Engaging Communities on Complex Sexual Reproductive Health Issues: The Case for Grounded Communication Model for Abortion Advocacy in Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

Sexuality education in Nigeria is primarily right-based and championed through non-governmental organizations and development partners. The right-based approach emphasizes sexual and reproductive health rights, covers sexual choices and gender norms, and is delivered through a participatory teaching strategy. Although argued as effective for health communication in low and middle-income countries, the right-based approach has not been effective in driving abortion-related advocacy in countries with restrictive abortion laws.

This paper reviewed community engagement approaches adopted by the Federal Ministry of Health and selected non-governmental organizations in Nigeria, specifically focusing on sexual and reproductive health-related issues. A desk review of the literature on communication models for sexual and reproductive health advocacy in Nigeria was conducted.

Findings show that existing models adopt a holistic or comprehensive approach emphasizing a top-to-bottom message flow. Community participation is mainly as the carrier of messages, not co-producers. This approach has proven problematic for the sustainability of health campaigns. This paper proposes a grounded communication model for driving abortion-related advocacy in Nigeria. The grounded communication model is a need-based, community-centered communication approach that emphasizes the co-production of messages by the end users. This paper argues that adopting the grounded communication model for abortion-related advocacy could improve local acceptability and reach of messages aimed at reducing unsafe abortion.

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