

National Stakeholders Dissemination Forum

Theme:

Fertility Regulation Trajectories of the Urban Poor in Accra: Findings from a Cross-Sectional Study



Project	Implementation and Impact Evaluation of Willows' Reproductive Health Programs in Ghana
Implementing Agencies	Regional Institute for Population Studies (RIPS) and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
Reporting Year	Year 3
Activity	Stakeholders Dissemination
Place of Activity	Ghana International Press Centre, Accra
Date of Activity	February 25, 2020
Country Investigator	Ayaga Bawah, PhD

Program Agenda

Item	Duration	Activity	Facilitator(s)
Arrival	9:30am	Arrival of participants	
Registration	9:30am-9:50am	Registration of participants	Victoria Anim and Caesar Agula
Welcome remarks	9:50am-9:55am	Welcome remarks from the Director of RIPS	Prof. Joseph A. Yaro (Director, RIPS)
Introduction	9:55am-10:05am	Introduction of participants	Dr. Ayaga Bawah (Principal Investigator)
Remarks	10:05am-10:10am	Remarks from Director General, GHS	Dr. Patrick Aboagye
Rationale of the forum	10:10am-10:20am	Rationale of the forum	Dr. Ayaga Bawah
<i>Presentations</i>			
Background and Methods	10:20-10:30am	Background of the study and methods used	Dr. Ayaga Bawah
Results	10:30-11:00am	Results on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Background characteristics Sexual behavior, contraceptive use, method mix, contraceptive discontinuation rates Emergency Contraception (EC): special research focus 	Dr. Elizabeth G. Henry (Harvard partner)
<i>Coffee Break (15mins)</i>			
Results	11:15-11:30am	Results on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abortion: special research focus 	Dr. Elizabeth Henry
	11:30-12:00pm	Results on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facility survey Exit interviews 	Dr. Patrick Asuming
Conclusions and recommendations	12:00pm-12:10	Conclusion and recommendations	Dr. Ayaga Bawah
General discussion/comments	12:10pm-12:40pm	Discussion of findings by stakeholders	Dr. Patrick Asuming
Closing remarks			Dr. Ayaga Bawah

Participants

S/N	Name of participant	Organisation affiliated with
1.	Dr. Issabella Sagoe-Moses, Director	Family Health Division, Ghana Health Service
2.	Prof. Augustine Ankumah, Country Director	Population Council
3.	Prof. Joseph Yaro, Director	RIPS, University of Ghana
4.	Valerie Gueye, Country Director	Willows International
5.	Patricia A. Boasiako, Rep.	Marie Stopes International (MSI)
6.	Emmanuel Adusei, Rep.	Research Division, Ghana Health Service
7.	Nicholas Nyagblorme, Rep.	Ministry of Health (MoH)
8.	Rachel Lawesh, Rep.	Total Family Health Organisation (TFHO)
9.	Davi Duah, Rep.	Total Family Health Organisation (TFHO)
10.	Efua K. Tuckson, Rep.	UNFPA
11.	Patience Boni	Willows International
12.	Charles Mensah	Willows International
13.	Alice Odoi	Willows International
14.	Dr. Elizabeth G. Henry	Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
15.	Dr. Ayaga Bawah	RIPS
16.	Dr. Patrick Asuming	University of Ghana Business School
17.	Caesar Agula	RIPS
18.	Dr. Mawuli Kushitor	RIPS
19.	Benedict Fosu Adjie	RIPS
20.	Martin Agyekum	RIPS
21.	Akua Obeng-Dwamena	RIPS
22.	Charles Asabere	RIPS
23.	Theophilus Toprah	RIPS

Background

The Ghana research team planned to undertake a series of dissemination activities for Year 3 of the Willows Impact Evaluation (WIE) study as indicated in their scope of work, including a stakeholder forum to share key findings. In fulfilment of this, the team in collaboration with their partners at Harvard organized a national stakeholder dissemination forum on February 25, 2020 at the Ghana International Press Centre, Accra on the theme: “*Fertility regulation trajectories of the urban poor in Accra: findings from a cross-sectional study*”. The forum had in attendance key actors within the circles of sexual and reproductive health to deliberate on the findings of the study. These key players included heads and representatives of the Ministry of Health, Ghana Health Service, Population Council, Marie Stopes International, UNFPA, Willows International, Regional Institute for Population Studies (RIPS) and Total Family Health Organisation.

