



SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

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Latest news on the cross-wise programme

Workshop to exchange good practice on unwanted pregnancies in Naivasha, Kenya

This workshop, organised as part of the programme agreement, was aimed at raising stakeholders' awareness of the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) guideline, increasing integration of prevention and treatment of unwanted pregnancies into SRH projects, exchanging intervention methods, experiences and tools, promoting intercontinental exchanges on the approaches developed and strengthening national and cross-wise advocacy. The workshop brought together ten projects, mainly from Africa but also from Nepal, Laos and the Latin American/Caribbean area. Various recommendations emerged from these meetings.

[See workshop intranet page.](#)
[See presentation to Board of Directors.](#)

Regional workshop (ALC) on unwanted pregnancies

From 26 to 28 March 2014, a Latin American and Caribbean regional workshop took place in Bogotá, Colombia on "sexual and reproductive health and rights: progress towards access, prevention and treatment for unwanted pregnancies". It brought together thirty participants, players in Médecins du Monde (MdM) projects (Mexico, Uruguay, Peru, Colombia and Haiti), as well as partners from these countries.

The aim was to share the experiences of MdM France and partner organisations of "the right to choose", to strengthen links between projects and partner organisations in the region and discuss advocacy strategies developed. The main topics dealt with were MdM's policy position on the right to choose, sexual and reproductive rights, unwanted pregnancies and positive experiences of

MdM and partner organisations regarding abortion and advocacy, conscientious objection, international law and national regulations and actions relating to Cairo+20.

SRH strategy for 2014-2017

At the last meeting of the SRH working group on 25 April this year, the 2014-2017 strategy was discussed along with the operational measures and methods needed to carry it out. Starting with the gains made in recent years, the exercise involved defining MdM's ambitions for the coming years and identifying priority areas for development. The human-rights and public health-based approach is being retained in order to offer a holistic package of affordable, good quality care, along with advocacy work to ensure the right to access SRH services. The next SRH group meeting is on 27 June.

[See presentation to SRH group on 25/04/2014.](#)

Advocating safe and legal abortion: campaign to mobilise for Cairo+20

For several months, MdM has been working with Planning Familial et Equilibres et Populations with a view to the special session of the UN General Assembly on Cairo+20 which will take place in New York in September 2014.

Alongside the various advocacy activities organised in advance of Cairo+20, a campaign to mobilise international opinion has been developed by MdM in support of universal access to contraception and safe and legal abortion. Entitled "Names not numbers", it has its own dedicated website: www.names-not-numbers.org which was launched in 12 countries on International Women's Day on 8 March.

[See news of the campaign.](#)

At the UN, Médecins du Monde defends universal access to contraception and the right to abortion

From 7 to 11 April this year, UN Member States met in New York at a session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) to prepare for the September Cairo+20 Conference. A delegation from Médecins du Monde, comprising Nicolas Guihard and Catherine Giboin and accompanied by a partner from Ivory Coast, was there to follow the negotiations throughout the week. After a week of intense discussions which were a potential opportunity to reaffirm women's sexual and reproductive rights, the outcomes were somewhat mixed. The question of universal access to contraception and safe and legal abortion were removed from discussions as a result of pressure from conservative groups who were quite determined not to allow any progress, however small, on this issue.

However, the resolution adopted at the end of the CPD session does recognise the need to include questions of sexual and reproductive health among the priorities of the new post-2015 development agenda. It also calls on States to act promptly given the delays which have accumulated in certain key areas of the Cairo programme of action. From now on words must be accompanied by concrete action from States, especially as regards the issue of unwanted pregnancies.

On 22 September heads of state and government leaders will be meeting in New York to take part in the Cairo+20 Conference. There is still time to urge them to make fresh commitments in support of women's rights.

[Sign and send our petition to the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon.](#)

Bulgaria: Preventing unwanted pregnancies in vulnerable populations in the Sliven municipality

MdM France has been working in Bulgaria since 2004 as part of a maternal and infant health programme in the Nadejda ghetto. Over the past four years, MdM has organised awareness-raising sessions on hygiene, immunisation and SRH including outreach activities. A unique and enriching aspect of the project is the involvement of health mediators drawn from the community. In 2014, the

project's general strategy was revised with MdM opting to focus on a single theme: reducing

unwanted pregnancies through family planning. The new project is more broadly concerned with vulnerable populations in Sliven. This new 3-year project is in partnership with the Bulgarian Family Planning Association and the Municipality of Sliven.

The Municipal Council has approved financial support for the project which will cover the costs of the free medical services planned. The Bulgarian Family Planning Association is providing contraceptives as well as bringing to the project 20 years of experience in this field.

Ivory Coast: 3 more years and one more district!

Since September 2011, MdM has been supporting SRH activities in three health districts. The overall results of this project are positive: reduction in

the institutional maternal mortality rate (from 346 per 100,000 live births to 119), an increase in the attendance rate among children under 5 years

from 0.5 to 0.65 consultations per year and per child, and an improvement in the quality of treatment.

