

“It felt like a weight was being taken off of my shoulders”: The impact of Lending a hand intervention in supporting migrant adolescents and young people, in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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1. Objective

To develop and test the feasibility and acceptability of a support structure for migrant adolescents and young people (MAYP) and understand their experiences of the intervention, in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.



2. Method

- Five peer navigators were trained on needs assessment (clinical, social, educational, and psychosocial) of MAYP.
- The peer navigators enrolled 283 MAYP, aged 14-24, between June 2021 and October 2022.
- The intervention included
 - using a mobile phone to provide advice and support identified during the needs assessment,
 - facilitating the referral process at a call centre to the study social worker for psychosocial and emotional services, and to local health facilities for healthcare services
 - providing peer support over the mobile phone on general issues like assistance with online application process and common teenage love problems.
- We conducted repeat in-depth interviews with MAYP, n=20; and in-depth interviews with 5 key informants (PNs), n=5, both face-to-face and telephonically.



Lending a hand peer navigators in the field

4. Conclusion

- The intervention was designed around the needs of MAYP – and co-designed with MAYP
- The quick referral process was welcomed by MAYP – the intervention was acceptable.
- MAYP said they felt respected.
- Interventions targeted for young people are effective when they are co-designed with them and are led by peers who understand young people’s experiences.

3. Results

- Our preliminary findings show that many young people’s migration was driven by their need for education.
- Transitioning from living with their parents or guardians to living on their own in an unfamiliar environment caused physical, psychological, and mental challenges.
- In describing the intervention most of them ‘felt like a weight was being taken off of their shoulders’.
- They also felt that it was beneficial because they were linked to care for sexually transmitted infection treatment, received psychosocial support from the intervention social worker, and were also supported by peer navigators as regards general challenges.
- This helped them develop adaptive coping strategies and improve their health behaviours.

“[had I not been visited by the peer navigators] I would not have visited the clinic.... maybe I would have waited until I was free to go home and visit a traditional healer...” LAH_P02_YM_18

“Talking to her [peer navigator] felt like a weight being taken off of my shoulders.... I do not feel emotional anymore and it does not stress me as it did before....talking to her [social worker], I would say helped me, it healed some parts of me in a way...” LAH_P08_YF_17

“I would not have afforded a private social worker.... It felt good to talk to someone who was not going to judge me but instead provide me with advice and support.....the information she shared with me helped me realize that we learn from our own mistakes, and I must not blame myself because it [miscarriage] was not my fault..... I am feeling okay now, I do not blame myself anymore” LAH_P14_YF_17

“Everything they [peer navigator] said really helped me because I seem to have forgotten that using condoms helps and it protects you from contracting diseases....I was starting to adopt the style of not using condoms like others [young people] from around...” LAH_P09_YM_23