

Sexuality in Africa

M A G A Z I N E

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A scene from *Sahar El-Layali, Sleepless Nights*, directed by Hani Khalifa, 2002. "People's predetermined opinions about women sexuality are rarely challenged by the Egyptian mass media."

Women and Sexuality in Egyptian Cinema

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Narrow Casting as a Tool for Effective Peer Education Programming

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Promoting Sexuality Education in Nigeria: A Challenge for the Media and Civil Society

Aminu Magashi Garba

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Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre
PO Box 803, Sabo-Yaba
Lagos, Nigeria

Phone : (234) 1- 7919307
Fax: (234)-1-3425470
Email: info@arsrc.org
Website: www.arsrc.org

Editorial Team:

Nike O. Esiet
Dr. Richmond Tiemoko
Arit Oku-Egbas

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Feature

Women and Sexuality in Egyptian Cinema

By Maggie Morgan,
a film-maker based in
Cairo, Egypt and a
teacher at the
American University
in Cairo

Introduction

Egypt is the only Arab country that can boast of a commercial film industry. When people speak of “Arabic films,” they are referring to Egyptian cinema. Films reach all homes. They have influence over people’s thought patterns and behaviours. It is, thus, interesting to view the relationship and dialectic between cinema and society in general, especially in relation to the topic of women and sexuality.

A renowned Egyptian film director, Dawood Abdelsayed, once recounted to me that an intellectual once asked him, “Why are all the women in your films whores?” Abdelsayed was

shocked at the question—coming from a serious thinker—since none of his characters were prostitutes in the literal sense. Nonetheless, the question shows the widespread perception of female sexuality—if it exists, then it is evil. Pornography and female sexuality are often seen as interchangeable.

One of the women directors in Egypt, Inas el-Degheidy, makes films that are in fact, commercial and quasi-pornographic. In spite of this, or perhaps because of this, she is often referred to as a “feminist director.” Whereas other films that are truly expressive of the rights of women and provide realistic

portrayals of women and sexuality are often disregarded by mass audiences.

Very few directors make films with any pre-conscious considerations of their portrayal of women. Their films express what may be considered subconscious views about women inherent in the majority of Arab minds. Therefore, it makes an interesting study to observe the statements made about women and sexuality in films - for they generally reflect public opinion.

The Labelling Game

Morality is a crucial factor when it comes to critiquing and evaluating Arabic films and the mass media. Filmmakers and television directors are very careful to make distinctions between good and bad women in their dramatic works. There are no grey areas and the degree of ‘goodness’ or ‘badness’ of any given person is closely linked to their sexual conduct.

The utmost dream of a commercial production is to be a *film qonbela* (bombshell) - a film that is definitely a “must-see,” because it is both highly entertaining and inoffensive like the El-Lemby film series. Then there is the *film fi risala*, (a film with a message.); and such a label means that the film is morally acceptable and hence “forgiven” for not including sensationalist entertainment. With this



A scene from *Sahar El-Layali, Sleepless Nights*, Directed by Hani Khalifa, 2002. The utmost dream of a commercial production is to be a film “qonbela” - a bombshell; in other words, “a must see” both in terms of entertainment quality and being seen as “inoffensive”



classification, there are no misgivings that the message may be a tad too didactic.

Occasionally at a cinema entrance, people inquire of one another, “*qissa walla manazir?*” (story or scenes?) The question makes reference to whether the film just has a message or story or if it includes love scenes. The sex scenes are a point of attraction for inquisitive teenage boys but a put-off for the wider, more conservative audiences.

There is also the fairly new phrase, *cinema nadhifa*, (clean cinema) that describes an entertaining film that does not offend conservative, religious sensibilities by portraying what may be considered promiscuity, obscenity, or a critique of religion.

Since the moral epitaphs attached to films are a relatively new phenomenon, some argue that society is regressing into a more narrow-minded state-of-being. Previously, the subject matter of a film was presented with less caution. But then again, one must ask the question: “who was allowed to go to the cinema?” Most women and children in the 1920s 1930s, and 40s would have probably never set foot in a cinema. Actresses were considered “loose” women. At the time, the French word “*artiste*” was appropriated by Egyptians and used synonymously for prostitute!

‘Good Girl’ Image

In order to attract broader audiences - including women and family viewers - a more positive view of women and their sexuality became part of the cinema world. Faten Hamama, known as the “Lady of the Arab Screen,” helped change the public’s negative perception of actresses. Instead of taking on the negativities associated with being an “*artiste*,” her insistence on being a ‘good girl’ in most of her roles, endeared her to her audiences. She gained respect under the scrutiny of almost every Arab set of frowning eyes.

By the end of the sixties, the off-screen personality of actors and actresses merged with their on-screen personas. This blurring of lines between the real and the fictional served to make cinema less

of an immoral menace in the public view.

Arab spectators, like any others, are predominantly drawn by the promise of entertainment and escapism. Cinema in the eighties and early nineties was mainly sensationalist: showing beautiful men and women and their relationships. The films were not pro-women; rather they featured women characters that were considered promiscuous. Many actresses decided to forego acting and take up the religious veil in the eighties. Therefore, women in cinema became shrouded with a cloud of guilt that reached even their audiences. Most viewers have an unconscious sense of guilt when they realize that all they want to see is beauty, action, affluence, heroism and luxury. Thus, when people watch a truly enjoyable drama that carries a “message,” they leave the theatre with a smug satisfaction. They walk out with a dose of preaching sugar-coated in the entertainment.

Box-Office Milestones

The first striking box-office success in the last decade was, *Sae’eedi Fi El-Gam’a El-Amrikiya* (A Man From the South of Egypt1 Goes to the American University 1998.) The lead actor was Mohamed Heneidy, a short little man whose appeal comes from his naiveté in the midst of a cunning world. In addition to his appeal on screen, his off-screen personality scored him many points. He appears in television programmes to invoke blessings upon his mother. (To do good to one’s parents, especially one’s mother, is considered the height of moral goodness in Islam.) Whenever he is interviewed during Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting, Heneidi is proud to say that he is fasting, praying, and going on a pilgrimage to Mecca. He emphasises that art has to be “good and clean.” That audiences not only enjoy Heneidy’s humour, but also wholeheartedly approve of him as a person, is a fact that cannot be overlooked in analysing the commercial success of his films.