However, some challenges do remain: the rate of attended births is not increasing in certain areas and even decreasing in the urban area, the use of family planning methods remains extremely low (<1%), and individuals continue to regularly pay for their medicines – 86% of the 500 people questioned had had to put their hand in their pocket.

To continue our work and extend our support, MdM is committed to a new three-year cycle – 2014-2016 – with the financial support of the C2D and of the debt reduction and development agreement between the French Development Agency (AFD) and the Ivory Coast government via ECHO. This new project, which is currently getting underway, includes a fourth district, Soubré, which has a large population of 1,000,000 and 60 health centres, bringing the number of facilities involved to 120.



Credit: Sébastien Dujardin

Niger: Nutrition and family planning project

Between 11 and 13 November, 16 new schools were identified at four Integrated Health Centres (IHC). The object was to increase the number of "Schools for Husbands" (SfH) by extending the initiative in other IHCs in the district, particularly Dandaji, Djinguiniss, Karayé and Sahiya. At the end of the process, 16 new schools had been identified, bringing the total number to 32 and the roll of "model husbands" to 329.

In November, a series of training/refreshers sessions were organised at "Schools for Husbands". This activity falls within the "Schools for Husbands"

strategy, implemented since 2012 within the four pilot IHCs. The aim is to involve the men in promoting reproductive health as a way of changing their behaviour within the community.

As part of the "Schools for Husbands" strategy launched in Illela in 2012, an exchange trip was organised between 16 and 19 November 2013 in the region of Zinder. Those taking part were "model husbands" from the SfHs of four IHCs in the Illela Health

District, trainers, the NAC/MdM contact person in

charge of SfH and the health district Communication Officer. The object of the initiative was for the 8 SfH delegates to discover activities being run by other SfHs in the region of Zinder and to consolidate what had already been gained by exchanging experiences.

In February 2014, two Integrated Health Centres at Karayé and Yama had their delivery rooms renovated thanks to funding from the AFD.

The Big Debate: "Being a young teenage mum in DRC" Kinshasa, 18 November 2013

Each term, the French Institute in Kinshasa organises a "Big Debate". On 18 November, on the initiative of Médecins du Monde, a public meeting was arranged on the subject of "Being a young teenage mum in DRC". More than a hundred people attended to examine the issue of access to contraception for adolescents. Opinions were divided, but the debate did provide a particularly useful framework for discussion and sharing views.

Although the median age at which young people first have sex is around 14 years and six months¹, minors are still not entitled to access contraception. Early pregnancies have an immediate impact on teenage health and significant repercussions on their social environment (stigmatisation, rejection by the family, exclusion from schooling, illegal abortion², etc.). A sociologist participating in the debate pointed out that the sex education of young people was part of traditional initiation rites and that village healers understood the methods to avoid unwanted pregnancies. Urban ways of life and extremely precarious conditions have disrupted these customary means of transmitting knowledge.

The Director of the National Programme for Re-

productive Health (PNSR) in turn reminded those present of some key figures relating to the situation of young people in DRC: the adolescent fertility rate is one of the highest in the world, around one birth in 100 results in the death of the mother, 28% of adolescents aged 15-19 years have reached the reproductive stage of their lives and 4% have given birth to a live baby before the age of 15 years³.

During the "Big Debate", those present acknowledged that sexuality is still taboo and that related information is not adequately passed on by the principal community educators (in the school, religious and family environment, etc.). Citing essentially cultural and religious reasons for this, the meeting could not agree on liberalising access to contraception for all women.

The 1920 law inherited from the Belgian Congo, prohibiting "birth control", along with "birth control propaganda"⁴, is still in force. The 1970s introduced the concept of "unwanted pregnancies", but contraception has nonetheless not been made more accessible to minors.

In this context, the Minister for Gender, the Family

and the Child drafted a bill in August 2012 on reproductive health, which has been on the parliamentary agenda since September 2013. This bill could change the prospects for all women, regardless of age, of being able to secure access to modern methods of contraception.



Another and her child in Kinshasa. Lam Dao Hien

1. CAP Study, UNICEF « Sexualité, VIH/Sida, santé de la reproduction, genre et violence », août 2012.
2. Rate of teenagers abortions: 30%, ELS, 1998.
3. UNFPA. Santé de la reproduction des adolescents et jeunes (SRAJ) en RDC, Juillet 2013.
4. CEDEF, http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/co/CONGOCO28_fr.pdf

Mexico: Project comes to an end in the Chiapas region

The project launched in Mexico in the Chiapas region came to an end last March. Its objective was to facilitate access to and increase knowledge of sexual and reproductive health for migrant women and sex workers in Tapachula and Huixtla. A project closure workshop was organised comprising several presentations. A video was also produced.

To find out more (in Spanish):

- See the project presentation.

