

**HELP & SHELTER/UNFPA QUARTERLY REPORT ON FAMILY PLANNING ACTIVITIES -
JULY - SEPTEMBER 2012**

Name of Person(s) Implementing Activity: Colin Marks, Chabela Lord, Parbattie Ranglall, Carol Innis Baptiste, Suzanne Chung, Kevin Massiah

Total # of Persons Reached = 409 Females (271) Males (86)

Total # of New Persons Reached = 222 Females (169) Males (53)

Total # of Persons Referred for FP Clinics =11 Females (9) Males (2)

Condom distribution = 147 Female condoms (52) Male condoms (95)

Type and quantity of materials distributed = FP brochures (339)

Description of Activity:

- Monthly awareness session on Family Planning, Bell West, WCD
- Opening session of training of community volunteers on GBV, Phoenix Park, WCD
- Monthly family planning session, Phoenix Park WCD
- Orientation session for new parents at Goed Fortuin Nursery school, WCD
- Interactive sessions with students of the Sophia Vocational Training Centre
- Group session with North Sophia Housing Group
- House to house visits to discuss FP, Grove, EBD
- House to house visits to discuss FP, Good Hope/ Lusignan
- Discussions on family planning and methods at Lusignan FP clinic
- Discussion on FP methods with teenagers - Good hope Learning Centre
- Group session with parents of students attending Grove Craft Centre, EBD
- Awareness session on socialization, gender and gender roles, Melanie Damishana, ECD
- Domestic violence including benefits of family planning, Providence EBD
- I day workshop on domestic violence and related issues in Berbice

FP Topics Discussed:

- Youth and sexuality and benefits of Family Planning
- Effective Parenting, Reproductive Health and Family Planning
- Strengthening Family relationships through effective Family Planning
- Sexuality, Reproductive health and Family Planning
- Family Planning- What is it?
- Family Planning methods
- Benefits of Family Planning and Family Planning Services
- **The importance of Family Planning**
- **Emergency contraception**
- **Use of the female condom**
- **Contraceptives and Family Planning**

Objective of Activity:

- To educate women in communities on the different methods of contraceptives including the use of the female condom, and the injection
- To educate women about the usefulness of the female condom in GBV situation
- To discuss access to family planning
- To educate teenagers about correct use of condoms
- To educate parents in communities on the benefits of Family Planning
- To increase understanding of the contributing factors to domestic violence
- To create the awareness of the nexus between Parenting, Health & Family Planning
- To better educate parents on the various FP options available, where they can be obtained and how they can be used

- To lift the awareness of students on the relevance of sexual reproductive health and its relation to family planning and management of the family unit
- Sensitizing youths on how Family Planning is an inclusive process that can better family health and stability
- To increase participants understanding of their sexual and reproductive rights

Assessment of Activity:

- During the house to house visits persons met were seen at home. The sessions assessed awareness of Family Planning in this part of the community. Everyone reached knew of condoms and the pills but were eager to learn of the others methods.
- The session was attended by youths between the ages of 16 and 22. The facilitator introduced several factors that impact the status of sexual and reproductive health especially among youths and the various methods of family planning. The benefits, advantages and myths of family planning methods were explored interactively with the use of pictures and text in the module. At the conclusion the group was asked about their preferred choice of method and there was an overwhelming preference for the male condom. Other topics discussed were unwanted pregnancies and the effects of this on teenagers, abortion and some of the negative consequences of this
- During discussions on Youth and Sexuality and the Benefits of Family Planning, Participants were very receptive to the information that young people would be in a better position to make positive choices when they understand the health consequences of sexual activity and also how to plan for managing the family unit. The group was then introduced to the various methods of family planning, the benefits and advantages. Myths of the various family planning methods were explored interactively with the use of pictures and text in the module.
- Facilitating a discussion on Effective Parenting, Reproductive Health and Family Planning with the North Sophia Housing Group was placed on the agenda of The North Sophia Housing Group as the leaders thought it would be a good opportunity for members to be exposed to information on Parenting and Family Planning as this particular section of the community has always recorded a high level of teen pregnancy that often result in children being exposed to vulnerable and risky situations, while the inexperienced parent (s) struggle to sustain a stable family unit. Illustrations of the various methods of family planning was introduced and all the methods were examined for its applicability to persons based on their circumstances, state or sense of comfort. Negotiating the use of family planning between husband and wife was also presented as very critical family for effective planning, the facilitator explained it was not only for single persons who wanted to avoid pregnancy, but it is also a good way to space the children's birth for effective management of the family unit, so both partners need to be involved.
- The session on Strengthening Family Relationships Through Effective Family Planning. was conducted with the plumbing and welding class of the vocational centre at Sophia as an on going initiative to reach more youths with FP messages and give them an opportunity to ventilate on issues of sexual and health practices.
The methodology used, was to have the youths express their ideas on how important it was for both sexual partners or husband and wife to be involved in planning the family through protective and preventative measures.
- This session on Sexuality, Reproductive health and Family Planning was the first session with a group of women who are members of the community based group that manages one of the community centers' within the community. The group included community workers, teachers, a child care provider and a member of the community policing group. This group of women requested this session as their aim was to use the information to further share it to the other people who access their community centre. They were also very interested in disseminating family planning materials to the extended community. The facilitator during the session introduced the module's illustrative visual displays that provided information on the various methods of contraception.
- This session was a continuing engagement at the vocational training centre in Sophia where teenagers and young adults are trained in vocational skills. This centre was chosen as it student

