

CPED Policy Brief Series No 4

Reproductive Health CHALLENGES and POLICY ISSUES in Edo State

Key Stakeholders' workshop Recommendations

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

Workshop was moderated by
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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 Edo 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 Edo State

1. The challenges of sexual and reproductive health in Edo State

- Lack of formal education, low level of education on maternal and child care among women. Low level of reproductive and sex education among families (couples, youth and teenagers)
- Poor sitting of health facilities and basic amenities
- No structure in place to handle emergency situations
- Men refusal to access VCT
- Men refusal to negotiate sex in relationships
- Traditions, cultural and religious beliefs
- Ignorance of HIV/AIDS related issues by most adolescents
- Inadequate drugs in medical facilities
- Women lack of economic empowerment
- Bad attitude of some medical personnel towards their patients particularly those in public hospitals.

- Societal acceptance of females, negative expressions of masculinity e. g intake of alcohol before sex, multiple sex partners, disregard for women's decisions on sexual violence
- Burden of poverty.
- Secretive/ lack of communication -this could either be from a suffering victim or between couples who might not know how to present such subject to the husband or wife.
- Poor allocation of funds to the health sector by government.

2. Perceived Solutions to Overcoming SRH challenges

- NGOs should sensitize the public especially parents on the need to give their children sexuality education
- Advocacy to the policy makers for legislation, that will compel the government to be more committed in funding already existing PHC and the establishment of new ones where none exist.
- The media should create the necessary awareness through jingles in Edo state, the major spoken dialects as used in Edo broadcasting service(EBS) should translate all the sexual and reproductive

jingles in EDO,ESAN,ETSAKO,IGBANKE,EZON,OWAN and YORUBA as well as on Pidgin English

- Instituting a youth friendly centre especially at the grass root and close to the youth.
- Appeals to Government to enact relevant laws on major challenges confronting sexual and reproductive healthcare
- As a deliberate policy, Government/NGO to work hand-in-hand in all the 18 LGAs of Edo state with a view to solving the problems of sexual reproductive health
- A committee should be set up to censor films especially foreign films featured in TV.
- NGOs should be empowered to supervise government project on health and report to the public

3. Factors Influencing Maternal Health

Participants identified the following factors influencing maternal health in Edo State.

- “Lack of basic facilities especially in the rural communities in the state, the infrastructures on

ground is not modern enough and not accessible to the people. Following this closely is non availability of good roads leading to this health centres that provides maternal health services. Provision of better healthcare facilities, drugs and educating the generality of the public”.

- “Poverty is a major factor. Another is the inadequate accessible healthcare, delay in seeking services and so on. And not until these factors are eradicated or brought down to its lowest minimum, the problem will continue to be there”.
- “Lack of information on sexuality, early marriage, Sexual abuse, Gender based violence, Risky sexual behaviours are contributing factors”.
- “Neglect of traditional nurses and birth attendants in capacity building services programs”.
- No ambulance or any other form of transport facility at the health centres in the rural communities.
- “Shortage of health personnel especially in the rural communities’ health centres”
- “No reliable source of electricity supply sometimes nurses take deliveries with torch lights at night”.

- “Insufficient and irregular supply of drugs in the health facilities”
- “Obsolete and insufficient hospital equipment like delivery kits, drip set, stethoscope, sterilizing unit etc”.

4. Reflections of some selected participants during the stakeholders’ workshop

In an interview with some participants, question such as this was asked:

“Do You Think Attention Paid By Government on Reproductive Health Is Justified”?

Some responses made by participants are shown below:

Respondent A:

“All should show concern to reproductive health challenges. Governments, individuals and private institution should have adequate information with which to sensitize the Nigerian public”.

Respondent B

“There should be effective communication, involve TBAs in activity or reproductive health policy”

Respondent C

“All hands should be on deck to collaborate with every relevant agency to improve safe motherhood. It should not be left in the hands of health workers alone but join hands to make sure government, private institutions and individuals give attention to safe motherhood in our country. The government should make good implementation policies geared towards this regards, private institution can come in the area of supporting with their money to NGOs and other relevant agencies to enable them carry out their programmes. Individual can also support with his/her finance. This will go a long way in achieving the goals of sexual and reproductive health in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general”.

Respondent D

“Government or individuals can sponsor/Create/pay TV, Radio and media public enlightenment on routine antenatal programme, importance of safe motherhood, reproductive health and immunization”.

Respondent E

Pregnant mothers should be encouraged to:

- Keep doctor’s appointment regularly
- Avoid hard labour
- Avoid self medications
- Improve their nutritional status

Respondent F

“Private institutions and individuals can involve in programs which focuses on raising awareness, increasing knowledge and capacity building for health personnel and TBAs”.

Respondent G

“NGOs and Media houses can create awareness on reproductive health issues; produce documentary, human interest stories, drama, music, posters, and IEC/BCC materials on reproductive issues. Build the capacity of key stakeholders to get message of reproductive health to grass root. Network partnership on collaborate with other local and international organizations that are into reproductive health education. Advocate for good policies on reproductive health”

Respondent H

“Organize workshops to re-train health service providers in the various health centres, including traditional nurses and TBAs for capacity building”.

Respondent I

“**Government should** provide good incentives for health workers, especially those at the rural communities”.