

# Health beliefs, young people & sexual health



# MHSS purpose



To achieve better health outcomes for CALD communities



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- Background
- Barriers
- Strategies



# Demographic information

- Increasing proportion of young people  
**In 2007-08, 48% of new arrivals were aged less than 20 years (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2009).**
- Changing national origin of humanitarian entrants.



# 1998 -1999

- Former Yugoslavia
- Iraq
- Bosnia- Herzegovina
- Croatia
- Afghanistan
- Sudan
- Somalia
- Iran
- Sri Lanka
- Ethiopia

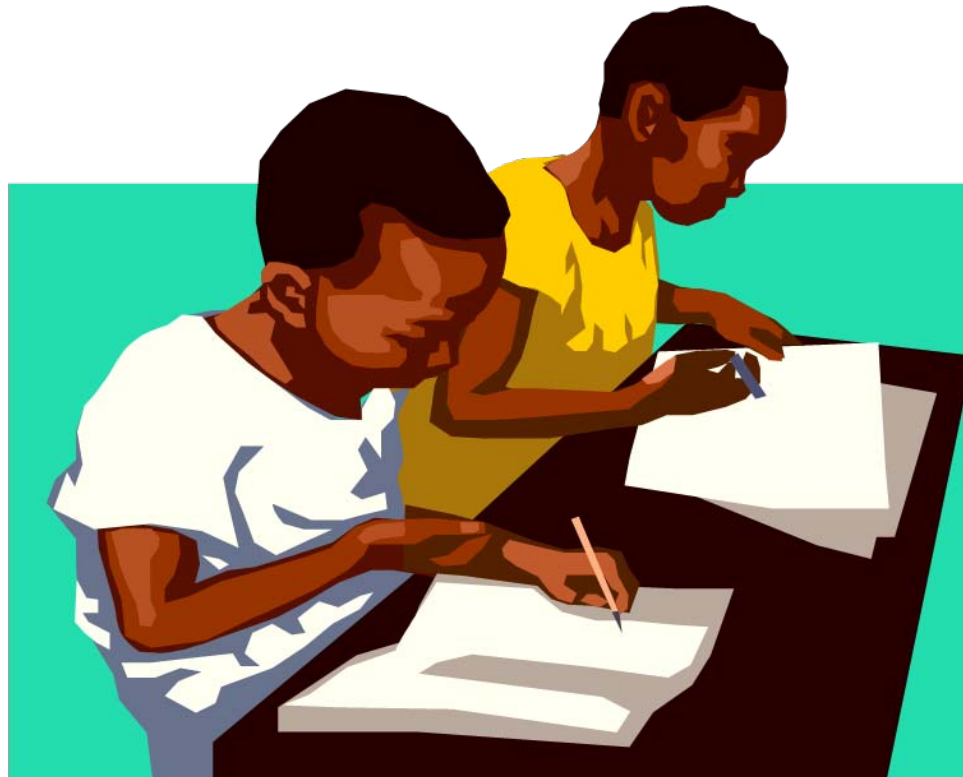


# 2008-2009

- Iraq
- Burma
- Afghanistan
- Thailand
- Other south east Asian
- Sudan
- Other central and west Africa
- Iran
- Sri Lanka



# Data and research



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# Pre-migration experience

- Disrupted education
- Lack of understanding of preventative behaviours...STI screening
- Unavailable youth friendly services
- Experience of sexual based violence
- Refugee experience



# Health belief systems



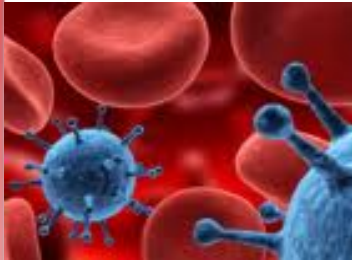
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# What do you see?



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# Biomedical



Illness caused by abnormality in the organs or system



Diagnostic testing



Clinical or medical treatment



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# Magico-spiritual



Cause of illness is mystical



People can use protective amulets or symbols



Practitioners have supernatural powers & use magic



# Traditional



Core aspect of relationship & environment



Individual is active & a central participant



Diverse therapies



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# What's in a name?

BBVs and STI are given names that best reflect what people:

- see - symptoms
- feel - impact
- believe is the source of disease



# Source of disease - HIV

- God's curse
- Prostitute killer
- Mugged by thieves
- A mysterious disease



# Symptoms - AIDS

- Razor blade
- Go slow- gradual deterioration of health
- A bad omen
- A needle



# Impact - HIV/AIDS

- A disease that kills hopelessly
- Causes severe pain
- A disease that leaves household desolate
- A disease of shame



# From a cultural perspective

- STIs locked into immoral sexual behaviour
- Potential carriers of BBV & STIs can easily be identified by their characteristics
- Shame and stigma associated with STIs and unplanned pregnancy
- Sex as part of a ritual is not 'sex'



# From a health belief lens

- STIs are caused by urinating under a full moon
- The sun shining on soil moistened by urine causes genital sores
- Having sex with virgin cures HIV
- Some home remedies for genital lesions range from cactus milk to goat blood



# One system doesn't fit all



Ask questions



Negotiate



Consider alternate points



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# Sensitivities

- Learning ability
- Ignorance valued
- Skills versus confidence
- Parents : intergenerational conflict
- Sexual health is not a priority
- Beliefs more persuasive than facts
- Concept of consensual sex



# Understandings

- Sex at an early age
- Intergenerational sex
- Cultural or religious practices: FGM , sex talk is taboo
- Anxiety about confidentiality: interpreter
- Shame associated with:
  - i) non-marital sex
  - ii) pregnancy
  - iii) STIs



# Bursting the myths

- Australia is safe
- Potential carriers of STIs can be identified
- Contraceptives cause infertility
- HIV is implanted in the condom
- Condoms are too small, easily break and slip
- Anal & oral sex is safer sex & preserves virginity
- 1 sexual partner is like eating 1 type of food
- HIV can be transmitted by mosquitoes



# Bleeps and blunders

- Unnecessary questions: Have you had FGM?
- Professional dialect: safe sex could mean sex within marriage.
- Use of acronyms: STI, HPV
- Use of explicit pictures without prior warning or consent.



# Culturally appropriate services

- Same sex groups with gender matched educators where possible.
- Consider alternate points rather than try change a person's beliefs.
- By all means ask questions that help you understand where the person is coming from.
- Remember settlement issues don't stop one being an adolescent.
- Try and have consultation time in the absence of the parents.





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