

Suriname

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The country had some of the highest maternal and perinatal mortality rates in the region, and poor knowledge of contraceptives and HIV/AIDS. The project's principal contribution has been through the development of a national SRH policy, the National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS, and the strategic strengthening of key partners in SRH, including RH commodities security and quality of RH care.

Implementation was carried out primarily by the leading service providing organizations: the Medical Mission, working in the interior of the country, the Regional Health Services (RGD), an arm of the health ministry working in the coastal area; the National AIDS Programme and the IPPF affiliate Stichting Lobi, a leading SRH service provider in the country.

The programme's aim was to contribute to the increased availability and utilization of integrated and quality reproductive health services by women, men and adolescents and to promote behaviour change in SRH practices through culturally appropriate and gender-sensitive information sharing and skills building. Its strategic focus has been on capacity building through the provision of technical support, training and institutional strengthening of government facilities and NGOs involved in SRH service provision.

The inclusion of SRH in government agencies has dramatically increased the number of people reached with SRH information and care services.

Comprehensive involvement of main health care provider in RH service provision

The inclusion of sexual and reproductive health in government agencies has dramatically increased the number of people reached with SRH

information and care services. A key programme achievement was the involvement for the first time in a comprehensive and sustainable manner of the major health service provider, the Regional Health Services in the provision of SRH services throughout its network of clinics.

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The Regional Health Services reproductive health care package has been extended. A number of RGD clinics have been equipped with staff and materials to carry out deliveries and to stabilize obstetric emergencies until an appropriate hospital is reached.

The improvement of SRH services, availability of commodities in clinics, and strengthening of prevention of HIV and unsafe abortion among young girls in the interior through support of the Medical Mission and the health care provider in the country's interior can also be considered an important project achievement.

ICPD+10 advocacy and RH policy framework achievements

The programme funded the development of the ICPD+10 update document for Suriname, called Ten Years of the ICPD Programme of Action in Suriname, 1994–2004. This document provided material for advocacy purposes, and also formed a major input for the drafting of the National SRH Policy Document. As such, it has become a central document for both the government and

FACTFILE

Title EU ACP Reproductive Health Project

Aim To contribute to the increased utilization of integrated RH services and to promote behaviour change among women, men and adolescents.

Duration 66 months: 2003–2008

Budget US\$2.320 million

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

▶ ICPD+10 advocacy and RH policy framework achievements.

▶ Popular opinion leaders outreach programme for sex workers.

▶ Comprehensive involvement of main health care provider in RH service provision.



SUSTAINABILITY

Achievements have been integrated into existing structures including those run by government and NGO partners. At policy level, the outstanding programme impact has been the incorporation of SRH policy in national health policy, in particular the development of the first National Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy framework as well as the introduction of SRH protocols in diverse areas.

The establishment of youth-friendly services, initiated during the programme, has been followed up in joint action plans with PAHO and UNICEF, as well as the National AIDS Programme. Support for a youth centre, set up during the project, is now being shared by UNFPA, UNICEF, PAHO and the National AIDS Programme.

Research reports, such as ICPD+10 and studies on youth and SRH, have greatly increased awareness among policy makers and other decision makers at different levels on specific issues and have guided the subsequent development of RH services. SRH training on a wide scale (all RGD and MM health workers) has been important for the subsequent implementation of integrated SRH services in clinics.

NGOs. The report itself and its accompanying baseline survey have contributed directly to increased knowledge and awareness of SRH and indirectly to more targeted approaches for providing health services. The fact that the situation analysis and baseline research report are still widely used by both government and non-government institutions clearly illustrates their importance in SRH policy development and planning.

The investment in the production and distribution process of the ICPD+10 report has been highlighted as particularly effective in the way data and analysis from this report are being used to inform and guide the formulation and implementation of policy. This approach has been cited as a best practice.

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Popular opinion leaders outreach programme for sex workers

Suriname has a relatively low HIV prevalence rate with localized epidemics within sub-groups that could easily spread to the wider population. For example, sex workers from urban areas tend to visit workers in the gold mining industry of the interior thus creating increased risks for the spread of HIV and other STIs.

The Popular Opinion Leaders (POL) project implemented by Stichting Maxi Linder (SMLA) focused on increasing awareness of SRH issues and on strengthening the skills of male and female sex workers (SWs) for safe sex. Key trusted opinion leaders from the community were engaged to promote safe sex behaviours within the sex workers community in particular across a range of venues and settings.

A key spin-off has been the financing through UNFPA of a pilot project to increase skills building and income generation among SWs. This activity resulted in a real improvement of service with strongly increased demand for condoms. Initial surveys have also shown drastically increased understanding of the importance of using condoms and equally impressive changes in behaviour among this high risk group.

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LESSONS LEARNED

The integration of the newly drafted SRH policy in national health policy and implementation programmes should include specific agreements among all partners on rules of engagement (criteria, consultations, financing).

Future programmes would benefit from being implemented in sequential stages depending on their causal linkages. More use should be made of sex-disaggregated data to design and implement programmes and ensure that future SRH implementation sustainability incorporates gender analysis and gender-specific programming and implementation.

Partnerships must be adequately resourced to prosper; for example, more realistic target setting and/or identification of partners who will plug resource gaps; acknowledge the real costs of alliance management and agree on how to finance them; and ensure budgeting of the inclusion of target groups as partners of the programme at all stages.



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