

# Improving Health

**FACT:** An estimated **340 million** new cases of sexually transmitted bacterial infections occur annually. These are mostly **preventable and treatable**.

**SOLUTION:** Providing **access to sexual and reproductive health** services and information is by far the most effective way of preventing and treating these infections. This makes for a **healthier population** and contributes to the **prevention of HIV infections**.

# Rangi's story

Rangi is 22 and lives in the Cook Islands. His local health centre runs a regular sexual health clinic for youth and found that Rangi had a **sexually transmitted infection**. If left untreated this infection can cause serious health problems but to be cured of it all Rangi needed was a simple **course of antibiotics** for him and his partner. While at the clinic Rangi also found out about how to **use condoms** to **prevent reinfection**.

**Having access to good sexual and reproductive health services meant that Rangi could positively deal with what was a serious health issue for him and his partner.**

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# Empowerment

**FACT: 201 million women** worldwide would like to use contraception to manage their family size, but **do not have access** to these services or products.

**SOLUTION:** When **family planning** is made available to couples through sexual and reproductive health clinics, they **can make decisions** about how many children to have and when to have them. Making choices helps **empower women** and gives them confidence in all areas of their lives, from making decisions in the home to participating in politics.

# Pauline's story

Pauline lives in Samoa with her husband and three children. Several years ago Pauline and her husband went to the clinic together to decide on contraception. Being able to **plan her family** gave Pauline new **confidence** to return to studying. The opportunity to control the number, timing and spacing of their children was fundamental for Pauline's ability to balance household activities and **complete her studies**.

**Today, Pauline has a thriving business and is running for election.**

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# HIV Prevention

**FACT:** Across the Pacific **98.9% of all HIV infections** are associated with sexual connections, pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding.

**SOLUTION:** Providing sexual and reproductive health services within a community means that **education** and **practical methods** on how to prevent the spread of HIV can be made available. A staggering **29 million** out of 45 million **new projected HIV infections** in the next decade could be **stopped** by access to basic sexual and reproductive health services and information.

# Roníca's Story

Ronica is 28 years old. She lives in the Marshall Islands and is married with two children. Two years ago her **husband tested HIV positive**. Because sexual and reproductive health services integrate HIV issues as part of their routine work, Ronica's local health clinic was able to talk to her about things like **how to use condoms**, how to **negotiate condom use** with her husband to **prevent infection** and other family planning options.

**Without this knowledge Ronica would almost certainly have contracted HIV.**

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# Education

**FACT:** Providing girls with **one extra year of education** beyond the average **boosts** their eventual **income** by 10% to 20%.

**STRATEGY:** When couples are given the opportunity to use **family planning services** they can have the number of children that they can provide for. This means parents are more **able to fund** the cost of **education** for their children, boosting the chance that girls will gain an education.

# Noella's story

Noella is 15 years old. She lives with her parents and two brothers in the Solomon Islands. Noella attends school, unlike her friends, whose parents can't afford schooling for girls. When they were married, Noella's parents took **advice from the local clinic** on how to manage their **family size**. Having access to family planning information allowed them to provide Noella with the **opportunity** of continuing her **education**.

**So now Noella has the chance to realise her dream of becoming a doctor.**

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# Saving Lives

**FACT: Every minute one woman dies** and 30 more suffer injury, infection or disability because of **complications** of **pregnancy and childbirth**.

**SOLUTION:** Ensuring all women have **access to SRH**, such as antenatal services, skilled birth attendants, emergency obstetric and post-partum care will **save the lives** of women and their children.

# Felice's story

Felice is a young mother from Tuvalu. She became pregnant when she was **15 years old**, but during her pregnancy had access to **regular check-ups** at the antenatal health clinic. Here she learnt the importance of breast feeding and was screened for anaemia and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Because of Felice's young age, the nurses made sure she could get to the hospital quickly for the birth, and that she had **skilled care**. Felice had a healthy **baby** boy who is **thriving**.

**Felice is now 17 years old and uses family planning to prevent further pregnancies so she can further her education.**

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# Environmental Sustainability

**FACT:** When couples are **unable to plan** their families as they would like, they often have **more children than** they have **natural resources** to provide for.

**SOLUTION:** By accessing sexual and reproductive health services, couples can **manage** their **family size** and match the size of their family to their **available natural resources**.

# Angela and Silas' story

Angela and Silas are from Vanuatu. For food, they fish and have a garden for vegetables. When they married they visited the local clinic and chose to **plan how many children** they would have. Their garden and the daily catch are **enough to feed** their three boys. It also means that they have **enough land** to leave to their children and their future families.

**By being able to access sexual and reproductive health services Angela and Silas have made sure that their children are healthy and will have land to survive on in the future, ensuring that they do not fall into poverty.**

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# Economic Growth and Income

**FACT: Twenty percent** of people across the Pacific are aged between **15 and 24 years of age** – 1.6 million people, and this will **increase** every year by 2.2 percent.

**STRATEGY:** When sexual and reproductive health services and information are available for young people, they can **maintain** their **health** and ensure they have a **family** when they are **ready**. This means that they are able to gain a good **education** and take part in the **labour force**, contributing to their country's **economic growth**.

# Joshua's story

Joshua and his girlfriend, Sisi, learnt about sexuality and relationships when they were at school. They talked a lot about sexual intimacy and when they decided to go ahead they **protected** themselves **from an unwanted pregnancy** and possible STIs. This enabled them both to **graduate** from trade school, get good **jobs** on a large building site and **contribute** to the country's economic growth.

**It also means that when they do have children they will have a decent household income and be able to raise healthy and educated children, giving their children the best chances of avoiding poverty in the future.**

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# HIV Support

**FACT: Every minute 10 people** are infected with **HIV**.

**SOLUTION:** Like everyone else, it is vital that people living with HIV have **access to sexual and reproductive health services** and information. These services provide important information about how to **manage fertility** and **counselling** about HIV during pregnancy.

# Sailasi's story

Sailasi lives in Fiji and is HIV positive. He is married to Delphine and they have two children. Neither Delphine or the children are HIV positive. Sailasi does not want to have any more children. He attends his **local HIV clinic for anti-retroviral** medication and because the clinic **also** deals with **sexual and reproductive health** issues, they can offer him and Delphine **advice on family planning.**

**This allows Sailasi and Delphine to get all the help they need under one roof.**

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# Where to now?

These cards illustrate the **important role of sexual and reproductive health (SRH)**, not only in the lives of individuals, but also in **preventing** and **alleviating poverty**. The next step is to examine how your country deals with SRH issues. Start asking questions about your unique situation, what problems you face and what solutions you already have in place. Here are some questions to think about and help you assess the situation in your own country.

# Moving Forward

**What is already working well in your community to create good sexual and reproductive health?**

**Are your sexual and reproductive health services confidential, friendly and acceptable to all?**

**What needs to be done to improve the sexual and reproductive health of your families and community?**

**What sexual and reproductive health issues can you see in your community?**

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