Sa’eedi cast Heneidy in the role of Khalaf, a naïve villager—traditional and old-fashioned—who is a student at the American University in Cairo.

Although he admires its social advancement, he disapproves of the “corruptive” values of American society. He encounters modernity’s many guises: boyfriends and girlfriends, certain dress codes and music of the people at the American university, with a comic yet morality-laden response. In the film, Heneidy sings a song called, “*Chocolata*” (Chocolate.) The chocolate to which he refers is a Sudanese prostitute. He teases her saying, “When I turn off the lights, I can’t see you!” The “good girls” are Khalaf’s conservative yet modern classmates and veiled girls. They are set in stark comparison to the promiscuous girls of the American University. Viewers were not critical of the film. The game of binaries: good versus bad and self versus other that is deployed passes by largely unnoticed.

According to Egyptian director Dawood Abdelsayed, “mall audiences are a new breed of people. They are the ones reared in the eighties and nineties under the influence of the petro-dollar culture exported from the Gulf countries. They were conditioned to look for morality in cinema, especially where it concerns women.” [1].

Succès de Scandale

People’s predetermined opinions about women and sexuality are rarely challenged by the Egyptian mass media. However, opinions and sympathies were stirred when a film came out that raised key questions about the life of an adulterous

In a society where you are bombarded with values of puritanical morality and with stereotypes of wives and mothers who are selflessly devoted to their families, it is heresy to even suggest that women think about sexual pleasure!



Actress, Mona Zaki stars as Perry, a devoted mother who forgives her husband after he promises never to have an affair again in the film *Sahar El-Layali* directed by Hani Khalifa, 2002

womanizer, family relations, and sex out of wedlock. *Sahar El-Layali* (Sleepless Nights), a controversial social drama, released in 2002, caused a huge stir. The plot of *Sahar El-Layali* revolves around four couples whose lives intertwine. The problems encountered by the couples are adultery, commitment-phobia, and sexual dissatisfaction with regard to the women characters. Not sure that it would attract an audience, the producers delayed releasing the film for a year waiting for a “good moment.” Contrary to their expectations, the film proved popular and remained in the theatres for six months.

Although there was no truth to the claims, rumours circulated all over Egypt that *Sahar El-Layali* would be banned. The debate was probably directed more at the subject matter than to any explicit sex scenes. Wives who are not sexually satisfied, couples that live together out of wedlock are not the run-of-the-mill subject matter of mainstream Arab cinema. In a society where you are bombarded with values of puritanical morality and with stereotypes of wives and mothers who are selflessly devoted to their families, it is heresy to even suggest that women think about sexual pleasure! To make things worse, all the characters in the film were cast in a sympathetic light as “good” people who make mistakes. The two who live together out of wedlock are portrayed as attractive and likeable. Even a prostitute who makes

an appearance is portrayed as comic and ridiculous, but not evil.

When the film was shown in London as part of an event called, “Forbidden Films in the Arab World,” discussion flared at home. As a result, *Sahar El-Layali* was in the media spotlight. The general consensus was that it was indeed daring but at least it was truthful about “what we all know but do not say.” Audiences felt the director was heroic and admirable for venturing into new terrain. In this aspect, *Sahar El-Layali*, is unique among many other films that have explored controversial subjects likely to vex both the Censors and public sensibilities.

The ending of *Sahar El-Layali* is not disturbing. Perry (Mona Zaki), a devoted mother, forgives her husband when she gives birth to their second child and in turn, he promises never to have an affair again. The commitment-phobic marries his girlfriend. This is contrary to popular wisdom in Egypt which says that “a man never marries a woman he has slept with.” In this film, not only do we see a couple living together, we also sympathize with the characters. Yet the film is conformist in the end. The finale of the film shows the characters, repentant and forgiven. Hani

Khalife, the film director observes, “I know the ending is not realistic but I left hidden hints that the characters are not totally reformed. I managed to give the audience what they want. A happy ending... Why not cater to the consumer? I definitely set out to make a box-office hit. It is melodramatic, unrealistic, but entertaining. I don't mind... because in the middle is something people are not used to, and that is that I make no moral judgments about the characters. In my own opinion,” he smiles, “That is an achievement!” [2].

Double-Faced Society

Other films are not that lucky when it comes to confrontations with either public opinion or with the censoring authorities. *Baheb El-Seema*, (I Love Cinema) was shot in 2001 and screened in 2004. Like *Sahar El-Layali*, it was controversial from the very first days of its release. The events take place in the late 1960s and are told from the point-of-view of Na'eem, the son of a middle class Egyptian Christian family. Na'eem's father is a religious fanatic who forbids him from going to the cinema. Forbidden by her husband to paint nude figures, Na'eem's mother produces double-faced paintings that she hangs on her walls—with nature scenes on one side and nudes on the other. Her paintings mirror the double-faced society, where much is done and hidden and where appearances differ gravely from reality. She is shown to be tormented by her husband's vow to fast and abstain from sex. (An admission that is unthinkable in contemporary Egyptian society.)

Baheb El-Seema showed no villains and it was not difficult to sympathize with any of the characters, even the “fundamentalist” father figure. Unlike, *Sahar El-Layali*, however, this film did not gain the audiences' unrestrained stamp of approval. In a poignant line, the narrator reminisces about a visit to the doctor and says, “I hate all those people who tell us what to do under the pretext that they know better what is for our own good.” The authority of a father, the rules of a headmistress, and the decrees of religious leaders are all implicated in this statement.



Moreover, in *Baheb El-Seema*, the characters do not ultimately repent and play by the rules. Naeem's aunt, gets married, gives birth to twins, and then gets a divorce. She is described as "the only woman in our family who dared to do what made her happy."

The case made by *Baheb El-Seema* was last summer's hottest scandal. Whereas the pattern has been for Muslim fundamentalists to challenge certain modes of artistic production, *Baheb El-Seema* showed the start of a similar trend among Christian viewers. Because the family around which the story revolves is Christian, the Christian minority in Egypt reacted very negatively. Hardly ever portrayed on screen, the film showed a mother who suffocated by her husband's vow of chastity, has an affair. The enraged Coptic audience wondered, "Are they implying that Christian women are whores?" Several Copts gathered to file a collective lawsuit against the scriptwriter and director, both of whom are Christians; against the Censor for releasing the film, Minister of Culture for allowing it, and the Minister of Interior for not perceiving it as a threat to national security and an impetus to sectarian strife and violence.

