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Reproductive Health CHALLENGES and POLICY ISSUES in Ogun 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 Ogun 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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1. THE CHALLENGES OF MATERNAL HEALTH IN OGUN STATE

The participants in the stakeholders' workshop identified the following key challenges facing reproductive health in Ogun State

- Participants believe infertility is one of the major reproductive challenges in Ogun State which to them is mainly caused by untreated sexually transmitted diseases and unsafely performed abortion. Other SRH challenges amongst women of reproductive age are pregnancy related complications, miscarriages and still birth. All these they argued goes with a lot of stigma.
- Most couples have no clear knowledge of Reproductive Health issues: this to a large extent has led to misuse/incorrect use and refusal to use modern contraceptives which in some cases can result in unintended pregnancies.
- They also believe the antenatal challenges are obvious enough to note, such as inadequate health facilities like modern medical equipment and delivery kits, inadequate skilled health workers malnutrition during pregnancy which in

most cases are associated with poverty, lack of health facilities in some communities of the State.

- Some other challenges are associated with complications during delivery for example severe bleeding, infection, unsafely performed abortion, inaccessibility of health centres at the grass root, refusal of some parents to immunisation their children among others.
- There are also challenges at the family level like the infringement of female reproductive health right by their husbands and family members, increased poverty leading to low nutrition for mother and child before and after childbirth
- At the Community and State level, there is inefficient referral system and lack of good road network especially in some rural communities and the problem of inadequate funding of the reproductive health sub sector by government at all level.

2. Why is it necessary to increase attention on Reproductive Health in Ogun State (CSOs)

Participants believe that increased attention for reproductive health in Ogun State will help to reduce, if not eliminate most of the SRH challenges faced by the people of

the State. It is also their opinion that there must be concerted effort by the three tiers of government, the people and their leaders at all levels in order to achieve improved reproductive health record in the State. Their recommendations are enumerated as follows:

- Reduction in the high rate of maternal deaths as both direct and indirect causes of maternal death such as severe bleeding, infection, unsafely performed abortion, hypertensive disorders, obstructed labour amongst others will be reduced to the barest minimum.
- That the people are sensitized which will lead to increased awareness on sexual reproductive health matters amongst couples and other members of the public which will in turn reduce cases of marginalisation of the women.
- increased use of health facilities at the grassroots
- Increased male support on issues of family planning, child spacing, and more peace within the family unit.
- increased awareness on the need to educate our children on issues of sexuality

- decrease in cases of rape, unwanted pregnancies, wife battering, female genital mutilation etc

3. Factors that influence maternal health in Ogun State (CSOs)

Participants identified three main factors influencing maternal health in Ogun State, they include:

- Gender issues: at the family level, women are often marginalized as they lacked decision making power in their households they are not often allowed to participate in decisions about their health care and other issues pertaining to maternal health. There is also the issue of gender based violence in the State which is often associated with rape, abuse, sexual coercion etc
- Inadequate health facilities, drugs and poor interpersonal communication of health officials has led to high rate of miscarriages, infections, infant mortality, complications and maternal death over the years in the State
- Poor government attitude towards SRH issues in the area of poor budgeting, monitoring of health personnel to ensure standards are kept, lack of in service training for SRH officials to ensure they are at breast with current practices in other parts of the world

- Inadequate skilled personnel: Many of the health facilities in the communities lack skilled and experienced midwives and doctors to attend to women during labour, birth and the postpartum
- Lack of in-service training for health workers
- Lack of registration and training for TBAs by government: government still has no current comprehensive register of all TBAs in the State, there is also no programme of training and retraining them. Participants believe that their registration and training are necessary as a result of the fact that lot of pregnant women in both urban and rural communities of the State still patronize these TBAs and their training will certainly improve on their service delivery.
- Poverty/ignorance: many couples delay and in some cases not visit health centres for treatment because of lack of money and while in other cases they are ignorant of the benefit they stand to get at modern health services, some patronize TBAs as they feel it is cheaper.

4. What can be done to improve safe motherhood in Ogun State (CSOs)

Participants recommended that the situation of safe motherhood in Ogun State will be improved if the following actions are taken:

- Advocacy against early marriage: government, CSOs and the media in the state should embark on aggressive advocacy by using information and other statistics to raise awareness and increase knowledge on the dangers of early marriage and the advantages of training the girl child.
- Prenatal counseling for newly wedded: the Ogun State house of assembly should pass a bill into law that makes it compulsory for religious and traditional institutions in the State to send their would be couples for a minimum of 4 weeks counseling/training on safe motherhood
- Strengthening antenatal services for pregnant women: this can be achieved through increased budgeting, and ensuring easy access to basic medical care during pregnancy, child birth and the postpartum period, this implies strengthening the health systems and linking health centers and hospitals to provide care where women need it.
- Ensure improved working condition for health workers so as to avoid frequent strike: this can be in form of improved remuneration and better working environment.
- Provide training for TBAs: a large proportion of pregnant women still patronize TBAs while others register with both the clinics and their TBAs, in order to improve efficiency and reduce infant/maternal

morbidity and mortality, the government and the civil society organizations should embark on training and retraining of TBAs on modern methods of taking deliveries, identifying early signs of complications and ensuring prompt referrals to the health centres or hospitals

- Enlightenment campaign for pregnant women on safe motherhood: public enlightenment campaign to women using the local media available will go a long way in improving safe motherhood in the state.

5. How can the media address issues raised on SRH and what are the challenges associated with this advocacy (the media)

Participants noted that the media can play a major role on raising awareness of reproductive health challenges in Ogun State as follows: