

## NETHERLANDS ANTILLES

### ICPD+15

**Caribbean Sub regional Expert Meeting  
To assess the implementation of the Program of Action  
of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD),  
Antigua and Barbuda, 20-21 August 2009**

General observations country report.

#### **Background information of the Netherlands Antilles**

The Netherlands Antilles is made up of five Islands, namely, Curacao, Bonaire, St. Maarten, St. Eustatius (also called: Statia) and Saba. The Netherlands Antilles is an autonomous country in the Kingdom of the Netherlands...

The Netherlands Antilles has three official languages: Papiamentu (a Creole language of the majority of the Leeward's islands, Curacao and Bonaire), Dutch and English the majority language of the Windward Islands Saint Maarten, Saba and Statia.

The Netherlands Antilles is currently being reformed, in 2010 it will stop to exist. Bonaire, Saba and Statia have chosen for a direct relationship with Holland. While, Curacao and St. Maarten will be an autonomous country in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

*From the Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands:  
Netherlands Antilles declared of their own free will to establish  
a new constitutional order in the Kingdom of the  
Netherlands, in which they will conduct their internal interests  
autonomously and their common interests on a  
basis of equality and will afford each other assistance,  
and resolved by common accord to adopt the Charter for  
the Kingdom;*

The Netherlands Antilles has a population of approximately 200,000.

The age group between 0-14 accounts for 24%, 15-64 accounts for 67% and 65 and over accounts for approximately 9%. Life expectancy has been increasing over the years and currently stands at 76 years, which is comparable to some developed countries. The increasing life expectancy is due to improvement in housing conditions, and better medical, hygienic and social facilities and services. The increasing life expectancy coupled with a declining natural increase has resulted in a rapid increase in the population of the elderly. This process started in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the average age at death still increases.

Tourism, petroleum refining and offshore financing are the main activities of the Netherlands Antilles. The country's GDP has a high per capita income (approximately US\$11,000). The overall situation in the Netherlands Antilles can be defined with the following characteristics:

- Compulsory education 4- 18 years
- Compulsory social education for unemployed youth 16-24
- 85% of the population insured with the Public Health care insurance
- Government paid health care for the unemployed
- Social security for the unemployed
- Declining unemployment from 14% 2003 to 10.3% in 2008. This is the lowest unemployment rate in 20 years. (Central statistics Bureau).

## Best practices

Positive highlight:

1. Decline in teenage pregnancy and youth unemployment.
- 2. More statistical information on school attendance**

Example of statistical information on school attendance: Total monthly absence in Schools on Curacao

Month	Percentage	
August	2.97	
September	3.46	
October	6.39	
November	5.99	
December	6.62	
January	5.13	
February	5.47	
March	3.87	
April	4.67	
May	3.87	
June	3.37	

Yellow = low absence

Red = High absence

### **Reproductive Health in the Netherlands Antilles**

Most of the work in this area is carried out by the Health services of the 5 island governments in collaboration with NGO's.

The health service in Curacao subsidizes two NGO's, the Planned Parenthood and the ASNA, (Aids Foundation Neth. Ant) to provide for reproductive health services. The Sector Health services on the other islands also carry out their programs in close collaboration with NGO's.

#### **Non-governmental Organizations**

Most of the work of raising awareness about sexual and reproductive health including the prevention of HIV/AIDS is carried out by Non -Governmental Organizations, including faith-based organizations. Most of these NGO's work in collaboration with the respective island public health services.

On Curacao and St. Maarten, where most of the cases of HIV/AIDS are registered, campaigns have been and are carried out targeting the public in general and especially young people. These campaigns cover not only HIV/AIDS prevention but also matters such as teenage pregnancy prevention, the use of contraceptives (condoms) and abstinence until marriage. The abstinence programs are carried out mostly by faith-based organizations. A few of the major projects on different aspects reproductive health and sexuality that include HIV/AIDS prevention in their programs are:

- The *Red Cross in Curacao and St. Maarten* who are also part of the regional Red Cross Program on HIV/AIDS education and Prevention. Young people, both boys and girls are trained to become peer educators and they then work informing and raising awareness among other

Young people.

