



## UNFPA Lesson Learned

<b>Title:</b> Promoting the Policies and Laws on ASRH Rights and Responsibilities. <b>(The Paralegals Approach)</b>	
<b>Region/Country:</b> Africa, Ghana	<b>Division/Branch:</b>
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<b>Date (10November 2004):</b>	
<b>Primary Subject Area: Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health including HIV/AIDS</b>	<b>Additional Keywords:</b> Reproductive Rights
<p><b>Lesson Learned:</b> Equipping community members with Legal literacy successfully guided community members to understand and appreciate the rights of young and this approach promotes Adolescent reproductive rights at the household and community levels.</p> <p>Using communities and their associated hierarchical power and authority as change agents is very beneficial for programme ownership and sustainability</p> <p>Linking legal interpretations to traditional and religious faith rules and regulations creates a favorable platform for acceptance of human rights issues and legitimacy</p>	
<p>Description of Issue and Context: <b>The UNFPA/FIDA Project</b></p> <p>The UNFPA/FIDA Project on ASRH including HIV/AIDS seeks to incorporate cultural and religious realities on the ground to the educational efforts to improve the status of ASRH and curb the spread of HIV/AIDS amongst the 10 to 24 year olds</p> <p>The project targets policy makers at various levels particularly at the household and community levels and equip them with advocacy and legal skills to enhance the commitment and support to ASRH including HIV/AIDS programme implementations</p> <p>The project adopted the involvement of traditional and religious leaders, parents, teachers, health service providers including herbalist, district assembly members and young people at the community level for advocacy on ASRH and rights policy and programme implementation. This is because cultural and religious beliefs are a cornerstone of individual and collective behaviour change. Traditional rules and regulations and religious teachings/doctrines are highly adhered to by people and are held in high esteem hence leadership of culture and tradition as well as religion, is critical in facilitating and sustaining of policies and developmental programmes in communities. These leaders help mobilize, inform, shape and influence policies and practices written and unwritten in their communities. These leaders who will so much power from their subjects, are equipped with information on ASRH including HIV/AIDS, they are also exposed to government policies, laws and human right conventions in the context of their specific district culture and are later inaugurated into an association of paralegals at a gathering of the paramouncy of the traditional authorities in the district. The paralegal, whose first role is to be a peer educator to his colleagues, also assists in improving on the community environment for the implementations of ASRH/HIV/AIDS policies and programmes.</p>	

**Strategy Used:**

- Capacity Building
- Community mobilization and Support
- Partnership Building

**Results:** •Referred cases of sexual abuse to court and the offers punished by the law courts  
• Resolved marriages that were on the rocks with young people being the victims of broken homes  
•Re-united parents and their neglected adolescents  
•Caused a higher court f law to over turn a ruling by a lower court of law in which a 22 year old girl was wrongly sentenced to ten years imprisonment for abortion.

**Conclusions and Recommendations:** Evaluating the impact of integrating legal literacy in to the cultural and religious beliefs and values, the paralegal approach in the implementation of the UNFPA/AYA programme seems to be catching up with the Ghanaian populace and efforts should be made to sustain this approach of not creating new norms for the fight against HIV/AIDS but rather building on the existing ones taking into context the culture and tradition of the people. Understand and appreciate the rights of young people  
•It has help community members to identify gaps in community practices that violates the rights of young people  
•There is the need to evaluate this approach on a larger scale and have it documented for evidenced based programming

There is the need for extensive documentation and replication of the experience in other districts of the country

**Suggested Follow-up:**

**Collaborators: FIDA Ghana**

**Links and Resources:**