

*CPED Policy Brief Series No 6*

# Reproductive Health CHALLENGES and POLICY ISSUES in Cross River State

**Reproductive Health Challenges and Policy Issues in  
Cross River State**

**Key Stakeholders' Workshop Recommendations**

**Organised by Centre for Population and Environmental  
Development, CPED**

Workshop was moderated by  
**Ese Akpede and Erhi Mercy Makpor**

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## Preface

This policy brief is part of the on-going research and policy linkage of the *Centre for Population and Environmental Development (CPED)* on the research theme titled “Health including HIV/AIDS and Development in Nigeria” in the current Strategic Plan (2010-2014) of the Centre. This policy brief which is based on a stakeholders’ workshop on Reproductive Health Issues and Challenges in Cross River State examines the contemporary challenges facing reproductive health in the state and policy issues and strategies to improve the prevailing situation. The policy brief is designed to inform policy makers and other stakeholders involved in activities to improve reproductive health in the state. The brief reflects the recommendations and views of the workshop participants and no attempt has been made to change these stakeholders’ views and recommendations.

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## **Reproductive Health Issues and Challenges in Cross River State**

### **A. Challenges of Reproductive Health in Cross River State**

Challenges of sexual and reproductive health in Cross River State the participants noted the following

1. Low emphasis on reproductive health except on HIV/AIDS.
2. Lack of political will.
3. Poor budgetary allocation to reproductive health issues.
4. Inadequate information on Reproductive Health issues.
5. Cultural and religious factorshinder the delivery and utilization of reproductive health services.

### **B. Justification to increase attention in Cross Rivers State**

1. Discourages harmful practices.
2. It brings taboo subjects out in the open so that we can discuss them.

3. Low implementation of reproductive health policies and programme.
4. Low awareness of reproductive health issues.
5. It will help government to control population explosion.

### **C. Factors Influencing Maternal Health**

1. Inadequate / appropriate information by many women.
2. Poor accessibility to health care centers e.g. bad roads, distances etc.
3. Quality of health care providers e.g. lazy nurses, no doctors, harsh health care providers etc.
4. Quality of service.
5. Inadequate facilities.
6. Role of Traditional Birth Attendants.
7. Beliefs (superstitions, myths, misconceptions, taboo etc).
8. Socio economic factors.

9. Illiteracy

10. Policy implementation.

**D. WHAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE SAFE MOTHERHOOD?**

1. Training and retraining of Health care workers and Traditional Birth Attendants in the rural communities.
2. Establishment and improvement of health care facilities in rural areas.
3. Increasing the awareness of antenatal care among expectant mothers/women of reproductive age.
4. Good nutritional diets.
5. Regulation antenatal checks ups.
6. Enlist support of the male folks.
7. Avoidance of self medications.
8. Indulge proper sanitation habits

**E: Challenges of the media in reporting reproductive health issues and how to improve on health issues**

1. Inadequate information made available to the media in reporting health issues.
2. The technicality of the subject matter.
3. Sacrificed alternatives.
4. Access to reproductive health policy.
5. Personal relationship between the NGOs and the media.
6. Honorarium
7. Political will – government programme.
8. Policy of media organization
9. Sensationalism
10. Objectivity.

**F. Questions and Key Issues raised by participants at the workshop**

Participants raised a number of questions and key issues on SRH which they want stakeholders to address in the coming years.

1. Women in the northern part of Cross Rivers State age 12 – 14 have been pregnant and have at least 1 child.
2. Some mothers who do not want their female children to have children on time visit native doctors to have their daughters' wombs blocked.
3. Some women breastfeed their babies for about 2 years (another form of family planning) before they get pregnant again.
4. There has to be a parent – to – child communication within us consciously. We also have to pass this information to the rural communities at large.
5. Sex education should be incorporated into Secondary Schools. There is need for sex education to be discussed among children.
6. Such films should be shown to the public (for crime and punishment purposes). Enlightenment can start at anytime; therefore it is not too late to show and tell the public.
7. Very pathetic but educative. It has touched our spirits and souls. It will go a long way to create an impact to the public and the society at large.
8. Abortion is a wicked act, no matter the circumstance, abortion should not take place. There is a community

where they declare free sex week yearly and it always takes place between 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> October every year. The NGO world should arise, pursue and fight such an act.

9. Health workers and doctors are doing terrible things to help women and young girls expel innocent children. The video clip should be shown to the public so that family planning will be welcomed.
10. A tool should be put in place in order to portray such a clip.
11. If we are not well informed we will all be deformed. This clip should be shown to the public most especially the rural communities. It is good they watch the clip so that they can have a feel of what they hear and see. I commend CPED for the good work.
12. I have been left mentally battered. This video clip has sent a huge and positive message.
13. A doctor did an abortion and use to work on babies that are up to six months in pregnant women but when he met with his end was when he saw a supposed fetus or baby he thought he had expelled into a trash bin, he had to make up his mind on whether to let the baby live or not to.

14. A community in Cross Rivers State (Boki community) practices free sex week.
15. Some people in rural communities say it is their rights and tradition to practice and carry out Female Genital Mutilation.
16. It is very important to communicate with the media to shoot your cause. Advocate a bill on the rights of people who have been abused sexually, this bill has to be passed in Cross Rivers State.
17. Made an appeal to the gentlemen of the press and the media houses to subsidize rates.
18. Depending on your relationship with the media.
19. If what you are packaging is of great importance the media will always know, therefore your information should be very important and newsworthy. The information must also be of public interest, be new and fresh.
20. Some people are scared of going to the media for fear of privacy and too much expense.
21. Local media in Cross Rivers State are very limited. The local media needs to be much enriched.