- See the presentation of the socio-demographic survey carried out at the end of the project to improve understanding of the project target populations.
- See the presentation: Between myth and reality, female migrant workers of Central America.
- See the presentation on conception and human rights practices by the women of Central America in Tapachula.
- See the presentation on the difficulties and problems encountered by migrant women in the region of Soconusco.
- See the presentation of the diagnosis of violence against the women of Tapachula.

- See the presentation on Central American working women and their families on the southern border of Mexico.
- See the presentation on the recommendations and lessons learned in the area of migrant access to health.
- See the presentation on Médecins du Monde's (MdM) intervention strategy on migration.
- See the presentation on future prospects for MdM France in the region of Soconusco.
- See the video.

Haiti: Problems with accessing SRH services

Médecins du Monde France (MdM-F) has been supporting the Grand Anse health authorities since 2006 as part of an ongoing programme to improve access to healthcare for the most vulnerable populations, such as pregnant women and children under 5 years. Sexual and Reproductive Health is the priority area for this intervention which relates to the whole care continuum and is in the form of technical and funding support currently provided to three healthcare facilities – Carrefour Charles, Prévilé and Abricots.

At community level, MdM-F has helped mobilise 106 traditional birth attendants and 255 women from 9 mothers' clubs. These women receive training and attend awareness-raising sessions so as to be able to implement the different community activities. They work at grassroots level on promoting SRH services such as providing information, promoting existing services, family planning, attended births and home visits.

At institutional level, MdM-F has organised training

for healthcare providers on SRH topics including providing long-term family planning and Basic Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care (EONC). At the centres supported by MdM-F, a free system of healthcare for pregnant women and children under 5 years (including newborns) has been put in place, as well as referrals of obstetric emergencies to the second tier facility at the community hospital.

Burkina Faso

Training workshop for grassroots organisations on devising information/education/communication micro-projects and advocacy

As part of the partnership with grassroots organisations, 9 of them in the province of Soum were helped to draw up awareness-raising and advocacy action plans. After several discussions, the objectives, outcomes and certain activities were harmonised and the organisations had a shared understanding of the intervention in the district.

The intervention was aimed at stimulating greater community support for improving people's access to Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (family planning (FP), unwanted pregnancies and excision); strengthening the capacities of community stakeholders (traditional, religious, political and organisational authorities, village birth attendants, members of emergency units and management committees (COGES), etc.) in the area of SRH; and supporting community initiatives to promote SRH and hygiene in the healthcare setting.

International workshop on exemption policies for maternal health services in Africa: evaluation, experience and knowledge sharing, from 25 to 28 November in Ouagadougou

The "Financial Access to Health Services" Community of Practice of the "Harmonisation for Health in Africa" (HHA) platform, in collaboration with the research consortium of FEMHealth and the universities of Montreal (Canada) and Heidelberg (Germany), organised a workshop on "Exemption policies for maternal health services in Africa: evaluation,

experiences and knowledge sharing". The aim of this workshop was to review scientific studies in this area, paying particular attention to empirical results, methodological approaches and interventions.

The workshop enabled useful lessons to be drawn for evaluating and monitoring health policies, particularly in the field of funding healthcare and maternal health.

9th Congress of the French Contraception Society (FSC) and 7th Congress of the Burkina Faso Society of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians (SOGOB): from 30 January to 1 February 2014 in Ouagadougou

The project's participation in this important meeting to exchange good practice took the form of a delegation comprising a doctor from the Djibo Medical Centre with Surgical Unit and 3 MdM participants (site coordinator, Maternal and Child Health (MCH) adviser and national advocacy officer). Around 400 participants from African, European and American countries attended various events on diverse aspects of contraception and gynaecological and obstetric pathologies.

At the end of the three days of exchanges, attention

focused on some topics and experiences from which lessons could be drawn for our projects in the field.

In particular, these included:

- Integrating MCH/FP services;
- Ensuring safety and availability of contraceptive products ;
- Emergency contraception;
- Access to FP services in rural areas: Ghana's experience of Task-Sharing;
- Contraception and compliance: reversible and long-acting.

The dates of the next SOGOB congress, which will be held in Guinea, and of SFC, scheduled for Niger, have yet to be fixed.

[Read the report on participation in the 9th Congress of the French Contraception Society \(FSC\) and the 7th Congress of the Burkina Faso Society of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians \(SOGOB\).](#)



Crossing a river by small boat in Burkina Faso.

Latest publications/Upcoming events



Poster advertising the research

Uruguay

In 2012, Uruguay positioned itself in the vanguard of sexual and reproductive rights by approving a law decriminalizing medical abortion. One year after putting the services in place, this report presents the results of research undertaken by Médecins du Monde France in Uruguay, aimed at studying the experiences and pathways of women using the SRH services and having had access to a termination provided by this service.

[Read the complete study online.](#)

Angola

External evaluation in Portuguese of the programme rolled out in the region of Kwanza Norte, Altro Lado Consultadores, March 2014.

Upcoming events

22 Septembre: Cairo +20 Conference in New York.

Due to be published in summer: SRH training sheets.