Presentation of Key Findings

The entire program lasted for about three hours. Presentation of the findings were jointly done by both the University of Ghana and Harvard Team. Following a brief welcome by Professor Joseph A. Yaro, Director of the Regional Institute for Population Studies, Dr. Issabella Sagoe-Moses, Director Family Health Division, representing the Director General of Ghana Health Service who was the next to speak, apologized for the inability of the Director General to be represented in person, but noted that on their part Ghana Health Service considers research on health as a bedrock for program implementation and that she was personally happy to be present to listen to the results, which she believed would be important in helping the service to fashion out reproductive health strategies.

Dr. Ayaga A. Bawah, Principal Investigator of the Willows Impact Evaluation Project, then gave an overview of the project, including a description of the study areas, basis for selection of the study communities, how the survey was conducted and data stored. Following the introductory presentation by Dr. Bawah, Dr. Elizabeth Henry presented results of the women’s survey. Her presentation focused on women’s sexual behavior, contraceptive use, method mix, contraceptive discontinuation rates, emergency contraceptive use and induced abortion. She was immediately followed with a presentation of key findings from the facility and exit interviews by Dr. Patrick Asuming.

Brief summary of the key findings, as presented, included the following:

➤ **Sexual behaviour**

- Ninety-one percent of women age 16-44 years ever had sex.
 - Forty-six percent of adolescents (16-19) ever had sex.

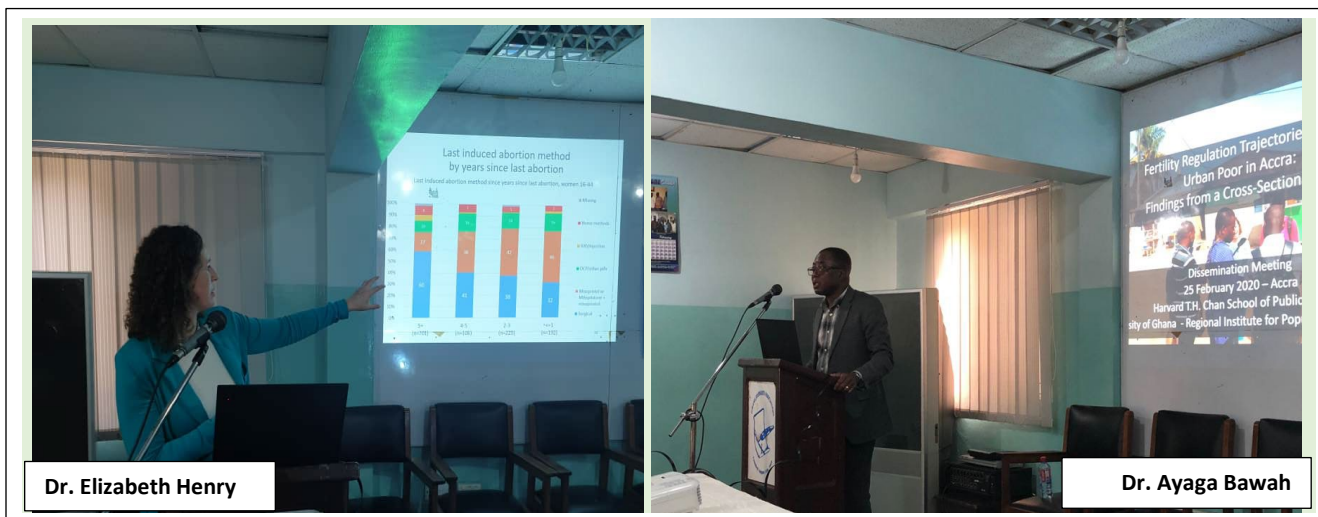
- **Family planning (FP) method use and discontinuation**
 - Fifty-six percent of all women ever used a modern method, yet current use is relatively low (22%).
 - There is relatively high percentage of traditional method use (39% of all users).
 - This is fairly consistent with recent reports (35% GDHS in Greater Accra (2014)).
 - Overall, 69% of users discontinue the method use by 12th month. **Use of Emergency Contraception (EC)**
 - Consistent and frequent use of EC is relatively high.
 - Ten percent of EC users use it consistently.
 - Fifty-two percent of EC users have used it more than 4 times in 12 months.
 - Reported method failure for EC is also relatively high.
 - EC is an important method being used to prevent pregnancy among wealthier, more educated and younger women.
- **Induced abortion**
 - Medication abortion (MA) is the most often used method for all women who had induced abortion in the past 3 years, regardless of their age.
 - It is unclear on the degree to which women getting MA at pharmacies are provided counseling.
 - Characteristics of those ever having had an abortion include younger age, women never in union and early sexual debut (<16 years).