population amounts to approximately 120 persons that can benefit from family planning and sexual reproduction health information and messages that would influence safe and responsible choices as they get involved in sexual activities and in the process influence adult behavior that would produce better managed families. Sexual and reproductive health was discussed in the context of safe sex practices between intimate partners and informed decision making on number and spacing of children. Participants also explored factors that impact the status of sexual and reproductive health especially among youths. The group was introduced to the various methods of family planning. The benefits, advantages and myths of the various family planning methods were explored interactively with the use of pictures and text in the module.

- For the first time some participants saw the female condom, the demonstration on how to insert it was done using a model. The female condom was discussed in the context of a method that can prevent pregnancy and STI's
- Injectables were discussed as a method of family planning which can be kept private by women if they so wish or have need to do this because of health or other kinds of reasons.
- Parents enjoyed the discussion on Importance of Family Planning and were encouraged to share the information with their teen daughters.
- Participants attending the session on emergency contraception were Community volunteers who work in prevention of GBV. The information was well received and understood.
- The focus of the activity was to identify the ways in which boys and girls are socialized and how this impacts or influences their decisions, choices, etc. and also contributes to abusive behaviors. The session also provided an opportunity to discuss the importance of family planning, its benefits and also to find out how much persons knew about contraceptive methods and given that this was a church youth group; what were their views on contraceptives. It also gave us a chance to discuss responsible sexual behavior
- The need for partners in intimate relationships to communicate and discuss their expectations on one another was stressed. Family planning was identified as a vital part of this discussion particularly in relation to high incidences of child abuse and child neglect due to absences of fathers or abusive relationships
- A number of women spoken to who were experiencing some side effect in relation to their FP method or were in need of FP were given referrals and encouraged to attend their area FP clinic

Feedback from Participants:

- The question was asked; why boys like their partners to be virgins, but are not willing to be the same? One youth indicated that he did not want a woman who is a virgin because he wants someone with experience. One female participant disclosed that her class teacher (male) told her that her virginity was not valued if she still has it by 24. The participants had already been exposed to condom demonstrations so there was no need to repeat this. The pastor disclosed that contraceptive use is permissible and is used by church members, but opined that abortion is not. Some of the young people who were in relationships had not spoken to their partners about their expectations from the relationship since they thought this was understood
- Participants were open to the topic, Contraceptives and Benefits of Family Planning, but were more concerned with the impact these messages are sending to teenage girls as it relates to sex when they are encouraged to use contraceptives. Participants believe it is necessary for persons in relationships to have discussions and for males to be more open and accepting of women's needs. Persons disclosed that they were using family planning, some did not see a need for this given the status of their relationship but disclosed that they were better informed should the need arise.
- Participants said they learnt that the injection can be used and kept a secret from partners who do not approve of the use of FP
- Participants indicated that the information on the benefits of family planning was good and more of it should be shared at future meetings.
- Participants said that they would share the information about the usefulness of the emergency contraceptive in GBV situation as a means of educating women and women victims of GBV about this option in their respective communities

