

Male Involvement in RH Concerns: The Philippine Experience

The issue of male dominance in a patriarchal society like the Philippines has its roots in the colonial set up of our country, others believe that empowerment of women is the solution to all of these.

Men have their own rights, right to be informed about matters related to their reproductive health. When we empower the women, they will know how to bargain and decide matters relating to their sexuality. The realization that males are important agent of change because even if we empower women without corresponding attention to male RH it is useless, that is why a good service model is one that caters for males and females.

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo Program of Action stated clearly that "Special efforts should be made to emphasize men's shared responsibility and promote their active involvement in responsible parenthood, sexual and reproductive behavior, including family planning; prenatal, maternal and child health; prevention of STDs, including HIV; prevention of unwanted and high-risk pregnancies; shared control and contribution to family income, children's education, health and nutrition; and recognition and promotion of the equal value of children of both sexes". Furthermore it stated that. And "The objective is to promote gender equality in all spheres of life...and to encourage and enable men to take responsibility for their sexual and reproductive behavior and their social and family roles." The Programme of Action recognizes that men need to take responsibility for their own sexual behavior as well as respect and support the rights and health of their partners. Family planning programmes have generally ignored men, and have been de-signed to maintain gender norms dictating that reproduction and fertility control are women's responsibility.

At a conference to review progress held in 1999, one of the goals was the reduction of vulnerability to HIV/AIDS infection. Since male plays an important role in the spread of this because of their promiscuity, it is then very important that male should be reached and be counseled. Male plays an important role in the health of mothers and children.

In a developing country like the Philippines, it is important that male should be encouraged to be involved especially in the use of contraception, helping in the domestic chores especially at homes, sharing decision making in the homes- sensitive to the needs of the women and children.

The **objectives of this paper** is to describe what transpired in the past ten years in terms of the commitment to male involvement in the Philippines. It will review efforts by stakeholders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) , and Governmental Organizations (GOs) efforts in terms of male involvement in the reproductive health. Furthermore it will expound on the existing debate about male involvement vis a vis women empowerment in a patriarchal country like the Philippines. From the analysis above, it will generate explanation and the future options and actions in terms of male involvement in the Philippines.

There is a need to involve the male because we need to take account:

- take account of Gender issues in the formulation of Strategies for Information and Service Delivery of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Service.
- Furthermore, there is a need to involve men in FP to enlist their support for contraceptive practice.

Many programs the world over recognize that men have an important influence on women's and children's health and also have distinct reproductive health needs of their own. In many settings, men also may serve as gatekeepers to women's access to reproductive health services. Research and program experience are demonstrating that many men care about and are willing to make positive contributions to the reproductive health of their partners and well-being of their families. Despite the surge of interest in this area, there is a lack of consensus about what it means to involve men in reproductive health programs and uncertainty about how such involvement will affect women's health and status.