The scandal was so broad and the anger so tangible that the Coptic community held demonstrations. Ikram Lam'ei, the Protestant pastor in charge of the church in which some of the scenes were shot, was asked for an explanation by the leadership of the Evangelical Church in Egypt. Other than the fighting and swearing in the church, there was a scene where two young people are caught kissing on the church rooftop. In an effort to placate people's anger, Lam'ei was forced to publish an explanation in *Rose el-Youssef*, Egypt's most widely-read current affairs magazine. In it, he said that he was not informed of the film's content, and that anyway, the kissing scene was not on the rooftop of his church! The banality of the accusations was matched by the ridiculousness of his response!

The film remained in the cinema for eight weeks. The lawsuit did not

succeed in banning it. Not yet, anyway. Many speculate that without the controversy, *Baheb El-Seema* would not have stayed in the cinema for half that time. When no controversies are raised the majority of artistic productions, like *Baheb El-Seema* screen at international festivals, and get no attention outside critical circles at home. For better or worse, these notorious "festival films," appeal to agencies of foreign funding. Invariably, such topics revolve around current affairs: politics, women's status in the Arab world, and sexuality. Yousri Nasrallah's latest release, *Bab El-Chams* (The Door of the Sun, 2004) is a film about the Palestinian dispossession. In the last scene of the film, the lead actress stands before an Israeli soldier and proclaims with pride, "I am a bitch. I do not know the father of my children!" She does this to hide her husband's whereabouts. Her words fall hard on the ears of audiences who are used to women defending their puritanical sexuality. The film, like the others mentioned, problematize the popular views on female sexuality.

A lone ranger among directors, Dawood Abdelsayed, renowned for his artistic integrity, makes films that fit none of the stereotypes. He cannot call himself a director, he says, because by definition a director is someone who can be hired to direct someone else's script. Nor can he call himself a writer/director because he refuses to be commissioned to write and direct a film. According to his own, well thought-out definition, he is "a filmmaker who makes films when I feel compelled to do so." [1] Abdelsayed who was born in 1946, has only made seven films so far and is currently working on his eighth.

Dawood Abdelsayed's films do not succumb to the temptation of catering to the morality of audiences. Issues are never black or white for him. "When you try to answer the unanswerable questions...that is what art is all about...such questions include the big existential questions like why was I born, why am I here...but also other less grand unanswerable questions. Why and

how do we fall in love? His work in progress, *Retha' Ala El-Bahr*, (Seaside Eulogy,) is a romance.

His portrayal of women insists on being individualized and specific—colourful and resistant to the black and white categorizations that are so common in the genre; especially where sexuality is concerned. In his first film, *Sa'alik*, (Vagabonds,) we encounter a woman who is content to have a relationship with a man without wanting to marry him. She has other plans for her life and career. Love and marriage are not necessarily related to each other in her mind—as is customary in other films. But what is okay for men is not okay for women, even on the screen. People, ever since, have called his lead female characters, "whores."

Diogene is the name of Dawood Abdelsayed's production house; people like him often have to produce their own films. Diogene was a Greek philosopher who carried a lantern, even in the daylight, searching for one honest man. As stubborn as Diogene is in his search for honest art, Abdelsayed still refuses to make films for reasons other than the mystical notion of being "called" to do so. "A good film is not because of high technique or even the expenses pooled into it. Rather it is because of the charge it carries. Many films can touch you but few can pierce your heart. A successful film is one that can make you feel the difference. It needs to pierce your heart." [1]

With the work of artistes like Abdelsayed, who dare to be different and will not succumb to the pressures to conform, there is hope that we will begin to see more realistic portrayals of women and sexuality in Egyptian cinema.

References

1. Maggie Morgan: interview with Dawood Abdelsayed, Cairo, July 12, 2005
2. Maggie Morgan: interview with Hani Khalifa, Cairo, July 18, 2005

¹ *People from the South are considered conservative and traditional, and are thus usually the butt of jokes.*

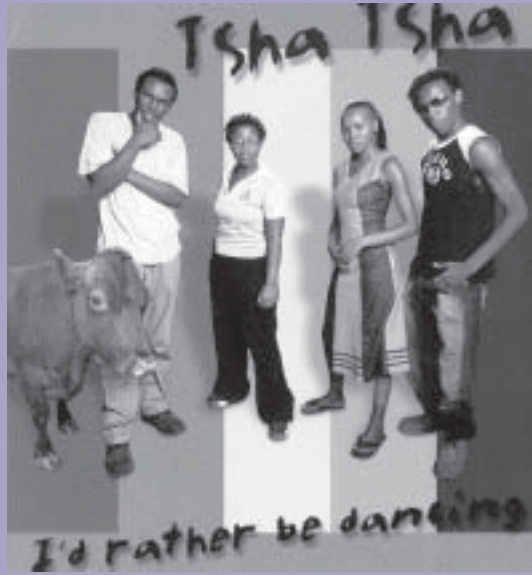


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Issue in Focus

Narrow Casting as a Tool for Effective Peer Education Programming

*By Richie Adewusi,
Ph.D., the Executive
Director, Youthaid
Projects Inc., in
Lagos, Nigeria*



Tsha Tsha is a South African entertainment education drama series that focuses on the universe of young people living in a world affected by the realities of HIV/AIDS

Background
Over the years, development interventions have explored the peer-to-peer concept to reach specific target audiences. This has been the case especially for youth programmes; and peer education as a concept has been applied in different contexts and environments. In the course of our work in Nigeria at Youthaid Projects Incorporated, we discovered, however, that trained peer educators experienced challenges in educating their peers due,

air interpersonal communication components can hardly bring about the desired behaviour change.

This thinking led to the development of drama presentations targeted at in-school and out-of-school youths. Again, we found that with this concept, because the presentations are usually one-off presentations per project site, they lacked the support, the ingredients that that the peer educators craved.

We returned to the drawing board because of the need to develop a concept that would combine the advantages of drama as an entertainment-education medium, the use of technological innovation provided by television, plus the facilitation capacities of trained peer educators. The end result of responding to these various challenges is the Narrow Cast concept.