On the facility assessment survey the key findings included:

- **Family planning methods offered and obtained:**
 - Thirty percent (30%) of facilities in the study area offered 1-3 methods.
 - Improving method mix could be a priority, but not a one-size-fits-all strategy
 - Only a quarter of facilities offered EC.
 - Most women who visit facilities for family planning service receive implants and injectables. Most of them also come for resupply.
- **Counseling:**
 - While the majority of facilities offered FP counseling, 30% do not.
 - Majority of women (55%) had provider discuss both short- and long-term methods at their FP visit, but over 20% discussed none.
- **Abortion services provided by type of facility**
 - Public sector facility-based availability:
 - Surgical abortion was offered at 30% of public facilities.
 - MA was offered at only 5% of public facilities.

- Post-abortion care (PAC) was offered only at 30% of public facilities.
- Private sector availability:
 - Surgical abortion was offered at 11% of private facilities.
 - MA was offered at 11% of private facilities.
 - PAC was offered at 13% of private facilities.

Following the presentations, Valerie Gueye, Country Director Willows Ghana, noted her appreciation to the research team and acknowledged their association with this work. She in particular, acknowledged the close collaborative relationship between the University of Ghana and Harvard teams on the one hand, and that of the Willows Team, on the other hand. Prof. Augustine Ankomah, Country Director, Population Council, noted his satisfaction with the level of detail in the work presented and that scientific presentation of findings which ought to be shared more frequently.



Key Issues from the Discussion

The key issues raised and feedback received from participants included the following:

- The Director of Family Health (FH) Division, Ghana Health Service finds the study's findings as very useful for FP counselling purposes, especially as it reflects the urban poor. She indicated that counselling is the bedrock of FP and highlighted challenges with IMCI as a similar community-based program that relies heavily on a counseling component. She also expressed interest in the EC findings and recommendations regarding fertility strategies for those who have sex infrequently and posed questions about what might explain these findings, which warrant further investigation and collaboration.

- There was also a proposal for these findings to be shared in larger platforms such as the annual conferences organized by GHS.
- The UNFPA representative highlighted the need to bring these findings to larger discussion on interventions, and noted the use of traditional methods and brought up the need to look at FP use among adolescents.
- The Population Council representative highlighted the high rate of traditional method use in urban settings and the need to explore this further. He also highlighted the high rates of discontinuation that are influenced by EC and may not be appropriate to include, even though other methods also report high discontinuation rates as well.
- The MSI representative highlighted on most youth aged 16-19 having early sex and indicated that there is a lot to do in terms of further understanding method mix and choice of methods among that cohort. She therefore called for collaboration with the FH division to target counselling for the youth. She also noted the need for improved counseling services.
- The Country Director of Willows International noted the high percentage of women obtaining MA from pharmacies, despite the restrictions, and raised concerns about the quality and effectiveness of MA pills sold at pharmacies. She indicated that some of the MA products sold in country may be counterfeit, such as products from Nigeria. She also noted that the data support what they have observed in the field with an increase in EC use over recent years.
- The attention of the research team was drawn to the classification of private mission hospitals under public hospitals in the analysis and the need for that to be revised. It was also recommended that the team use GHS classification of health facilities.

Conclusions

The dissemination forum was a success, with most of the policy actors, including the Director of Family Health Division of GHS showing up for the event. The research team also received valuable feedback from the participants.

Acknowledgements

The Ghana team appreciate the unflinching support from Dr. Elizabeth G. Henry and Dr. Iqbal Shah. We also acknowledge the administrative support from RIPS.

Photo Gallery



Report compiled by: *Ayaga Bawah, Patrick Asuming and Caesar Agula.*