confide intimate things. They are not confident that what they share will be kept confidential.”

Furthermore, at a larger scale, there is a need to enact laws and policies that promote adolescent health. Importantly those laws need to be known and followed. “Many people are still unaware of the Law on Family Planning #2017-043,” shares Ms. Edmée. “Young people still do not know that they have the right to SRH. The existence of this law should also help healthcare providers perform their responsibilities,

but the problem is that even healthcare providers do not know about its existence.”

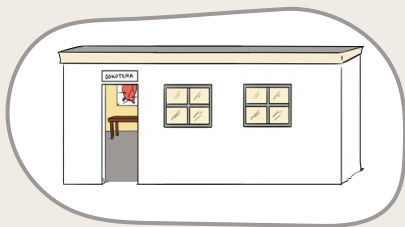
Health services, education, and other systems of support for youth must go hand in hand. From individual efforts to give youth improved knowledge and services, to collaborative efforts to create linkages between services, to national-level policy changes, there are positive impacts underway – and opportunity for further progress.

FISA offers health care services for all ages, from general consultation and care to sexual and reproductive health services. With 50 years of experience, FISA has improved access to health information and services in Madagascar by bringing their services to remote regions and towns, increasing the number of health centers, and partnering with a wide range of other organizations.



To achieve our common goal of ensuring youth have healthy lives...

we need to make sure that **high-quality** reproductive health and family planning services are **available** to youth.



But to fully achieve this, we need to do more.

We also need to improve:

the **connections** between services,

the **ease of accessing** services,

and the **youth friendliness** of services.



Together, let's build a healthier future for the youth of Madagascar!

The Pass it On! magazines are designed to gather and respond to **invaluable insights from communities** on their experiences and values with youth health policy and programs.



Combined with **strong leadership** and **evidence-based initiatives**, we believe we can create the greatest impact for our children to grow up into healthy, happy, and well-rounded adults.

LEARN MORE

Projet Jeune Leader believes that to be effective, programs and policies need to respond to communities' knowledge and feedback. To see more constituents' feedback, get more information about impactful approaches for youth health policy and programming in Madagascar, AND to give your own feedback, visit:

<https://fr.projetjeuneleader.org/ressources>



Let's Demand Our Right to Health!

To have rights is to be blessed
So, count your blessings
It means you are not forced
To do what others think
It can slow you down, so don't hesitate.

It's not too late
If you want to know
Your rights and their stories
So, don't leave
If you haven't heard
All your rights.

If you know them
Then it's possible that today
Your tears will turn to smiles
Because here on Earth
We all agree
That you have rights.

Poem by Nasolo, Youth Leader
from Antsirabe

**ENSURING THAT EVERY YOUNG
PERSON HAS INFORMATION,
EDUCATION, COMMUNICATION, CARE,
AND REFERRAL IN MATTERS OF
SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH.**

