

Minutes

Reproductive Health Working Group

Time: 4 May, 2010

Venue: CSS, University of Copenhagen

At this second meeting of the Reproductive Health Working Group –facilitated by Enreca Health and the Universities Denmark’s Platform on Human Health UNFPA– Wilma Doedens, UNFPA gave a presentation on recent developments in reproductive and sexual health and rights (SRHR) in refugee situations seen from a UN perspective. She raised the question why we have changed our mind on how best to address the needs of people living in emergency situations, and what is holding this up. She briefly introduced a joint UNFPA, WHO and UNHCR manual on reproductive health in emergency situations. It was underlined that there is a tendency to forget other aspects of reproductive health than safe motherhood so that important issues such as family planning, sexually transmitted infections, gender based violence and postabortion care (PAC) are receiving non optimal attention. It seems striking that in particular PAC is not recognized as essential given the high rate of sexual violence that women are exposed to do during emergency situations. Denmark could play a leading role in the promotion of access to safe (post)abortion services also in times of emergencies.

In spite of the fact that Denmark has issued a strategy on sexual and reproductive health and rights, little has been done to address these issues at the Danish embassies. This seems to be some of the results from a Thematic Review to Document the Danish Development Assistance to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights that is in the process of being finalised by a consortium of international consultants. The strategy has four thematic areas: (i) promoting gender equality and empowering women; (ii) improving sexual and reproductive health; (iii) increasing young peoples’ access to information and services; and (iv) linking the response of HIV/AIDS to SRHR but seems to lack a monitoring framework as well as earmarked funds. Thus, even in countries where Denmark support health sector programmes, Denmark is not seen as a strong supporter of SRHR at country level.

As the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is preparing the launch of a new strategy for Danish development assistance, this could be a window of opportunity for advocacy for more attention to reproductive health in emergency situations. Even though reproductive health is mentioned throughout the strategy it is important not to address it a sole means to reduce population growth and to ensure that not all funds are devoted to vertical HIV and AIDS programs.

Read more: <http://www.unfpa.org/emergencies/manual/>

List of Participants

1. Vibeke Rasch, External Lecturer, ISIM, University of Copenhagen
2. Ib Bygbjerg, Professor, ISIM, University of Copenhagen
3. Bjarke Lund Sørensen, PhD student, ISIM, University of Copenhagen
4. Siri Tellier, External Lecturer, ISIM, University of Copenhagen
5. Pascal Magnusson, DBL,
6. Tine Gammeltoft, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen
7. Niels Jørgen Secher, MD, Hvidovre Hospital
8. My von Euler, Department of Public Health, University of Copenhagen
9. Birthe Holm Sørensen, independent consultant
10. Sofia Lund, MD
11. Birgitte Jyding Vennervald, DBL Life, University of Copenhagen
12. Wilma Doedens, UNFPA