



Regional Training Workshop Promotes Condom Use

Over forty additional health professionals from across the English and Dutch speaking Caribbean now have the skills to promote demand and supply of condoms as a means of protection against disease and unintended pregnancies.

The health workers participated in a three-day Regional Trainer of Trainers Workshop put on by UNFPA in collaboration with the Female Health Foundation of Brazil, the Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS (PANCAP) and regional governments held in St. Vincent and the Grenadines 17 - 19 September 2007.

The training will enable participants to assist their respective governments to develop effective action plans to promote consistent and correct use of condoms and ensure adequate supplies for their populations. In June 2006, UN Member States unanimously adopted a Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, which identified prevention as the mainstay of the response at all levels to the pandemic. It also called for a commitment to intensifying efforts to ensure a wide range of prevention programmes including male and female condoms.

In a presentation outlining the benefits of a strategic approach to condom promotion, UNFPA Regional Advisor, Hugo Gonzalez said, “ensuring demand and supply of condoms is an integral component of a range of HIV prevention strategies that includes informed, responsible and safer sexual behaviour through voluntary abstinence, delayed age of onset of sexual activity, fidelity, and condom use”.

Although billions of condoms are used annually for disease prevention and family planning, indications are that only one in ten risky sexual acts is protected by condoms. And although female condom distribution has been increasing, its global share remains small (0.3%). In the Caribbean, the promotion of the female condom is in its infancy stage, consequently awareness and use is very low. To bridge this gap, special focus was given to equipping participants with the skills to promote awareness of and use of female condoms.

“Women and girls are increasingly being trounced by the HIV epidemic in the region with new infections among this group surpassing those among men”, explained Harold Robinson, UNFPA Representative for the Office of the English and Dutch speaking Caribbean. “Given the proven advantage of condoms in preventing the sexual transmission of disease and protecting against unwanted pregnancy, UNFPA is committed to ensuring access as an essential part of reproductive health services provided to men and women. It is in this vein that my office has pledged technical support to any country that needs our support in finalizing the agreed action plans for a comprehensive condom programme strategy” he added.

UNFPA is the main supplier of female and male condoms globally and advocates the promotion of, and access to high quality condoms to those who need them, when they need them and that people have the necessary knowledge and skills to use them correctly.

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