

NATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING BOARD

An Agency of the Ministry Of Health

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CONTRIBUTED ARTICLE: LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

It's not unusual to hear a conversation sprinkled with proverbs. Kudos to those people who have a knack for weaving them into their conversations. One that is applicable and supportive of parenting messages is **"Ef fish deh a river bottom an tell yu seh alligator have gum boil, believe him"**. It has a simple translation that advises listening to the voice of experience.

Programmes done by entities like the National Family Planning Board (NFPB) engage tactics to communicate messages to adolescents. Each of these messages is developed from data-gathering exercises on particular subject matter. The data represent the experiences of many individuals who have shared their testimonials with the NFPB, snippets of their lives that are bite-sized responses to questions administered in focus group discussions and surveys.

In the NFPB's Reproductive Health Survey 2008, parents/guardians were identified as the preferred source of information on topics related to family life or sex education among both males and females 15-24 years. That said, parents are ideally placed to be advocates for the NFPB's programmes and messages. The Reproductive Health Survey is a national survey that provides information on the knowledge, attitudes and practices among persons of reproductive age, including young people.

It is research data that advise the public of the dangers adolescent girls face when they carry and deliver a pregnancy before their bodies are fully developed. These conditions include uterine infections, higher incidences of eclampsia and systemic infections. The vulnerability also extends to the baby as is seen in premature birth, low birth weight and higher neonatal health conditions.

Research has pointed to the reduced prospects for a young girl born into poverty and who in turn gets pregnant. Her completion of her education is impacted and with very little educational attainment she has poor prospects of securing a decent paying job to help take care of herself, the child(ren) and contribute meaningfully to the rest of her family.

Listening to the voice of experience can make a world of difference to children's outcome in life. That responsibility falls to parents and other adults through data sharing, story-telling and honest conversation.

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