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Message from the Director

Dear readers,

A warm welcome to our fifth issue of the biannual SPIRHR bulletin. This issue focuses on the activity performed in the second biennium of the year 2022 and is targeted to update partners and stakeholders on the progress made during this period. It also creates awareness and reflects the existing SRHR challenges, which in turn will facilitate stakeholders' engagement and resource mobilization.

In the second biennium of the year 2022, SPIRHR has continued the implementation of its programs in each of its four key subject areas: improving clinical care, training & education, advancing quality research and publication, and promoting SRHR through advocacy. Our collaborative effort with international and local partners has also continued with great momentum. The initiative to strengthen pre-service training has made significant progress through strengthening the CPD center and the provision of continuous need-based CPD training to produce competent SRHR champions and advocates. St. Paul Institute for Reproductive Health and Rights, in collaboration with Saint Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College, conducted the fourth annual RH symposium in December 2022 that hosted scholars, ministries, partner organizations, and reproductive health advocates. This fifth issue covers the above topics in more detail and other endeavors and challenges during the second biennium of 2022.

I hope you will have an informative reading. Your thoughts on the publication are very much appreciated, and feel free to send us an email: admin@spirhr.org

We look forward to hearing from you.

Tesfaye H. Tufa (MD,MPH)

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Director, St. Paul Institute for Reproductive Health and Rights.

The 4th Annual RH Symposium



The fourth annual Reproductive Health Symposium, hosted jointly by St. Paul Institute for Reproductive Health and Rights (SPIRHR) and St. Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College (SPHMMC), was a resounding success. The symposium, with the theme “Sustaining Sexual and Reproductive Health Services Amid Emerging Global Challenges”, brought together a diverse group of healthcare professionals, researchers, and policy-makers, to share their knowledge and experiences in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

The symposium started with a pre-conference continuous medical education (CME) session designed to provide the latest evidence-based information and practices on Advanced contraception and 2nd TM surgical abortion. It was followed by a special recognition program for nurses and midwives of SPHMMC. The program was an opportunity to celebrate the important work that nurses and midwives do in providing SRHR services to the St. Paul community. The first day of the symposium started with opening remarks from SPIRHR and SPHMMC followed by a panel discussion



on "Sustaining Sexual and Reproductive Health Services Amid Emerging Global Challenges." The discussion centered on the different challenges posed by emerging global health threats and their impact on the provision of SRHR services. The panelists, who included healthcare professionals, researchers, and policy-makers, explored strategies for ensuring that SRHR services remain accessible and safe in the face of these challenges.

The symposium also featured multiple poster presentations and abstract presentations, showcasing the latest research on a wide range of SRHR topics. The posters and abstracts provided a platform for researchers and healthcare professionals to share their findings and exchange ideas on how to improve SRHR services in the country.

In addition to the presentations, the symposium included 2 state-of-the-art lectures. The lecture provided an opportunity for symposium participants to learn about cutting-edge research and best practices that are shaping the field of SRHR.

The third and final day of the symposium hosted a panel discussion on "Innovative Approaches by Youth and Women-led Organizations to Tackle SRHR Challenges." This discussion highlighted the critical role that youth and women-led organizations play in advancing SRHR through innovation. The panelists shared their experiences and insights on their respective innovative approaches to addressing SRHR challenges, including research and policy, advocacy campaigns, and technology-based SRHR solutions.

Overall, the fourth annual Reproductive Health Symposium was a tremendous success that brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to share their knowledge and experiences on SRHR issues. The symposium provided an important platform for healthcare professionals, researchers, activists, and policy-makers to learn from one another to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights. We look forward to the next symposium and the continued progress that will undoubtedly be made in this critical field.



Education & Training

To deliver thorough and high-quality SRHR services, it is essential to ensure continued professional development (CPD) for medical professionals. Healthcare providers must be provided with a platform where their skills may be learned and developed to update their knowledge and skills to new and evolving standards of practice. As a certified professional development training provider, SPIRHR has been offering a wide range of in-person and online training in response to this need.

