

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR) EXPO

### *“Taking SRHR to the people”*

Population Council is an international, nongovernmental organization that seeks to improve the well-being and reproductive health of current and future generations around the world and to help achieve a humane, equitable, and sustainable balance between people and resources. The Population Council’s Reproductive Health program strives to improve sexual and reproductive health, especially for vulnerable people in developing countries. The Council conducts research in three areas: HIV and AIDS; poverty, gender, and youth; and reproductive health.

As noted in a recent IOM report<sup>1</sup>, the city of Johannesburg represents a “city of migrants”, a cosmopolitan centre that is home to a heterogeneous population of migrants, many of whom come from within South Africa (internal migrants). It has been found that a significant proportion of these migrants reside in what has been termed “hidden spaces” meaning inner city areas that are broadly disconnected from local government initiatives within the city centre. Therefore this group requires appropriate responses to address its particular health and development needs (Vearey 2010:37<sup>2</sup>).

With funding from the Ford Foundation, the Council in South Africa from June 2009 has been implementing a program aimed at strengthening SRHR/Health Services for Migrants in Inner City Johannesburg, South Africa. The program’s understanding of migrants incorporates both domestic and cross-border migrants. This program has been using a two pronged approach to achieve its goals through capacity building of community organizations by providing technical assistance and grants and a coordinated program of advocacy to inform communities of how to access their rights, and for stakeholders how to better serve and improve access to basic service.

As part of the advocacy component, Population Council in collaboration with the City of Johannesburg (Region F) and Yeoville South African Police Services will be hosting a SRHR expo on Human Rights Day on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 2011. The Council appreciates the commendable work being done by government and other nongovernmental organizations in improving SRHR in South Africa hence the expo will bring together various organizations providing SRHR services and give them the opportunity to inform the community of Yeoville about the services they provide and how to access them. Services to be exhibited will include sexual and gender based violence, family planning, men’s health, HIV and STIs. The expo will also serve to educate the community about the rights related to sexual health and how to access them. This is because poor SRHR outcomes are

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<sup>1</sup> IOM, 2010, *Migration and health in South Africa: A review of the current situation and recommendations for achieving the World Health Assembly Resolution on Health of Migrants*. November 2010. IOM Regional Office for Southern Africa, Pretoria: South Africa

<sup>2</sup> Vearey, J, 2010, Hidden spaces and urban health: Exploring the tactics of rural Migrants NAVIGATING THE City of Gold, *Urban Forum*.

often exacerbated by the lack of knowledge by communities on how to access services and the rights.

Drawing from the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), Reproductive health as a concept has evolved to reflect a positive state of complete physical, mental and social well-being – as opposed to a more historical notion of the presence of disease or infirmity. Reproductive health now relates to all matters of the reproductive system, its functions and processes. Reproductive health recognizes that people are expected to have a safe and satisfying sex life, may make their own decisions regarding their choice of contraception and thus have the freedom to decide when to procreate, if at all, and how often. Reproductive health also recognizes that both men and women should be mutually involved in decisions in this area. The expo will therefore adopt this broad understanding of reproductive health and generally focus on preventative care and the promotion of healthy sexual lifestyles.

Organisations and local government institutions providing SRHR services will be provided with exhibition stands at the Yeoville recreation centre from which they can educate the community about the services they provide and share information. French translators that are qualified refugee nurses will also be provided for each exhibiting organization because Yeoville is also home to a significant number of French speaking migrants. Exhibiting organisations will be limited to providing information on available SRH services and how to access them. In addition to providing information participating organizations will also be afforded an opportunity to do on site screening or testing. The expo will be a full day event that will begin at 9am with short addresses by guest speakers and a networking session for participating organizations. The exhibitions which will commence mid morning will run concurrently with theatre performances for school children (grade 11 and 12) to also educate them on SRHR.

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