To this end, the Narrow Cast multimedia option of using an educative television drama serial on HIV/AIDS and Adolescent Reproductive Health (ARH) issues was realised. The advantages of the Narrow Cast format includes the fact that it is produced specifically for targeted age groups, and it gives the young people the opportunity to reap the benefits of facilitation, be entertained while learning. In

Introduction
Narrow Casting is an interactive/participatory peer education and development communication concept as well as a tool. It is designed to inform and educate various target audiences on sexual health issues, including HIV/AIDS, using entertainment as a vehicle. Specifically, narrow casting uses the power of television plus the advantages inherent in interpersonal communication and interactive participation to educate specific target groups.

as they put it, to the “dry” nature of just talking to young people or groups of young people, addressing meetings or giving awareness-raising talks that sounded way too didactic (Youth Agenda Summit 2002).
At Youthaid, we saw this as a challenge, especially when we also realised that behaviour change is not an event but a process. Seeking to address this challenge led to the development of two television programmes. It also became clear to us that television programmes that are not backed or supported by off-



In addition the Narrow Cast sessions are coordinated by trained youth facilitators, using appropriate off-air behaviour change communication materials and these activities are sustained over a period of time. This format allows for indicators for the measurement of behaviour change.

The Concept

The Narrow Casting concept as stated earlier, combines the known advantages of television as a major source of information on sexuality issues for young people and the advantages of interpersonal communication. These are further reinforced by facilitated viewing sessions of a drama serial produced for television and played back on a specific day of the week, at a specific time of the day, over a period of time which is dependent on the number of episodes in the drama serial being used. The beauty of the Narrow Cast concept is that there is a high probability of having the same audience watch every episode of the production till the end of a particular serial (This consistency in viewing behaviour is powered or sustained by the sheer quest to find out what happens 'next').

The facilitated viewing sessions provide the young people with the opportunity for interactions including question and answer sessions, the chance to make contributions and to seek clarifications. The facilitated sessions also enable participants to access coordinated HIV voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) services and referrals which can be monitored and evaluated in a more specific and accurate manner for behaviour change; much more than is possible through a broadcast process.

The audience participating in a Narrow Cast session is expected to be a 'captive' audience, which is school-, church- or community centre-based. Such an audience is expected back each time an episode is aired for a number of reasons: because of their inherent desire to know what happens "next" to some of the characters they like, because of the lure of multimedia and again because of the exchange that can be enjoyed with peers as well as the

trained facilitators. The advantages of the Narrow Cast over the broadcast media also include the absence of programmes that run simultaneously on various television channels that usually compete for the attention of the young viewers; the availability of a generating set at

the viewing centres to counter the problem of power failure; and the opportunity for discussions and clarifications that Narrow Casting offers.

Expected Outcomes

This process is expected to empower adolescents and young people with information and education on sexuality issues in a manner that is culturally acceptable and would enable them to assess their HIV infection risk factors and therefore imbibe or practice abstinence behaviours. For yet others, it promotes the use of VCT services.

The process is also expected to ignite the creative abilities in the target group such that they direct their energies into putting into practice what they have learnt, or advocating for what they expect or what they want done about the various situations and challenges that young people face as far as sexuality issues; including HIV/AIDS and relationships are concerned. They then express their ideas through paintings, songs, poems and dramas that they can share for the benefit of themselves and their peers. This would also ultimately allow both adults and youth and other stakeholders working on adolescent and youth issues to have a privileged peep into the minds of their target audience. Thus, programmers and others can understand how the youth think, their feelings and struggles and can respond effectively to these.

Successful Pilots

Two pilots of the Narrow Cast concept have been conducted. One



Participants at the first Narrow Cast session at Wisdomgate High School in Ikeja, Lagos in the southwest of Nigeria

was implemented in an in-school setting using *Tsha Tsha*, a 39-episode television drama serial on HIV/AIDS, produced by CADRE and the South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC).

One hundred and sixty seven (167) students participated and one hundred and fifty seven (157) viewed all the 26 episodes that were presented. The second pilot took place in a community centre (a church) using *King Ubika: A Harvest of Whirlwinds*, a 24-episode drama serial also on HIV/AIDS, produced by Family Health International (FHI) in Nigeria. Eighty-four (84) young people aged 14-26 years participated. Seventy-two (72) of them viewed all the episodes.

The outcomes of these pilot projects have been so encouraging that presently, there are 25 centres in four states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, in Nigeria. Of these 25 centres, ten are in Lagos State in the southwest of Nigeria and funded under World Bank-assisted HIV funds. Eight of the centres are located in educational institutions (six are at the tertiary level and two at the secondary level) and two centres are located within community centres.

For further details on the Narrow Cast concept and outcomes of the pilot projects, contact Youth Projects Inc., PO Box 5785, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria. Tel: 234-1-4735422 / 234-



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Region
Watch

Soul Buddyz: Enabling Children Make Informed Choices

Introduction

Soul Buddyz is a real-life television drama specifically developed for 8 to 12-year olds and their parents and teachers, and has consistently had the highest audience ratings in its category in South Africa.

It delivers the positive message that all, irrespective of age, should and can talk about issues. One of the issues it focuses upon is children's sexuality. It also breaks the stereotype that children are incapable of making informed choices while reinforcing the message that kids can be active citizens in society.

The Vehicle

The Soul Buddyz vehicle consists of five main parts: Television (drama and Buddyz on the Move); Soul Buddyz Clubs; Radio broadcasts; Lifeskills booklet for grade 7 and a Parenting booklet

The Soul Buddyz project was launched in 1999, building on the successful multimedia strategy of the Soul City series. While the Soul City series is popular with all ages, its messages were not designed specifically for a very young audience, particularly 8 to 12-year-olds. Soul Buddyz has been developed specifically with this age group in mind because attitudes are often formed during this critical time



Soul Buddyz are friends at school who help each other with their problems. The TV programme is so successful that school children want to copy their heroes and heroines and clubs have been set up across the country

and yet, in the context of a rapidly transforming society, the needs and aspirations of children between these ages are often neglected.

Addressing Children's Sexuality

Emotional and health problems often originate or become embedded in this age group, with social problems such as physical and sexual abuse severely retarding the potential of many children.

According to Aadielah Maker, senior manager, Soul Buddyz, "We focus on showing children the

choices they have around sex. They can abstain, delay, they don't have to give into feelings, they can decide to have sex within marriage or they can choose to use condoms.