- Most of the participants informed that the information was good to share and all of them knew persons that they think they can share the new information with. They were informed about the monthly session and promised to make a special effort to attend
- Most of the persons present were not aware of all of the FP methods available. Many were glad to be informed of these methods since they believe it would prevent them from having to use the home remedies. Knowing that most of the methods are available at the health center in their community was also useful information for them.
- Participants generally agreed that education and poverty plays a critical role especially when it affects young vulnerable single mothers. One elderly participant posited that many women are somewhat powerless to choose prevention as a necessary precaution resulting in personal health risk and the inability to properly manage and provide for children who are born in close proximity to each other. Another participant stated that her friend mentioned to her that she was not comfortable discussing family planning methods with the community health workers as the environment and engagement is very subjective, so she tries all sorts of home methods and hopes that her spouse will one day choose to use condoms. Participants also said they would like to see more friendly staff at the family planning clinics: for lots of women family planning is a very confrontational topic with their spouses because having children closely spaced creates total dependence on the other partner for sustenance. Another participant felt that FP is a very relevant conversation to start having at home as it offers sound advice and can foster more equity and openness in intimate partner relationships. Participants also shared that good family planning and management can even reduce the amount of abuse taking place in homes. One participant who disclosed that she produced a child that resulted from a rape felt that maybe the tumultuous life that her child lives now could have been avoided if one of the methods was introduced as an option. Participants also said they would like to have more males present at the sessions
- At one of the house to house FP visits a woman disclosed that she never really shared her personal issues with anyone but felt comfortable in doing so since she believed that is the only way she can get help. She believed it was her partner's right to say how much children they should have because he is the breadwinner (she was then told of her rights too). She had lots of questions related to the many myths being heard in our communities, such as ALL contraceptives get people fat, people use contraceptives and still get pregnant etc. (these myths were addressed and cleared up).
- The majority of the participants remarked that this was the first time they were ever involved in a discussion on such topics including FP. One of the youths remarked that at the early stages of life sex is seen as a fun activity especially for girls and on the other hand boys use sex as a tool to prop up their sense of self-worth, its only when someone's health or the life of the child is at risk that people try to focus on these topics. Another participant was of the view that condoms will solve all the problems once they are used properly and every time. For one youth this was the first time they saw what a female condom looks like and how its used. Other participants expressed views such as sex has many problems attached, abstinence is the safest; sometimes women get pregnant to trap men, its not always about family; poverty is one reason why some women are taken advantage of; information shared was really good for young people and can help us to be better adults and parents.
- An elderly parent in the group stated that this was the first time she was able to view family planning from a different angle, because she always saw family planning as the health sector trying to control the population. She said they need to be a better delivery of the information at the health clinics. Another participant stated that most youths especially males just seem to think that the condom is all they need to protect them; they hardly understand the real purpose of preventing children at some time so that a family unit can benefit from choices that line up with a plan. A young mother explained that she's now inclined to go and discuss a family plan with her spouse and she hopes he'll understand and not feel she's just trying to restrict his manhood. Another woman remarked that It would be difficult for some women to use FP especially those with suppressive husbands or where abuse is present in the relationship. Other persons felt that a lot of family stress can be avoided when the family is planned and families can enjoy better health when they understand the value of family planning.

- Most of the participants stated that sex was never discussed within the home environment and sexual and reproductive health messages are only heard in sessions that focus on social issues. Several others remarked that family planning was rarely ever spoken about in their homes except in a critical manner which would usually involve statements being directed towards a friend or neighbor who seem to be very often in a state of pregnancy or who are struggling to take care of many children as a single parent mother. Other comments made included the view that females especially need to take responsibility for the healthiness and readiness of their own bodies when they are contemplating sexual activities; some people still think that more children is equal to more blessings; lots of families struggle when they are too large, especially when there is insufficient financial support and lack of education; if parents can give this information on FP to their children, they will be able to make better choices
- Only 10% of participants admitted that they discuss expectations with their partner including on matters of Family Planning. They however recognize the need to do so. Participants were encouraged to visit health centres in their areas for more information.
- After discussing the individual FP situations of a number of women at the Lusignan Health Centre. Women opted to use different FP methods such as IUD, injectables, pills and condoms. Questions asked by the women were answered some by the in-house midwife
- Some women said they stopped attending FP clinics because when they go they do not have contraceptives pills.
- Women were given referrals to the health centre to join the FP clinic. In one case the woman said her husband was getting tired of the withdrawal method

