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PRESS RELEASE

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Save the Children Philippines helps mothers learn to teach children sexuality, reproductive health

Save the Children Philippines is helping mothers learn to communicate with adolescent children on lessons of sexuality and reproductive health to address the rising cases of teenage pregnancy that cause ill-health and deaths to mothers and babies.

Lawyer Albert Muyot, Chief Executive Officer of Save the Children Philippines said empowering mothers with right information and communication skills ensure children reach their optimum growth and full potential.

“Early pregnancy disrupts childhood, perpetuates poverty while putting the lives of young mothers and babies at risk due to poor health and complications,” said Muyot.

Save the Children Philippines joins the International Women’s Day celebration on March 8 with the theme: “We Make Change Work for Women,” highlighting empowerment of women as active contributors of development.

Dr. Miel Nora, Technical Advisor on Adolescent Sexuality and Reproductive Health of Save the Children Philippines said a baseline study shows that Very Young Adolescent (VYA) aged 10-14 years old preferred to get information on sexuality and reproductive health from their mothers. But most mothers are not equipped with the right information and communication skills in teaching the subject.

Using the study, the group implemented the Healthy, Empowered and Responsible Teens or “HEART to Heart” program in Luzon and Mindanao to help mothers and caregivers improve their communication skills to teach sexuality and reproductive health.

The six-month program was given to beneficiaries of conditional cash transfer with participation of 120 mothers and caregivers in Navotas and Malabon in Luzon and rural communities of Alabel and Maitum, Sarangani in Mindanao.

He said the project improved parents’ knowledge of sexuality and reproductive health by at least 31 per cent.

Dr. Nora said the program builds open communication between a parent and a child, which is essential to prevent teenagers from getting pregnant.

“Empowering mothers on right communication skills on sexuality and reproductive health empower girls from risks of early pregnancy,” he said.

The Philippines has one of the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Asia, with one in every ten girls aged 15 to 19 getting pregnant every year, according to the National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) in 2013.

At least 22 percent maternal deaths are common among mothers aged 15 to 24 years old, according to latest data from the Department of Health. It added that 20 percent of those who deliver at 15 to 17 years will get pregnant again, the year after.

He said babies of teenage mothers face risk of neonatal deaths three times higher compared to babies of 25 to 29 years old mothers.

The program will be adopted by local governments and partner schools in Luzon and Mindanao.

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