

RESEARCH BASED TEMPLATE

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EMPOWERING AGENCY: A YOUTH-DETERMINED MODEL FOR MIGRANT AND REFUGEE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS IN WESTERN SYDNEY

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Background:

Migrant and refugee youth (MRY) in Greater Western Sydney experience significant barriers to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including cultural stigma, inadequate education, and limited service access. Despite SRHR being a fundamental human right, few frameworks exist that centre MRY voices in developing policy and programming responses. This Australian Research Council-funded participatory action research project aimed to develop a human rights-based, youth-determined model to guide SRHR policy and service delivery for MRY populations.

Methods:

A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was employed from 2020–2023. Qualitative data were collected through 17 youth co-facilitated focus groups (n=87 MRY), complemented by group concept mapping (n=55 MRY, n=13 stakeholders) and a quantitative survey (n=107). A draft model was developed through triangulation of findings and presented at a model development workshop with MRY and advisory committee members. The model was subsequently refined through a hybrid workshop (n=7 participants) and two community forums (n=24 participants) involving service providers from multicultural health, sexual health promotion, and community organisations.

Results:

The resulting model integrates socioecological factors across individual, interpersonal, community, organisational, and societal levels within a human rights framework. Key domains include digital literacy and online platforms, peer support networks, culturally safe service delivery, and strength-based programming that addresses emotional and relational dimensions alongside biomedical aspects of SRHR. Community feedback led to three revisions: visual consistency, removal of hierarchical numbering, and clarification of rights and obligations. The model emphasises MRY agency while acknowledging structural barriers requiring systemic response.

Conclusion:

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This youth-determined SRHR model offers a framework for developing culturally responsive, rights-based programming for MRY populations. We seek sector feedback on its applicability across diverse Australian sexual health services, educational settings, and community contexts to inform future translation and implementation efforts.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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