We had a specific story around a girl who was thought to be pregnant. The characters researched the myths around pregnancy and then there was a six minute animated sex education piece, which explored how the body works. The video also spoke about choices. We don't want to dictate, but rather to provide



children with information so that they can make healthy choices and seek out information.”

Sexuality - More Than Sex

In exploring sexuality in the series it is presented as more than just sex – it incorporates values, how you feel about yourself and others, relationships, and even issues such as substance abuse, and the choices that can be made to illustrate the issues of peer pressure. The vehicles explore how young people can positively support each other through what they want in their lives and what they value.

Parents are encouraged to talk about sexuality in the home. In the first series, we encouraged parents to speak to their children about menstruation and wet dreams.

All Soul Buddyz series are tested and researched for effectiveness. After the first series, it was proven with both boys and girls that it is not necessary to have sex with one's boyfriend or girlfriend to show love. Children exposed to the series felt very much more strongly about this than those that were not.

Gender and HIV/AIDS

Maker explains, “We have also explored the issues around gender in addressing HIV/AIDS. For instance in the second series, there was a story about how boys and girls accepted they could both play soccer. We also dealt with equal rights for girls and boys – that girls can do same things and they don't only have become mothers, teachers and nurses. They do also become engineers and pilots!”

In the most recent series the focus was on getting boys to identify and

Soul Buddyz Clubs are fun and safe places where young people can get together to learn, enjoy and contribute to their communities



A scene from the TV programme: Nozipho, a young girl who was raped is HIV positive. She is rushed to hospital with her parents and the diagnosis is pneumonia

then express their emotions. They were shown how to express anger in ways other than through violence. In one episode of Buddyz on the Move, a young boy had cried in front of his peers who laugh at him. Later he goes back to them to find out why. This is very brave and empowering for people of any age!

Maker continues, “We don't deal with HIV as a once-off issue because it is not in isolation to other children's issues. It is part of every series. There was a big shift in the first series when we discovered that children who had no exposure to Soul Buddyz were very unlikely to be willing to be friends with someone who has HIV/AIDS. Those that had watched Soul Buddyz were dramatically more likely to be friendly with children who were infected.

Sexual Abuse

“In terms of sexual abuse we encourage children to tell someone until someone believes them and we also tell them that if they have been abused, that they weren't responsible and it isn't their fault. We encourage them to find someone to listen so that they can get care and support”, Maker says

The third series also highlighted that children with disabilities have same sexual feelings as any other child.

The Clubs

The Soul Buddyz Clubs and print components reinforce the messages about positively supporting each other and have activities around

clarifying a child's personal values – so TV highlights an issue and the print reinforces, provides information and activities so that the children can work individually or in a group to determine their response to an issue.

After the success of the first series of Soul Buddyz, children across the country wanted to form their own real life clubs. Soul Buddyz Clubs are fun and safe places where young people can get together to learn, enjoy and contribute to their communities. Based in schools and libraries across South Africa, they aim to be a platform where all South African children can acquire additional knowledge and skills related to health issues.

Buddyz on the Move

This year, running in parallel with the Soul Buddyz television episodes is a new television magazine programme called Buddyz on the Move (BoM). Buddyz on the Move is the first actuality programme developed specifically for children. In this programme, real life Buddyz Clubs and children that are making a difference in their communities are filmed undertaking activities, from their perspective, around the themes of Soul Buddyz.

For further information please contact Onyx Marketing Communications T +27 11 728 5004 C +27 83 273 9891 michelle@onyxmarketing.co.za



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Research
Notes

Sexuality in the Egyptian Print Media

*By Prof. Dr. G.I. Serour;
FRCOG; FRCS and
Ahmed R. A. Ragab,
MD; PhD*

Background

While it is recognized that media encompasses diverse modes of communication both modern and traditional, the media here refers essentially to the mass media – print and electronic. The media is significant largely because of its recognized and powerful role in the dissemination of information to large populations; as well as its prominent role in the moulding of public opinion and as a socialization agent.

The media, undisputedly, has a powerful influence on society and conversely, social groups also have the opportunity to influence what is reported in the media. In promoting socio-economic development, well-being and good health of target populations, the media is a powerful tool and as such must be aided to present and disseminate factual and balanced information that will engender behaviour change. This is especially crucial for the largely misunderstood and new emerging fields of sexuality, sexual health and sexual rights.

Sexuality in the Print Media

The coverage of reproductive health and sexuality in the print media in Egypt has improved tremendously since 1998. In March 1998, the Population Council in Cairo organized a roundtable discussion to present key findings of a research conducted to selected journalists associated with widely read Arabic newspapers and magazines. Topics covered in this session included male involvement, post-abortion care, female genital cutting (FGC) and adolescents.

Two outcomes resulted from this roundtable. First, participants wrote several articles and in-depth news reports about the issues presented. Secondly, this session led to an ongoing dialogue with this group of journalists [1]. Following this success, the POLICY and FRONTIERS Projects in Egypt jointly organized a session on maternal health services in collaboration with the Population and Family Planning Sector of the Ministry of Health and Population. The session resulted in the production of several press articles and lengthy news reports [1]. Based on these experiments and in order to widen media coverage of critical reproductive health issues in a more systematic manner, an intervention project was designed and was based on three elements:

First: An assessment of the coverage of reproductive health in the Egyptian Press was undertaken for 10 months, from May 1999 to March 2000. A sample of Arabic-Language newspapers and magazines from different publishing houses in Egypt was selected and Daily screening of the press was conducted

Second: A network was formed of about 20 journalists from newspapers and magazines of different publishing houses.

Third: Four roundtable discussions were organized on critical reproductive health issues including marriage patterns in Egypt, youth and reproductive health, women and menopause, and contraceptive technology. The results of the evaluation of the roundtable discussions

showed a general increase in journalists' knowledge about reproductive health issues.

When assessing the content of newspaper and magazine articles published by network members, it was noted that many of them heavily quoted the fact sheets and press releases included in the press files for each roundtable discussion [2].

Aims of the Study¹

1. To conduct content (discourse analysis) of media reporting on sexuality, sexual health and sexual rights (S/SH/SR) to determine the quantity and quality of focus
2. To determine the incidence and extent to which the media contributes to misinformation and negative treatment of issues of S/SH/SR. That is, how does the media use pictures, cartoons, language and positioning of article and editorials to promote or devalue issues regarding S/SH/SR?
3. To determine the factors influencing the publishing (or absence) of articles on S/SH/SR in the media.