Task Sharing and Shifting in Abortion Care Webinar

Task sharing and shifting in abortion care have been shown to be a safe and effective way of increasing access to abortion care services. Multiple studies have shown that trained lower-level health professionals can provide abortion services with similar safety and efficacy as physicians. This is particularly important in low-resource settings like Ethiopia where there may be a shortage of physicians or other highly trained professionals,

As part of its webinar series, SPIRHR held a session on Task Sharing and Shifting in Abortion Care to discuss this issue. Dr. Ferid Abbas moderated the session, which featured speakers Dr. Muna Abdullah from UNFPA and Dr. Mulat Adefris from the WHO country office. The discussion focused on the current state of abortion, the principle of task shifting

and the rationale behind it, recent updates, and national and global experience with task shifting and shifting or abortion care, including self-care. The interactive and engaging session also included a Q&A session where participants asked questions about the topic.

Advocacy

Disability, Inclusivity and Awareness training for Health professionals



Studies have shown that people with disabilities make up 17% of the Ethiopian population. It is therefore important for healthcare professionals to understand the needs of PLWD in order to provide comprehensive care. Thus SPIRHR in collaboration with Engender Health has provided Disability, Inclusivity and Awareness training for 25 health professionals from different departments of SPHMMC on August 2nd, 2022.

The training centered on meeting the healthcare needs of people with disabilities, distinguishing between impairment and disability, and inspiring participants to be a part of the solution to end disability discrimination. The session also discussed effective and respectful communication strategies with people with disabilities. Participants expressed how the training helped them recognize their

own biases and how to deal with them. Moreover, they affirmed that similar training held at regular intervals for staff members can help to increase awareness.



Cervical Cancer Screening Training for Clinical year 2 students at SPHMMC



Cervical cancer is one of the most common cancers, affecting millions of women each year. Routine screening and early detection aid in the saving of lives. Cervical cancer screening is an important skill that can be developed through practice and knowledge.

As a result, SPIRHR has trained 12 clinical years 2 students at SPHMMC. The session was facilitated by OB/GYN and Gynecology subspecialist at SPHMMC and included a detailed theoretical discussion of cervical cancer incidence, risk factors, pathophysiology, as well as how to perform basic cervical cancer screening and counseling. The training also concentrated on the detection and management of high-risk lesions. The lecture was also followed by weekly practical sessions where students were assigned groups to learn about patients under the supervision of residents.



SRHR Advocacy Through Digital Media

Digital media has become a more powerful tool for SRHR advocacy than ever before. The ease of use and accessibility of these platforms allows for open and candid discussions about topics such as contraception, pregnancy, and abortion. Because social media is increasingly being used to share information and resources on SRHR, SPIRHR, recognizing the importance of this medium for better advocacy, has been collaborating with a number of youth-led initiatives that use social media to provide SRHR advocacy.

One such initiative involves a group of medical students who create SRHR-themed podcasts. Tankua, as they are known, is a youth-led SRHR podcast team that broadcasts twice a month on Telegram, YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook.

A group of four energetic hosts uses personal stories, movies, and current events to discuss important SRHR topics in a friendly yet informative manner. In recognition of their work, in September of 2022, Tankua was also awarded a RiseUp Grant through SPIRHR. The grant is aimed at allowing them to expand their work and outreach. The project is expected to continue supporting more youth advocates that promote SRHR to the broader community.

Research & Publication

Principles of Grant Writing



Grant writing training workshop was conducted to enable faculties to familiarize themselves with the basic principles and tips for effective grant writing. The training workshop was facilitated by Dr. Estifanos Biru Shargie who represents the Global Fund in the Roll-Back Malaria Partnership's Surveillance, Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group (RBM-SMERG) and its "Data Quality & Surveillances Practices" technical working group.

The training workshop was divided in 12 sessions focused on the introduction to effective grant writing, accessing the right sources of funding, establishing sustainable funding partnerships, and learning from reviewers' and mentors' roles in grant writing.

13 faculties from various departments of SPHMMC were in attendance and the training served as a valuable opportunity to learn the skills and techniques needed to successfully secure funding for projects and programs.



TOT in Scientific Writing & Publishing

Scientific writing is one of the most important skills that should be included in a research capacity. Strengthening efforts and having a critical mass of researchers with good writing skills will significantly impact research productivity in the host institutions.

Accordingly, SPIRHR in collaboration with the Center for International Reproductive Health Training at the University of Michigan

(CIRHT-UM) has organized the first Train the Trainers – Scientific Writing & Publishing Training Workshop. The objective of the workshop was to train senior faculty members from SPHMMC and other partner universities to enable scientific writing training to be cascaded to other junior researchers, mentees and residents, and master students in those institutions.

