



Poor young females more vulnerable to STD than well-off counterparts — study

by Chito Chavez – January 26, 2018

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A study conducted by a research group revealed that impoverished women workers are vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases (STD) than those from the affluent households.

The report was revealed by Quezon City-based state think tank Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) which based its study from the 2008 Philippine National Demographic and Health Survey.

The study was administered by then National Statistics Office, PIDS Research Fellow Michael Abrigo who said about 41 percent of poor females aged 15 to 24 years are at risk of getting infected with STDs, compared to only 22 percent of females from well-off families.

Abrigo attributed this to the low level of awareness about STDs among poor female young adults in the country.

Recent records of the Department of Health (DOH) show that there are 9,217 listed cases of HIV/AIDS from January to October last year while the total reported cases from January 2010 to May 2017 are 40,388.

Contrary to claims that mandatory comprehensive sex education in school is likely to lead to earlier sexual initiation and higher rate of sexual activity among young adults, Abrigo's study showed that implementing sex education programs in schools results to better sexual behaviors.

Abrigo believes it delays sexual initiation, limits sexual activity, and increases the use of condoms among some groups in the population.

Also, the study found that increasing knowledge on HIV/AIDS may rake in substantial savings for the government in the long run.

"Focusing on the poor population by increasing HIV/AIDS knowledge could lead to a decrease in at-risk population by 1.1 percentage points or about 2 to 3 percent. This can translate to an annual total cost savings of about US\$0.5 million (P25.35 million) to US\$ 5.8 million (P294.13 million)," Abrigo said.

To prevent and minimize the spread of the disease, Abrigo urged the government to make sexuality and reproductive health information more accessible in the Philippines, especially to the young adult population through social and mainstream media.

He also proposed the administration's support to family planning programs under the country's Reproductive Health Law.

Earlier last year, the Supreme Court lifted the two-year-old temporary restraining order that covered several contraceptive products, following the findings of Food and Drug Administration (FDA) declaring these drugs as non-abortifacient.

"The reclassifying of these contraceptives as non-abortive products by the FDA and lifting of the TRO by the Supreme Court are welcome developments in the full implementation of the RH law," said Abrigo.