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Areas of Focus

For the purpose of this study, the subject areas included the following: sexual health/sex education/sexual rights; reproductive rights; adolescent and youth issues; HIV/AIDS; family planning; violence and abuse/female genital cutting; infertility; maternal health; abortion and other related topics

Research Questions

The research questions included the following:

- How frequently are S/SH/SR issues featured in the press?
- What aspects of S/SH/SR are presented?
- How much of S/SH/SR information is provided?
- Where/when is S/SH/SR featured in the press?
- From what perspective (conservative, progressive, liberal) are they written?
- Who are the target audiences?
- How balanced are the views/discussions provided?
- How does the media coverage of S/SH/SR fit in/challenge/contradict the social, economic and legal contexts?
- How does media coverage of S/SH/SR impact on policy issues?
- How are S/SH/SR issues linked with broader health issues?

Methodology

From January to June 2004, project staff reviewed a sample of selected Arabic-language newspapers of different publishing houses in Egypt, including governmental and party papers. Two part-time project staff conducted the screening of the sample of the Egyptian Press. All articles featuring reproductive/sexual health/sexuality issues were clipped and logged using a special sheet. Information gathered on each clipped article was entered in the sheet based on the following headings: date of publication, name of the publication, length of the article; type of the article (feature, column, news, letter to the editor); reproductive/sexual health/sexuality issue covered in the article.

Table (1) Distribution of Articles by Type

Type of article	Number	Percent
News	269	72.9
Feature	73	19.8
Question and Answer	17	4.6
Letter to the Editor	2	0.5
Column	8	2.2
Total	369	100

It should be noted within the context of Egypt that the circulation figures often do not reflect the reality regarding readership of the paper, as many readers, especially in work places, public libraries

and rural areas, could share one newspaper. Following this step, the articles were sorted based on the areas of focus earlier identified (above) and regardless of the date of publication and the publishing house.

Findings

During the life span of the research, from January-June, 2004, 369 articles were studied that included news/information about sexuality issues. Table (1) shows the distribution of the articles by their type: News, column, question and answer, feature and letter to the editor.

More than one quarter of the articles, 29.8%, were on family planning. This was followed by reproductive health and rights at 18.4%. Violence against women constituted 13.0% while sexual health and education constituted 7.6%. Adolescents and youth reproductive health issues accounted for 6.5%; and lastly, HIV/AIDS constituted 6.8% (see Table 2).

Table (2) Frequency Distribution of Sexuality/Reproductive Health Articles

The Issue	Number of Articles	Percent (%)
Sexual Health/ Education	28	7.6
Adolescents/Youth Reproductive Health	24	6.5
HIV/AIDS	25	6.8
Family Planning	110	29.8
Reproductive Health and Rights	68	18.4
Violence Against Women (including female circumcision)	48	13.0
Unclassified*	66	17.9
Total	369	100

* Included more than one issue in the same article

Evidence from the Egyptian Demographic Health Surveys 2003 (see Table 3), indicates that print materials are the least popular of the three mass media as source of information for the public and thus unlikely to be a major source of information on sexuality and reproductive health. One plausible explanation could be the nature of the articles in the newspapers. Mostly, as

Table (3) Percentage Distribution of Participants by their Exposure to the Media

Type of Media	Percentage of Those Who Are Exposed
Watch TV Weekly	92.9
Listen to Radio Weekly	63.5
Read Newspapers / Magazines	20.9
All Three Media	16.2
No Media Exposure	4.8

Source : Adapted from EDHS (2003) Table 1.11 page 14

shown from the findings, information from this medium is often incomplete and in some cases incorrect. What is disseminated is mainly news about conferences, meetings, workshops, programmes and training workshops in the area of sexuality and reproductive health in Egypt.

Lessons

The study provided evidence that if an intervention programme is designed and implemented to inform and engage media practitioners, it would be successful. Consequently, there is a need to design an intervention programme, which provides media practitioners with a reproductive health/sexuality reference package as well as necessary training. This would ensure that the messages disseminated are more correct, informative and sustainable.

Recommendations

There is need for an intervention programme that would provide a targeted group of newspaper writers with correct, understandable, reliable, and sustainable package of information on sexuality and reproductive health issues. The Ministry of Health and Population and the National AIDS Program could design and implement such a programme, which in the past proved to be successful in the area of family planning.

To implement the suggested programme, there is also a need to work with senior editors, to develop a database of the journalists who are interested and qualified to work in the subject area and also to conduct training programmes for the targeted journalists. In addition, it would be important to form a network of the target journalists and to develop a press briefing kit, which should be updated frequently.

Reference:

1. Hegazy S; and Khalifa M (2000): *Increasing the Coverage of Reproductive Health Issues in Egyptian Press Project*, the Population Council, Cairo.

Bibliography

- El-Zanaty, Fatma and Ann A. Way. (2004). *2003 Egypt Interim Demography and Health Survey*. Cairo Egypt: Ministry of Health and Population (Egypt), National Population Council, EL-Zanaty and Associates, and ORC Macro.
- Serour G.; Ragab, A and M, Mahmoud (2004): *Role of Husbands in Family Planning/Reproductive Health Decisions within the Family*, NPC, Cairo.
- UNFPA (2004): *HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care for Young People Using Health Centers*, February, 2004, Cairo-Egypt.

(Endnotes)

¹ The study was commissioned in 2004 by Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre



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Viewpoint

Promoting Sexuality Education in Nigeria: A Challenge for the Media and Civil Society

By Dr. Aminu Magashi Garba, a public health communicator and the executive director of Community Health and Research Initiative, Kano in the northwest of Nigeria

The difference between Southern and Northern Nigeria is palpable in every aspect of life, not only in terms of and the huge gap in educational development, but also in regards to industrialization, business, the health care delivery system and the presence of international development partners.

Vaccine Controversy

Southern Nigeria is indeed far ahead of the north. When in the year 2004, northern Nigeria was engulfed in a controversy over the safety of the Polio Vaccine, it was obvious then that the fight was between the north and the international development partners under the global polio eradication programme.

