“Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) is a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being related to sexuality and to the reproductive system.”

SRH—which includes family planning; prevention, care, and treatment of sexually-transmitted infections; and prevention of gender-based violence—is increasingly being integrated into health services to provide holistic, comprehensive care, particularly to youth.

While health authorities increasingly promote the provision of SRH services, the uptake of these services by young people remains low. Challenges include a lack of adolescent-friendly services which go beyond purely physical issues to address young people’s concerns regarding the social and psychological aspects of their sexuality. SRH messages often focus solely on the prevention of sexually-transmitted infections (STI) and family planning—topics that may not resonate with youth. Other barriers include the social stigma of accessing SRH services, especially for young women who may not want to be perceived as being sexually active. Lastly, health facilities’ hours of operations often coincide with schools hours, while transport costs may also create barriers to access.

The need to strengthen sexual and reproductive health in Angola

Angola has one of the highest rates of adolescent pregnancy and childbirth in sub-Saharan Africa, with an adolescent fertility rate of 192 per 1,000 women. In Luanda, Angola’s most populous province, 12% of pregnant women are adolescents. Angola’s 2010 Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices survey among those aged 15-24 years revealed that 43% have sex by the age of 15 years, but only 51% of male and 38% of female youth know that condom use is a method of HIV prevention. Youth receive inadequate SRH education in schools, increasing their risk of early pregnancy, STIs, sexual abuse, and exploitation.

The Angolan government increasingly recognizes the potential of partnering with civil society and the private sector to provide comprehensive SRH policies and services.

2 Sexual and reproductive health needs of young people: Matching needs with systems. 2012. Available at: www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/matching_needs_with_systems.pdf
3 Plano Nacional de Desenvolvimento Sanitário (PNDS) 2012-2025
This partnership provided AAM with financial and organizational support to achieve the following:

- 13,137 individuals reached with messages on HIV prevention, gender-based violence, and women’s rights
- 2,561 individuals reached through community campaigns on HIV prevention
- 25 youth trained to be school-based peer educators

AAM’s youth activists encourage students to form youth clubs at their schools to educate and engage their peers on SRH, providing further training on SRH and ongoing support.

**Development of a SRH manual**

After identifying the need for materials and guidance on SRH in the country, and consulting with the National Public Health Directorate in the Ministry of Health’s Department of Sexual and Reproductive Health, AAM led the development of a sexual and reproductive health manual for CSOs. The manual is organized into seven topics based on the most frequently asked questions during AAM’s HIV prevention presentations in schools. These include:

- Sexual and reproductive health rights
- Gender and gender-based violence
- Adolescence and sexuality
- Sexually-transmitted infections and HIV
- Menstruation, pregnancy, and antenatal care
- Pregnancy during adolescence and unsafe abortions
- Family planning and modern contraceptive methods

The manual includes activities and practical exercises appropriate for a classroom setting, as well as a pre- and post-assessment of knowledge.

BLC will support AAM to facilitate a workshop to validate the manual, as well as a guide on gender-based violence, in August 2015. The workshop will convene 30 representatives from civil society and government to review and evaluate the content and presentation for future use. The manual will subsequently be distributed to other CSOs in Angola with support from the Angola Network of AIDS Service Organizations (ANASO) and the Ministry of Health.

**Improving SRH services**

AAM plans to scale up their activities for youth in the future, including:

- Providing HIV counseling and testing (HCT) at schools after liaising with ANASO to train more of AAM’s activists in HCT and engaging the schools’ directors to gain their permission to provide this service
- Conducting surveys at schools to measure adolescents’ attitudes and knowledge of SRH to better inform AAM’s interventions

Launched in 2010, the USAID-funded Building Local Capacity for Delivery of HIV Services in Southern Africa Project (BLC) strengthens government, parastatal, and civil society entities to effectively address the challenges of the HIV and AIDS epidemic.

Throughout the Southern Africa region and with specific activities in six countries, BLC provides technical assistance in organizational development, including leadership, management, and governance in three key program areas: 1) care and support for orphans and vulnerable children; 2) HIV prevention; and 3) community-based care.