The training workshop was facilitated by the founder and Editor-in-Chief of Prepublication Support Service (PREPSS), Dr. Ella August who is also Clinical Associate Professor of Public Health at the University of Michigan. 12 faculty members from the department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Surgery, Internal Medicine, Nursing, Public Health, and Pediatrics and Child Health from SPHMMC attended the training. The workshop included topics such as critical thinking, writing the different sections of a manuscript, writing feedback, author communication, visuals in manuscripts, and presentations. The newly trained trainers will consequently cascade the sessions to their colleagues and juniors.



Service

Capacity Building based on basement findings of **key SRHR performance at Health Centers**



SPIRHR has provided training for 16 professionals from 10 health centers in follow up of the dissemination and consultative workshop on the key findings of important SRHR performance at health centers in Addis Ababa and Oromia region. The sessions spanned over 2 weeks and had both theoretical and practical sessions.

Consequently, SPIRHR has conducted a 2-week CAC training for 16 mid-level service providers from 5 health centers. The training was provided by certified, highly competent, and experienced educators and included practical and hands-on experience in addition to the national CAC training material. Following the theoretical sessions at SPIRHR CPD, the trainees had practical attachments at MSI Clinic. All 16 trainees successfully completed their training and received certification.



SRHR Education for **Vulnerable Communities**

According to studies, Ethiopian women of childbearing age have little knowledge of

SRHR and services. This lack of awareness is particularly pronounced in women and girls with disabilities. In recognition of this SPIRHR, actively supports causes that aim to enhance the rights and well-being of women and girls to from vulnerable communities.

Partnership to Advancing SRHR

Increasing access to care of **GBV** Survivors through Task Shifting



St. Paul Institute for Reproductive Health and Rights (SPIRHR) in collaboration and working partnership with St. Paul Hospital Millennium Medical Collage (SPHMMC) SPHMMC strives to become a Center for Reproductive Health and Rights excellence through ascertaining the highest quality of clinical service, training, research and advocacy in the line of SRHR. As part of this collaborative effort, SPIRHR through the generous funding of Grand Canada Challenge is piloting a project “Increasing access to care of GBV survivors through task-sharing of

evaluation and management of survivors by non-physician provider”.

This task-shifting approach is expected to create access and availability of the service for the community enhancing girls' and women's access the quality Reproduction Health Services to reach their full potential and contribute to their community. The program also augments the One Stop Centers that provide services to survivors of Gender-Based Violence.



Capacity Building in Abortion Research



St. Paul Institute for Reproductive Health and Rights has signed a collaborative agreement with Guttmacher Institute, USA, and Addis Ababa University School of Public Health to carry out planned collaborative activities. The partnership formed a consortium and assessed institution- and individual-level capacity for conducting abortion-related research in Ethiopia and identified the mechanisms to effectively strengthen the capacities of Ethiopian abortion researchers. The findings of this assessment highlighted that there are gaps in effective collaboration among researchers and a lack of expertise in putting research findings into practice, analyzing data on abortions gathered using indirect methods like the Network Scale-up, Confidant, and Game of Contacts methods.

In recognition of such challenges, experts were engaged and adapted existing training materials to abortion research and provided training for trainees/ researchers at different levels. The consortium started to equip novice researchers, instructors in higher institutions, and practitioners with state-of-the-art knowledge and skills in abortion research methods.

Articles

SRHR and Participation of Men and Boys

Sexual and Reproductive health services are seen to include women primarily. It is common to see educational training and services focusing on women solely. This can be due to women being more specifically influenced in relation to SRH issues. Although the lack of such services for women will indeed threaten women's health, specifically via increasing the chance of unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion, increased chance of STI, and increasing maternal morbidity and mortality, it doesn't dispose of the need for men's engagement in SRHR. Consideration of male SRHR awareness and service is equally vital not only because of the need to address their neglected need for SRH awareness and service but moreover because it will augment women's. When men do not share the burdens of SRH women bear the responsibility for their own and their family's SRH and eventually the society's. Addressing the SRHR awareness needs of young men as early in life as possible can affect life-long attitudes and behavior pattern formation towards the issue achieving just that, men who share the burden of maintaining SRH of family. Engaging men and boys is thus central to building more equitable societies.