Mixed Feelings

With respect to the sexuality education curriculum – in 2002 when the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) in conjunction with the Federal Ministry of Education, NGOs and many international development partners drafted and proposed a curriculum on sexuality education for both primary and secondary schools - it was received with mix feelings and generated a raging controversy especially in



This teenage girl, having never received any family planning information or services, is hospitalised for pregnancy-related complications. The maternal mortality rate in Nigeria is among the highest in the world. © 2000 Liz Gilbert / David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Courtesy of Photoshare

Northern Nigeria.

Within a very short time, the discussion on the acceptability of the curriculum was hijacked by religious leaders and other gatekeepers and this gave the issue different connotations and colourations. Then, the media were awash with all sorts of comments. A journalist reportedly said that “the

curriculum contains significant portions that fester with the pus of reckless moral indiscretion” which can outrage the sensibilities of parents, teachers and moralists of all shades.

The Answer

I am of the firm belief that the Sexuality Education Curriculum is one of the answers to the problem of high



maternal mortality as well as the unacceptable prevalence of HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) in Nigeria. I would nevertheless like to note that the initiators of the curriculum, while introducing the initiative, did not carry out the required level of advocacy to policy makers and other gate-keepers across the federation to educate the leaders and the public on the importance of the programme. They also omitted to build cross-cutting and wide ranging partnerships to ensure acceptability of the curriculum.

Health Issues

In trying to fathom the rationale behind the rejection and the way out of the doldrums in Northern Nigeria, we need to look at the health and social problems bedevilling our societies which of course require deep thought and sustainable solutions.

Nigeria's maternal mortality Ratio is about 948/100,000 live births with a range between 300 and 1,700/100,000 live births. In a recent research conducted by the Society of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians of Nigeria (SOGON) in six states of Nigeria, the maternal mortality ratios of some of the states in the North was found to be around 3000 death /100,000 live births.

Factors that contribute to high maternal mortality amongst others are : obstructed labour which is associated with early pregnancy; eclampsia (which is seen mostly among young women below 18 years, during their first pregnancy; unsafe abortions which are associated with unplanned pregnancy and lack of access to correct information and services on Reproductive Health (RH). Most of these problems present more frequently among adolescent women of primary or secondary school age.

HIV

With respect to HIV/AIDS, Nigeria's prevalence rates in 1999,

2001, 2003 were 5.4% , 5.8 % and 5.2 % respectively and the country has about 4 Million of its population infected and living with HIV/AIDS. Based on the National Demographic Health Surveys (NDHS), adolescents and youths below the age of twenty four are the most vulnerable and affected by HIV/AIDS.

I am of the firm belief that the sexuality education curriculum is the answer to the problem of high maternal mortality...as well as the unacceptable prevalence of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

For the country to safeguard its future, it must invest in its young population through empowerment schemes and provision of quality, adequate and correct information on diverse range of issues.

The Media

The antagonists of sexuality education are of the belief that teaching such will equally lead to some of the problems mentioned above; but I believe that is far from it. If one looks at the nature of our society, the adolescents and youth, bearing in mind their adventurous nature, have other ways to access information - through the Internet, satellite cable networks, as well as the popular mass media; both print and electronic.

Controlling the diverse sources of information will remain a Herculean task to all of us. Unfortunately, a large proportion of the information being released by such Media are counter productive and capable of

leading to early initiation of sexual intercourse which may lead to unplanned pregnancy, unsafe abortion and exposure to HIV and other STIs and at times ultimate death.

Mix-Up

Another worrisome phenomenon is the mixing-up of sexuality with sex education; they are not the same. Sexuality encompasses our entire life, values, norms, culture, gender, how people perceive their bodies, sexual orientation and behaviours, reproduction and procreation processes.

As I mentioned earlier, my view is that in initiating the issue of a sexuality education curriculum, NERDC and its local and international partners did not do their ground work effectively to articulate the issues and to engage the country in a national dialogue that would engender the adoption of the sexuality education programme.

Recommendations

There is no reason why NGOs in northern Nigeria should surreptitiously teach or introduce the sexuality education curriculum to schools. Rather, they should act from the position of strength not weakness by engaging stakeholders in a dialogue - be it parents, teachers or religious leaders. This way, everybody will participate and make contributions accordingly.

With the strategy I have proposed, the society would claim ownership of the curriculum and in that respect, the Media as the fourth arm of government, must be involved to catalyse sustained debates and discussions on sexuality issues. But that can only be possible and effective if the Media is equally well informed and trained on sexuality issues.

References

Health Sector Reform Document (2004) Federal Ministry of Health, Nigeria
Weekly Trust Newspaper, June 28 - July 4, 2002



Notes to Contributors

Guidelines for Submissions

The editors welcome submissions on the thematic focus of future issues of the Magazine, as well as other areas of sexuality, sexual health and rights. Themes for upcoming 2005 and 2006 issues include:

2005

- * Sexual Violence and HIV/AIDS

2006

- * Youth, Sexuality and Marriage in Africa
- * Sexuality Beyond Reproduction
- * Cultural, Religion Beliefs and Healthy, Pleasurable Sexuality
- * Healthy and Responsible Sexuality: Lessons from People Living Positively.

ARSRC seeks articles for submission which are objective, analytical and mirror current /contemporary issues and debates in the areas of Sexuality, Sexual Health and Rights in Africa. Articles should reflect a

holistic /comprehensive approach to sexuality; taking sexuality discourse beyond health to incorporate broader issues of the expression of sexuality without guilt, fear or ill-health. While priority would be given articles that have not been previously published, already published material may be considered depending on how relevant the subject area and focus is to ARSRC's work. However, for already published articles, full details of previous publication and where to seek permission for reprint must accompany the article.

We particularly welcome articles related to our thematic focus for the following sections :

Region Watch: Topical issues with a country or sub regional focus

Programme Feature: best practices from programme implementers

Research Notes: Focus on relevant research and methodologies

Viewpoint: Reactions to previous magazine issues or on a subject area that a reader wishes to express very strong views or opinion.

Length

Feature articles : 1,000 -1,500 words

Research issues : 800-1,000 words

Opinion articles : 400-500 words

Photos

We welcome photos with or without articles and will give appropriate credit when photo is used.