Challenges:

- Some of the youth attending sessions live in very complex home situations where sex is viewed as a commodity and parents are complicit. In cases such as these FP seems out of their control, and this is applicable to the females especially.
- Speaking about sex, family and health issues within the home environment is still viewed as taboo, so when young adults are exposed to information on these issues they still feel intimidated as they are not able to openly engage and exchange their views or even enquire from the adults at home.
- pictures of this session were taken but there was a problem with formatting which affected the transfer from cell phone to the desktop for printing
- My photographer didn't show up on time to capture pictures of the session
- The participants got a better understanding of how Parenting, sexual reproductive health and Family planning is all connected and how it results in healthier and happier families.
- There was an age difference and in some cases low literacy so some information had to be simplified and occasional clarifications was necessary
- Getting the partners (males) of the women to attend sessions. An attempt would be made to reach them at their homes.
- Some Participants were not willing to share in the discussion
- Fifteen females were educated about the use of the female condom
- To convince participants that to insert the condom can be an easy process.
- To get participants to talk about Family Planning. Most were willing to listen
- Culture and traditional beliefs were a barrier in getting persons to accept some information in a positive light
- One woman who is 40 years old disclosed that she is so terrified of a pregnancy or abortion that she has moved out from the marital bed and is sleeping with her kids. her husband is furious so she is considering getting the IUD without his knowledge
- A 30 year old woman who has 7 children ranging from 15-11/2 yrs and was in an abusive relationship left and went to stay with her sister but the sister is unable to keep all the children. Woman is again pregnant with her 8th child.
- Teenagers feel that by asking for condoms they are admitting to being sexually active

Successes:

- The social worker attached to the Sophia Vocational Training Centre stated that she was glad that the youths now had access to the information on FP. She has requested a module.
- The administrators of the programmes at Sophia Vocational Training Centre are absolutely convinced that all their students need to be exposed to the topics and information that forms the content of the sessions.
- An atmosphere of sharing between the older women and young ones give way to sharing of critical information and some formally acceptable trends were assessed for their relevance and value as it relates to proper sexual reproductive health practices. Some women viewed female condom for the first time. A demonstration was also done for the benefit of all participants.
- The participants got a better understanding of how Parenting, sexual reproductive health and Family planning is all connected and how it results in healthier and happier families.
- These youths have insatiable desire to discuss the topics explored as it helps them to expand their knowledge and more often than not they will share it to someone, even if its just to appear to be endowed with knowledge amongst their peers
- There were some disclosures and persons were advised on help available
- Some persons were convinced of the benefits of contraceptive use by teenagers, with one participant disclosing that her teenage daughter is using contraceptives
- A parent brought a neighbor along with her to the session, since she believe the information being shared is one that can help this family. After the session the neighbor shared how happy she was to be part of the session.
- A woman shared a friend of hers would welcome the information but was shy to attend. The information was taken for woman, so a visit can be done at her home
- One mother is thinking of using the pills, she choose this method since she believe it would best suit her lifestyle. Another took the information (leaflets) to share with her teenage daughter since her daughter only recently disclosed she is sexually active.
- Being able to inform women that the female condom prevents pregnancy and all STI's if it is being use correctly every time
- These participants are now sharing family planning information with others.
- Twenty one persons learnt about the female condom.
- Eleven new persons were introduce to the topic of Family Planning
- Helping women to understand that the injection is a safe method of FP
- Being able to clear up misconception on the use of the pill
- These participants now have more information on Family Planning that they will be able to use in their volunteer work
- Convincing mothers that contraceptive pills were available at their health clinics
- Convincing women to join and attend family planning clinics regularly
- Getting husbands to attend FP clinics with their wives
- Getting a 31 year old mother of 7 children to agree to FP
- Helping a mother of 5 children to agree to using the IUD after the delivery of her 5th child
- Having discussion with the midwife at the HC

Recommendations:

- Demonstration models for showing the correct use of female and male condoms
- The female condoms should be at Health Centers for free distribution
- That more family planning information should be shared on television
- Organizing session on this topic with men.
- Leaflets on injectables