

ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

The Directorate of Gender Affairs being aware of the issues impacting women in Antigua & Barbuda sought to address the reduction of STIs (including HIV) and unintended pregnancies through education and empowerment to promote the use of the Female Condom. Three persons from Antigua & Barbuda were trained as UNFPA Master Trainers and CCP implementers; one of these trainers was from the Directorate of Gender Affairs. The Directorate was extremely interested in the promotion of the female condom among their clients, teaching them assertive negotiation and how to address issues impacting women in their personal lives and their sexual health. They received 1000 Female Condoms at the beginning of the program¹; 989 were distributed and 11 were used for demonstration purposes.

Achievements of national BCC and CCP programming²

- 3 staff members of the Directorate of Gender Affairs were trained in male and female condom demonstration and information sharing when the Master Trainers held a workshop in A&B.
- There was active involvement of males in the discussions on issues such as female sexuality, religious beliefs and myths about male and female condoms.
- Male partners were eager to introduce the FC to their partners.
- As a result of their participation in bar and barber shop discussions, some men who previously did not wish to have their partner(s) use a condom were willing to invite her/them to similar discussions so as to make their own choice.
- The demonstration team was invited to conduct talks and demonstrations for church groups and organizations.
- The Antigua Public Utilities Authority (APUA) with a staff of over 900 was identified and agreed upon as a distribution outlet for the FC.
- There was increased discussion, demonstration and distribution of the FC in schools and other locations.

Socio-cultural Concerns

- The continued high cost of the female condom.
- The low socio-economic status of sexually active women in the migrant population.
 - This client base is perceived to have less access to services and as a result their exposure to, and use of, the female condom is restricted.
- Results of a previous survey conducted by the NGO **Alliance** in collaboration with Gender Affairs showed that in Antigua, use of the FC was more out of curiosity than serious interest in its protective properties.
- Assignment of health care workers to the community in which they live negatively impacts on condom distribution. So too does the religious conviction of some in the community.
- Public broadcasting appears to be an inappropriate channel for information sharing regarding condom use.
- Incongruities between RHCS objectives and existing legal framework.
 - Some participants stated a reluctance to engage in demand creation among certain client groups, particularly older persons and youth below the age of 16 years. They felt that some of the services requested especially with underage clients, were inconsistent with the established legal framework regarding young people and sexual activity.
- One factor which encourages unprotected sex is the sale of sexual services and the economic advantage for workers not using condoms.
- The fear of being seen as cheating deterred some men from introducing partner(s) to the female condom.
- The role of significant public figures in supporting sexual behaviour change needs to be emphasized.
- There is a need to maintain an ongoing supply of female condoms and funding of condom programming thus ensuring RHCS.

Challenges Experienced in FC Promotion and Distribution

- Time constraints: this had implications for the collection of client feedback forms and the full attendance of some key persons at all workshop sessions.
- The religious convictions of some members of the community resisted the promotion and distribution of condoms.
- Question and answer sessions: it was a challenge to answer some questions relating to sexual and reproductive health, hence the need for greater collaboration with the health sector/National AIDS Programme.
- There was an insufficient supply of female condoms to distribute to the various user friendly locations.
- Some men do not believe in, and hence do not use, condoms.

¹ Antigua received 3000 second generation female condoms at the start of the program. 1000 were allocated to the Directorate of Gender Affairs.

² The reporting period is June – August 2008.