Presentation

Please submit initially, an abstract with your name, contact address, phone number, email address and details about yourself as you would wish it to appear on the list of contributors

*****All contributors will receive a copy of the issue in which their contribution has been published.

About Contributors to this Edition

Ahmed Ragab is a reproductive health consultant and assistant professor in applied reproductive health research at the international Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research, Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt. He has a wealth of experience having worked in several African countries including Somalia and Sudan in the areas of HIV/AIDS/STIs and issues of violence against women.

Aminu Magashi Garba holds a Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery degree and is currently the executive director/project coordinator of Community Health and Research Initiative, Nigeria. He is also a consultant and writes a popular column – "Health Interactive" – in the *Daily Trust* newspaper and Gamji website in Nigeria. He participated in the 2005 edition of the Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre's Sexuality Leadership Development Fellowship.

Prof. Dr. G.I. Serour is Professor and Consultant in Obstetrics and Gynecology and specialist in Infertility Treatment at Al-Azhar University since 1982. He is also Director, International Islamic Center For Population Studies and Research, Al-Azhar University.

Maggie Morgan is a film-maker based in Cairo, Egypt. She has an M.A in film and literature and teaches a cultural studies course at the American University in Cairo. She has directed documentaries about stereotypes of women in Arab media, violence against women, and about artists in the Middle East. She also does research on women and media.

Richie Adewusi, PhD, has his background in English literature, journalism, public relations and development communication (including media materials development and production, behaviour change communication and social marketing.) He is the Head Facilitator, Centre for Family and Reproductive Health Initiatives and the Executive Director, Youthaid Projects Inc., Nigeria.

Sexuality Resources

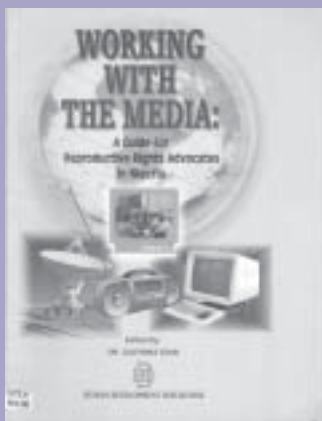
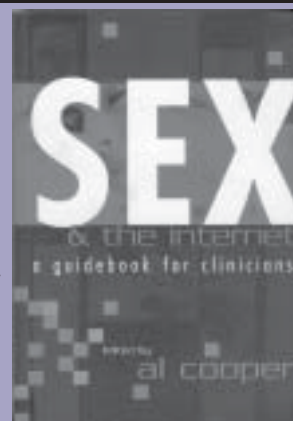
Sex and the Internet

Editor : Al Cooper

Publisher: Brunner-Routledge, New York, 2002

ISBN: 1-58391-355-6 (Paperback)

This groundbreaking book is the first of its kind to thoroughly explore the topic of cybersex and the effects of internet use on sexuality. Focusing on treatment and assessment issues and the clinical implications of cybersex, the volume provides mental health professionals with an analysis of the most recent empirical evidence along with research specific to the impact of Internet use on couples and families, gay men, people with disabilities, children, and the workplace. Edited by one of the leading researchers, clinicians, and authors in the emerging field of sex and the Internet, this book addresses the growing complexity of Internet sex issues and their impact on psychological functioning.



Working with the Media: A Guide for Reproductive Rights Advocates in Nigeria

Editor: Dr. Oluyinka Esan

Publisher: Human Development Initiatives, 2001

ISBN: 978-35780-3-0 (Hardback)

Working with the Media : A Guide for Reproductive Rights Advocates in Nigeria, attempts to bring into clear focus how the mass media and their operators can help the dissemination of knowledge among reproductive health advocates in Nigeria. The spread of HIV/AIDS and others sexually transmitted infections has made the production of this work quite timely.

The first section of the publication sets out to understand the problem; including an appreciation of media institutions, their operations, audiences and the way they may impede their best intentions. The second part of the publication goes beyond an analysis of the problem and presents standard professional practice and skills.

Call for Articles - Sexualities: Studies in Culture and Society A special issue on:

“Sexualities in Southern Africa” (Website: <http://sexualities.sagepub.com/>)

Southern Africa has in recent years gone through and continues to go through major social, political and cultural changes, not least the ending of apartheid in the Republic of South Africa, the spread of HIV/AIDS, and political instability in many countries. These and many other developments raise major issues for the social construction of sexualities within the region, prompting a major growth of

research and publication on these matters.

The proposal for this special issue was inspired by two recent conferences, held at the University of Western Cape – on ‘Writing African Women’ and ‘From Boys to Men: Masculinities and Risk’. The special issue will bring together selected papers from those conferences together with other papers from recent research.

For details on preparation of scripts, see: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalManuscript.aspx?pid=200>

Articles Being Sought: 6 articles x 7000 words and 6 x 2500 words. Please send all contributions by 01.01.2006 to all 4 editors by email - Bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za, hearn@hanken.fi, Moletsaner@ukzn.ac.za, MORRELL@ukzn.ac.za

2nd Africa Conference On Sexual Health And Rights

The African Federation for Sexual Health and Rights (Fédération Africaine pour la Santé et Droits Sexuels) in collaboration with the Africa Regional Office of Planned Parenthood Federation of America-International (PPFA-I) is pleased to announce the 2nd Africa Conference on Sexual Health and Rights to be held in Nairobi,

Kenya from 19th –21st June 2006. The theme of the conference is “*Sexuality, Economics and Development in Africa.*”

Some of the identified thematic areas for the Conference are: Sexuality and Sexual Health; Sexuality, HIV/AIDS and Emerging Therapies; Sexual and Domestic Violence (Child Abuse, Vulnerable Groups); Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights; Abortion; Culture and Sexual Rights; Sexuality Education and Contemporary Issues in Sexuality.

Other areas of focus include: Sexuality and Religion; Family Planning in the Era of HIV/AIDS; Partnerships in Sexual Health and Rights; Sexuality and

Economics; and Programming for Sexual Health and Rights .

For further information, please contact the following: Conference Organizer, Africa Regional Office, Planned Parenthood Federation of America-International, 1st Floor, Chaka Place, Argwings Kodhek Road, P. O. Box 53538-00200, Nairobi, Kenya. Tel: 254 20 2727049-52

Fax: 254 20 2717013

Email: conference@ppfa.or.ke

Dr. Uwem Esiet, Convener AFSHR, c/o Action Health Inc., Lagos, Nigeria. Tel: 234-774-3745

234-803-725-0701

Fax: 234-342-5496

Email: info@actionhealthinc.org