• **Planned Parenthood in Curaçao Planned Parenthood (Famia Plania)**

This organization is a member of the International Planned Parenthood federation. Currently they are raising awareness and doing prevention work among commercial sex workers (CSWS) who operate outside of the legalized brothel. This outreach program targets the CSW and her clients at snacks and other places where these exchanges take place.

The CSWS get information on reproductive and sexual health and are given free contraceptives and counseling. Their male clients also get free condoms and counseling. So far this year they average about 2000 free condoms handed out each month.

*Famia Plania* also provides:

- Free consults by doctors and nurses, free gynecological exams including pap tests, pregnancy tests, contraceptives and emergency contraceptives, at the clinic.
- Family life education and counseling for young people
- Peer helpers program in secondary schools for which for boys and girls are trained to help others.

- Pre and post counseling in cases of abortion and follow-up counseling

- Teenage pregnancy prevention programs and registration of cases

- trains young people to become peer counselors and has several training programs especially during school breaks for the youth concerning sexual health and self esteem.

- A major Abstinence –until-marriage program is being carried out by a faith-based organization (FBO), the *ATM Foundation (abstain till marriage) program*. Since 2007, the year in which the foundation has been founded, hundreds of teens have been to the information rallies and have pledged to abstain until marriage. The teens who take the pledge receive a card like an ATM card that they sign when pledging.

- A sexuality information hotline was recently opened where any person (young or old) can call and talk about any concern or questions they have about sex, sexuality, sexual health, STD prevention and other such matters.

- The *AIDS foundation Netherlands Antilles (ASNA)*, which has been raising awareness for more than two decades in the Netherlands Antilles and has a special, focus on the youth.

- FOKO, Curaçao Pride Foundation and ORGUYO both are organizations *for homosexuals and lesbians* they work to counsel and raise awareness among their target population.

- **The RED campaign** in St. Maarten. A very successful public–private effort in raising awareness about HIV/AIDS. This campaign has succeeded in bringing together businesses, school and government agencies and other NGO's in a concerted effort to fight HIV/AIDS. Each month different company/businesses adopts the awareness raising campaign and they use the available media outlets to bring their messages across.

**HIV/AIDS (area of major concern)**

According to the data from the Epidemiology & Research Unit of Medical and Public Health Service of Curaçao, Netherlands Antilles, data accumulated over the period 1985 – 2006 indicates that there are 1729 cumulative known cases of HIV infected persons. Of the 1729 known HIV-infected persons 988 (57.1%) are male and 741 (42.9%) are female. The data are cumulative data of a laboratory based HIV-registration for the 5 islands. There may well be some deceased but the data on mortality cannot be merged with the HIV registration.

HIV-infections are more prevalent on the islands Curaçao and Saint Maarten, respectively 1134 (65.6%) and 550 (31.8%) of all registered cases. When the data are analyzed for St. Maarten and Curaçao separately, the increase in incidence seen for the Netherlands Antilles can almost entirely be explained due to the sharp increase in incidence

In St. Maarten, especially among the male population. The majority

(65.3%) of the registered HIV-infected was diagnosed in the age-group of 25-44 years of age and 3.7% are children diagnosed less than 15 years of age 9.0% of the HIV-positives were diagnosed between 15-24 years of age.

For the government of the Netherlands Antilles and the island governments of the 5 islands HIV/AIDS and its prevention is a serious matter and as such is also a health priority. The health departments of the central government and the island governments and several NGO's have been working together in different projects and policy formulation to combat HIV/AIDS infections. All the 5 island territories have developed their own National Strategic Plan to combat HIV/AIDS.

**Area of concern is:**

- The incidence of violence against women
  - Need for immigration management policy to together with the region to guarantee social services to all. Example we registered more than 3000 children of undocumented citizens in our primary schools. Since all children have the right to go to school in the Netherlands Antilles and are under the compulsory education law (4-18) the schools will provide education for all these children. But without proper immigration management the social services will come under severe pressure.
  - Gender differentials, the quantity of boys dropping out of schools. A study on this theme subsidized in part by UNESCO is being carried out and the results will be presented in November.