

Family planning and good education critical to national wellbeing

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KOTA KINABALU: Family planning and better education is critical to improving the lives of countless women and children in the country and prevent social, health and financial problems arising from unplanned pregnancies.

“Enhancing family planning services, enhancing education, counselling allows women to make better, informed choices on their future which would reduce the number of unintended pregnancies, leading to healthier mothers and children,” said Prof Dr Zainal Arifin Mustapha, Acting Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS).

While official figures on the rate of unintended pregnancies is scarce, however various sources indicate at least 25 per cent of pregnancies nationwide is unplanned, said UMS Medicine and Health Sciences Faculty



Dr Helen with Prof Dr Zainal(left), and Dr San (centre) speaking to reporters.

deputy dean Associate Professor Dr Helen Benedict Lasimbang.

“We don’t have complete data as such issues are very sensitive and most people just wouldn’t talk openly about the subject,” said Dr Helen, adding there is also no data available on unplanned preg-

nancies for Sabah.

Alarmingly, an average of 18,000 teen girls got pregnant every year, seeking medical attention at various government health clinics, in a recent statement by Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr. S. Subramaniam.

Meeting reporters after

launching the National Conference on Avoiding Unplanned Pregnancies (NCAUP), she noted unintended pregnancies can result in abortion, miscarriages or live birth which may pose increased risk of injuries and even death, affecting the various women’s various social,

economic and cultural aspects of life.

The lack of access to family planning services, poverty, insufficient knowledge including non-use, incorrect use of contraceptive methods to prevent pregnancies are among the reasons for unintended pregnancies, she said.

The two-day conference organised by UMS, in collaboration with the Department of Health (JKNS), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), SWACH and OGSM from Oct 30-31 aims to raise awareness on the importance of planned pregnancies and improve knowledge on sexual education in preventing unintended pregnancies.

“The main objective of this conference is to improve education and raise awareness on enhancing women’s health,” said NCAUP Committee Chairperson, Associate Professor Dr. San San Win.

Meanwhile, Dr Zainal noted broadening access to family planning services would be a progressive step towards im-

proving women’s health and reducing infant and maternal mortality from unplanned pregnancies.

For instance, he noted planned pregnancies spaced two or more years result in healthier babies with fewer medical problems for mothers. Moreover, he noted planned families and longer birth intervals contributed to better health for mothers and infants.

“Family planning strategies, with pregnancies spaced two to three years will greatly help in lessening medical complications for mothers and healthier infants, moreover this would even lead to lesser need for abortions,” he said.

Among those who attended the conference were Dr Mohamed Hatta Bin Mohammed Tarmizi, Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, Fertility Specialist of Sabah Women’s and Children Hospital (SWACH) and Dr Hj Mohamad Farouk Abdullah, Sub-Committee member of the Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Malaysia (OGSM).