In the predominantly traditional society, we live in men tend to be primary decision-makers on social, economic, and domestic fronts. This

key role can be utilized in influencing SRHR awareness and service-seeking behavior of families/ couples. Therefore, recognizing the fact that the role of head of household is important and men tend to be the decision-makers and utilizing it in influencing health-seeking behavior in families and as partners in women's SRH health is important. This comes with its challenge. One of the main challenges with exploiting the role of the decision-maker to increase SRHR awareness and service-seeking behavior is impeding women's right to make decisions for their selves. In consideration of this challenge, the WHO suggests a "Gender-transformative approach" What is a "Gender-transformative approach"?

WHO characterizes a gender-transformative approach as 'an approach that addresses the root causes of gender-based health disparities through interventions that challenge and change harmful and unequal gender standards, roles, and unequal power relations that benefit men over women. There are six interrelated standards of the gender transformative approach. These are Human rights, Power, Norms and values, Gender, and diversity, Empowering women and girls, and Engaging men and boys in SRHR. The role of GTA in SRHR is engaging men and tending to harmful masculinities to improve SRH services. The center of this approach is tending to gender imbalance and challenging gender power relations while also addressing SRHR issues. Programs and interventions involving men and

boys have to be deliberate in advancing gender equality by unequivocally focusing on destructive gender norms including harmful standards surrounding masculinity and challenging unequal gender power relations that privilege men or subordinate women.

An example of a GTA approach-based intervention could be community conversations and training activities targeting school-aged and adolescent boys and girls. Such conversation will, be thought-provoking for children and young adults and allow unlearning of harmful gender-based inequalities at a much earlier age. Age is an important factor in the transformative approach as children and young adults are yet to form a firm attitude towards gender issues while adults have a long-healed belief that will be difficult to unlearn as compared to the younger age group. The conversations should address disparities and inequalities starting from the household scale to the community and beyond, to learn and shift constraining gender norms at each level.

A Special Article Published in the Ethiopian Medical Journal in Response to a Publication About Ethiopia's Safe Abortion Law and Maternal Mortality

Ethiopia, as one of the early reproductive health champions in Africa, made a legal reform by changing its safe abortion law in

2005. A recent publication in Ethiopian Medical Journal (EMJ) by Calum Miller presented a flawed argument on Ethiopia's safe abortion law and maternal mortality trend over the period following legal reform. Miller claimed that abortion related mortality had already decreased before the legal reform in 2005, and the legal reform has only increased abortion incidence and abortion-related morbidity and mortality. In response to this misleading article, a group of researchers led by SPIRHR program director Dr. Tesfaye Tufa published a rebuttal review in EMJ outlining the fact vs. the misrepresentations. According to the review by Tufa et al., mortality due to unsafe abortion was a leading cause of maternal mortality before the legal reform contributing to one-third of all maternal deaths. Fifteen years after the legal reform, unsafe abortion contributes only less than 10% of maternal mortality. Moreover, the article highlighted Ethiopia's commitment to improving reproductive health and the achievements made through a brave struggle of health care providers, policymakers, partner organizations, researchers, and other relevant stakeholders in the country and beyond. Recognizing the importance of maintaining the success made so far, the article highlighted the need for working together on the missing elements and the importance of continued engagement to maintain the achievements made so far.

Read more on the article from the link below.

<https://emjema.org/index.php/EMJ/article/view/2206/811>

THE NEW SRH BUILDING



About St. Paul Institute for Reproductive Health and Rights (SPIRHR)

SPIRHR was established and registered by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Agency for Civil Society in September 2019 as a local non-governmental organization with the vision of strengthening and facilitating effective and quality sexual and reproductive health and rights programs at St. Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College (SPHMMC). SPIRHR is an independent institution targeting to ensure the project's implementation in the most efficient and effective way while ensuring accountability and transparency. Since its inception, SPIRHR has continued supporting the implementation of major program activities that were jointly planned with SPHMMC Ob/GYN faculties while taking the lead in the administration and coordination of RH infrastructure development as per a collaborative framework outlined by a memorandum of understanding. Through the collaborative effort of SPHMMC and SPIRHR, SPIRHR will continue to invest in four key priority areas of intervention: training, research, advocacy, and clinical services. SPIRHR aim to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity through coordinated sexual reproductive health and rights and enable girls and women to reach their full potential.