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## SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Sexual and reproductive health is essential to quality of life and long-term, sustained health. SSDS has expertise in the design, implementation, and evaluation of sexual and reproductive health programs, in multi-sectorial prevention activities with educational and communication components, and in related advocacy work. We collaborate with partners in developing advocacy initiatives and the educational and communication components of multi-sectorial prevention and service activities.

SSDS assesses environmental factors including demand for services, behavior change communication, and other existing prevention interventions. We perform in-depth analysis of attitudes and behaviors as well as the socio-cultural and gender-related barriers to service use. The information we collect informs our work and enables us to help local partners strengthen civil society institutions, empower multi-sectorial networks, and promote youth-friendly programming.

We apply specialized knowledge and expertise to sub-components of sexual and reproductive health programs:

- Family planning
- Maternal health care
- Adolescent health
- Reproductive rights advocacy
- HIV/AIDS

We integrate sexual and reproductive health interventions with primary care and existing vertical programs for maternal-child health, family planning, and HIV/AIDS.

SSDS strengthens health systems and institutions. We work with local leaders and organizations to enhance sexual and reproductive health programs by developing:

- Relevant policies
- Clinical service standards
- Training materials
- Supervision, monitoring, and evaluation systems

### KEY SSDS INTERVENTIONS

**Maternal Health:** SSDS has worked extensively with multi-sectorial programs and government ministries to assess, design, and implement maternal health programs. Our programming experience ranges from basic primary care to emergency obstetric care, as well as safe abortion and post-abortion services. SSDS experts address the high incidence of unwanted, mistimed, and high-risk pregnancies by implementing prevention efforts, such as education for adolescents, and family planning for all ages. We work to reduce risk factors associated with unsafe abortions by advocating for health systems to integrate services and strengthen linkages across service areas.



UNFPA report on the  
"Beijing Platform for Action"  
prepared under  
SSDS contract

**Family Planning:** Family planning remains one of the most important public health components of reproductive health and SSDS staff members have decades of experience with program assessment, design, implementation, and integration. SSDS has worked to maintain comprehensive family planning as an essential program focus and to integrate family planning with other program areas. For example, SSDS advocates for child survival programs to include child spacing and avoidance of high-risk births.

**HIV/AIDS:** SSDS has extensive experience in the design and implementation of HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programs. We assess clinical services with a goal of improving the quality and scope of HIV/AIDS voluntary testing and counseling services, as well as treatment and care. Under the USAID-funded AIDSTAR II Project, SSDS is building the capacity of both civil society and training institutions in Cote d'Ivoire, and evaluating orphan and vulnerable children programs in South Africa.

**Adolescent/Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health:** The development of sexual and reproductive health programs for youth is often inhibited by controversy around sensitive topics and related program implementation strategies. SSDS works to improve sexual and reproductive health programs for young people through research, program evaluation, strategic planning, and advocacy. SSDS was instrumental in developing the Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia (RHAC), including scaling up their youth program, which had over 20,000 peer-group educators by 2010. SSDS evaluated trends in reproductive health, HIV, and youth/adolescent programs for the UNFPA Inter-Country Program, which works to address the needs of marginalized adolescent girls, and prepared an advocacy brief that equipped UNICEF's Adolescent Development and Participation Unit to better advocate for increased investment in adolescent girls' health, nutrition, and development.

**Reproductive Rights Advocacy:** SSDS has developed long-term relationships and partnerships with many reproductive rights organizations, ranging from UNFPA to international and national NGOs. In collaboration with these partners, we apply our expertise to various advocacy tasks including analyzing the state of reproductive rights advocacy, advising organizational advocacy networks on governance issues, and providing organizations with technical support in strategic planning and evaluation. Our experts are also equipped with communication and social marketing skills which allow us to help organizations conduct effective advocacy around controversial reproductive rights issues, such as and sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents and access to safe abortion services.

**Integration of Vertical Programs:** Many health programs increase their effectiveness by integrating existing vertical programs. Although integration creates more cohesive and holistic programming, many challenges arise when coordinating reproductive health services. To overcome these obstacles, SDSS analyzes a full spectrum of problems, and uses this analysis to develop strategic solutions. We work to overcome programmatic setbacks, including inadequate referral systems, poor service quality, and poor service provider capacity. We use quality improvement approaches to guide these integration initiatives as well as service provision assessments, which are national-level, facility-based assessments of the availability and quality of maternal, child, reproductive, and HIV/AIDS services.

**Institutional Strengthening:** Strengthening the capacity of local organizations is an essential component of all of our reproductive health initiatives. Please refer to the SSDS Organizational Development fact sheet for additional information on this topic.

For more information, please contact: [headquarters@ssds.net](mailto:headquarters@ssds.net)

### Selected Publications

Huff-Rousselle, Maggie and Helen Pickering. "Crossing the public-private sector divide with reproductive health in Cambodia: Outpatient services in a local NGO and the national MCH clinic." *International Journal of Health Planning and Management*. 16, no. 1 (2001): 33-46.

Phillips, Margaret and Maggie Huff-Rousselle. "A short step-by-step methodological checklist for costing HIV/AIDS activities." *Partnerships for Health Reform Project*. Bethesda, MD: Abt Associates, Inc., 2001.

Shepard, Bonnie. "Advocacy strategies for young people's sexual and reproductive health." In *Reproductive health and human rights: The way forward*, edited by Laura Reichenbach and Mindy Jane Roseman, 110-123. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.

Shepard, Bonnie. *Running the obstacle course to sexual and reproductive health: Lessons from Latin America*. Westport, CT: Praeger, Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006.

Shepard, Bonnie. "Addressing gender issues with men and couples: Involving men in sexual and reproductive health services in Aprove, Ecuador." *International Journal of Men's Health*. 3, no. 1 (2005): 155-172.

Shepard, Bonnie and Lidia Casas Becerra. "Abortion policies and practices in Chile: Ambiguities and dilemmas." *Reproductive Health Matters*. 15 (2007): 202-210.

