

Family Planning International Calls for More Pacific Reproductive Health Data on World Population Day

Wellington, 11th July 2010: ‘Everyone Counts’ is the theme of this year’s World Population Day, and Family Planning International is marking the day by calling for more reproductive health and demographic data collection and analysis to be carried out in the Pacific region.

Good quality, up-to-date and reliable reproductive health and demographic data is hard to come by in the Pacific, as Family Planning International found late last year while compiling data to create a reproductive risk index for Pacific women. A lot of data was missing or found to be out-of-date, and this makes it difficult to build a complete picture of the sexual and reproductive health situation in the region, which consists of 22 countries and territories.

“We know from the data that exists on sexual and reproductive health in the Pacific that there are many issues that need to be addressed with urgency, such as high rates of sexually transmissible infections and high maternal mortality rates. But we found many difficulties obtaining other important data, for example on HIV prevalence rates and antenatal care coverage, and this information is important for us to know where and how to target programmes and policies to address the issues” says Sumi Subramaniam, Director of International Development at Family Planning International.

Information is also scarce on adolescent and youth reproductive health practices and this is a key age group to target in the Pacific, given the young age structure of the population. There are countries in the Pacific which have high reported cases of domestic and sexual violence, and good information on such issues can help policy makers and the government address them appropriately in their countries.

Good progress is being made in some Pacific Island countries to collect and analyse data, but more investment and diligence is needed to ensure accurate, regular and nationally representative recording systems. The majority of Pacific Island populations live in rural or remote areas, and it can be difficult to regularly record information from these areas. It is also difficult to obtain sexual violence and reproductive health data in general because people can feel uncomfortable answering questions on such sensitive issues. Nonetheless it can be very beneficial for governments to prioritise collecting data on these issues as they will understand better the sexual and reproductive health needs of their population.

“At Family Planning International we use the data from our research to inform our in-country projects and activities so our work can be targeted for effective outcomes. Good information from Pacific Island countries and territories is crucial in our advocacy work, so it is something we value highly. More funding and investment - both from country governments as well as regional donor organisations - in data collection and analysis is essential to drive good decision making on sexual and reproductive health issues” says Sumi Subramaniam.

Background

Family Planning International (www.fpi.org.nz) is the international unit of Family Planning New Zealand and works to motivate awareness and action so that all people can enjoy sexual and reproductive rights. The unit has a particular focus on the Pacific region.

Spokespeople and images are available on request**Contact**

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