



A Future Maintained

Words & Pics: Blue Ventures

Community Based Distribution of Contraception within the Velondriake

Blue Ventures' integrated Population, Health and Environment (PHE) approach has successfully implemented Community Based Distribution (CBD) of contraceptives into the Velondriake region.

Blue Ventures Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) programme has been running within the Velondriake region of southwest Madagascar since 2007. It forms a cost-effective component of their community-based conservation strategy, emphasising the inextricable link between reproductive health and resource use, providing practical immediate and lasting benefits to public health, food security

the proportion of couples using any form of contraception) within the region is patchy, and significantly lower in the more isolated areas.

Stationary and mobile clinics delivered by the SRH team are resource intensive, and therefore a less sustainable model for improving access to SRH services. Therefore Blue Ventures needed to identify a cost effective, safe and efficient method

to Sexual and Reproductive Health services. A CBD system works by training local community members, usually older, trusted females, to council villagers on family planning choices and to provide a limited number of family planning options. CBD is widely viewed as an effective approach to improve access and uptake of family planning services for underserved populations. It is accepted that because these services

with Population Services International (PSI) has been developed further, to include CBD implementation, and 18 local women have been trained to act as CBD agents. PSI has extensive experience of implementation of CBD programmes within Madagascar and offers a standardised two-day initial training package, which covers reproductive anatomy, counseling techniques and modern contraceptive methods, including an emphasis on patients' concerns about side effects and common misconceptions. In addition they are providing Blue Ventures with support in the monitoring and evaluation of CBD

standardised CBD selection criteria, which were followed during the recruitment process. All the women who were to participate within the training needed to be able to read and write, be trustworthy, chosen by the community and be using a contraceptive method herself. CBD has the benefit of providing an alternative livelihood for women and is widely viewed as an effective means of supplementing income. The SRH team had an overwhelming response and 18 women were identified.

Two doctors from PSI came to Andavadoaka on the 4th and 5th of

a link between the SRH team and the CBD agents, providing support, education and referral services for any complex patients. The SRH team will continue to provide support and have troubleshooting mechanisms in place ensuring that the programme can run safely and sustainably. Blue Ventures continues to work closely with the doctors from the local government hospitals who remain wholly supportive of the programme and are happy to receive referrals directly from the CBD agents.

The training was extremely successful and at the end of the day



activity. Recruitment of CBD agents was conducted over a one month period in collaboration with the village elders. Owing to the culturally sensitive nature of SRH activities, gaining support from the village leaders before large-scale community engagement activities was crucial. It was important to clarify the objectives of the SRH programme and how it aligns with the community's values and development objectives. Any areas of particular sensitivity or cultural taboo were discussed in order to avoid any potential problems in the future.

The SRH team visited all the villages within the Velondriake and held meetings where the communities themselves elected the CBD agent to represent their village. PSI has

June to deliver training to all the women. All 18 women attended and took part in a two-day initial training package. The CBD'S received training on 'Pilplan' (combined contraceptive pill) and Kapoty (male condoms), the two methods that will be initially dispensed. Each CBD received an initial start-up stock of Pilplan, and will use the revenue from sales to purchase additional supplies. Standardised frameworks were provided for data collection and reporting, which will be followed by the CBD agents.

To ensure the CBD agents are supported in their new role, the SRH team has selected two peer educators, Nomeni and Clarissa who have been trained to supervise the CBD agents. They are to act as

PSI set up a mobile video unit within Andavadoaka village to show a film on sexual and reproductive health. Over half the village attended and all the CBD agents were introduced. The CBD agents have now been operating within the Velondriake for over one month and the initial analysis of clinical data has been extremely promising. The last few weeks have seen a key stage to the development of the SRH strategy within the Velondriake and the team is incredibly excited to see the results of the CBD implementation on local contraceptive prevalence rate.

and biodiversity conservation. However, even though the results are compelling with numerous positive synergies between ongoing SRH and community-based conservation programmes, basic barriers, such as a lack of easy access to family planning services and awareness of contraception, have meant Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR,

to increase access to Reproductive Health Care within the region.

Community based distribution of contraceptives has been highly effective the world over to remove barriers to SRH access. In remote areas, such as Velondriake, we believe that a CBD system will be the most effective way to improve access

are delivered by community members themselves, they are more likely to be accepted by the community members. Reducing barriers has been shown to increase family planning use by meeting existing unmet demands and spontaneously generating new demand.

Therefore Blue Ventures' partnership

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