

The W P F *Alert*



December 2020

E-volve to Solve: Family Planning in Crises

Our Symposium, E-volve to Solve: Family Planning in a time of crises, has been our event of the year.

Enjoy a summary of deeply insightful talks, from The Women's Club and from PNG and Cambodia, transmitted live by Zoom and now on YouTube. What better example of evolving, than our ability to share knowledge by technology?

Dr Deborah Bateson, Medical Director, Family Planning NSW

KEYNOTE SPEAKER, MC

Family planning is crucial for women's empowerment, especially for marginalised adolescents, those in remote areas, and women who lack power in their relationships to make their own choices.

Climate change and the current Covid pandemic are profoundly affecting women, who are fearful of accessing services, and are running out of contraceptives, facing disruptions of supply chains and diversion of services.

Since the pandemic there are an additional 49 million without a modern method of contraception, 15 million more unintended pregnancies, 3 million more unsafe abortions. Family planning's impact of women is more vital than ever.

But there is good news, and that



is why we are here today. We must seize the opportunity to be smarter, more equitable in ways of delivering family planning towards women. The immense up-take of technology in the old normal would have taken years, with red tape and bureaucracy. The roll-out has been amazing: virtual Tele-health, with e-health and m-health (mobile phone technologies and services), particularly in rural areas.

All these new and innovative technologies empower women.

Informed training and mentoring, unachievable when travelling long distances, are possible.

There is a growing concept of self-care, emergency contraception available over-the-counter, pills, do-it-yourself injectables so women don't have to travel back for them.

Of course, technologies can never replace the human face and shouldn't be used to blindly cost-cut. Problems with women's computer literacy or services must be taken into account.

What women want is important, and it is absolutely essential that the voices of women be embedded in these evolving solutions. We must build resilience into health systems and family planning is absolutely essential.

E-volve to Solve, Family Planning in Crises

Introduction: Alice Oppen, Chair, WPF

Our thanks to The Women's Club for enabling our hybrid gathering. Women here learning technology have made it possible. We are evolving.

In just a hundred years, we have developed women's contraceptives from fairly primitive interruptions to increasingly sophisticated hormonal controls.

When my parents were born, there were two and a quarter billion people on earth. Now, we

are approaching eight billion, with the largest generation ever bearing the largest generation ever. That's not evolution, that's explosion. This is a time of cascading disasters: drought, fires, floods, plague, seas rising. We fear it will continue unless we evolve differently.

Not more, but better. Not the economy, but the civilisation.

We need to evolve to better methods of contraception, better

delivery of services, better gender accountability, better balance between population and resources, real climate change reduction.

Where we give the ability to women to time their pregnancies, the population stabilises, and people flourish. We know how many children we can bear, care for and socialise. We want to cherish children, not crowd them. We can share this ability with people in our region.



The WPF team, L to R: Sam Durland, Marianne Christmann, Jane Malcolmson, Pauline Markwell, Natalie Brandon, Alice Oppen OAM, Emma Challen, Anastasia Symons

PNG: Dr Klara Henderson, CEO of Australian Doctors International



In PNG the delivery of services is a challenge just in access. Australian Doctors International operates through Outreach Patrols to very remote areas, and a health patrol team may go some 12 hours of travel, by 4 wheel drive and banana boat. For some areas the phone reception is 3 hours away, by banana boat. For these women implants that last for several years are best, but even getting the supply of implants to them is a challenge. There can be clinics that are just a room, no running water or toilets or electricity. Today there was a power outage, so a generator had to be brought closer

so Devlin could be live in the presentation.

A second role for ADI is the education of health workers, bringing workers in for training, or now trying to remotely train. ADI works in schools as well.

47 percent of women (married/in union) have satisfied demand for contraception; that leaves a lot to generate demand. There is a challenge in the supply chain; now links have been made with the local government and UNFPA to try to keep supply up.

Dr Charlene James, volunteer doctor went to West New Britain and met Sister Raquel in Wako. They met with all the difficulties -- rising sea levels forcing people to move uphill, travelling to get mobile and radio reception. Dr James taught Sister Raquel how to insert implants so she will be able to do it from now on, with a population of 3,000 people dependent on her. In answer to a question, Klara replied that a positive aspect of Covid is that it had increased a sense of partnerships.

PNG: Devlyn Olan, National Health Director, Australian Doctors International



People learn what services are offered, that they have access to reproductive rights, adolescents must learn how the body functions so they can avoid pregnancy. We want ADI to continue to provide better training. A father came forward to say he was happy they could space babies with an implant, and wanted all men to go and tell their wives to get an implant.

Deborah Bateson praised implants for revolutionising family planning. She explained how simple it was to insert a match-stick like rod in the arm, where it emits low dose hormones.

Cambodia: Camille Tijamo, Operations Manager, Marie Stopes International



Marie Stopes International Cambodia needed to keep access to family planning open while adapting to the Covid-19 diversion. It really affected how we worked, which had been face to face, and now we had to make different ways.

What did we do?

Our clinics remained open, provided with strict implementation of clinical and infection prevention guidelines; we managed client flow through appointment booking; distributed flyers about Covid-19 and how to protect themselves to all clients coming to the clinics.

We maximised the Contact Centre to provide counselling, advice and infor-

mation over the phone, via Facebook messenger, email, and other communication apps like WhatsApp and Viber. The most important thing was the MSIC Contact Centre, which proved to be very efficient and essential during the pandemic.

Through phone calls, email, and/or FB message, we can communicate with many women and men across the country. 22% of total calls are from young people 15-24 years old. They're asking more information about FP/contraception, which method is preferred. We also reminded them to use contraception to protect themselves from pregnancy, if they are not yet ready. We produced a [video](#) informing our clients that our

clinics remain open during this time.

We maximised our Facebook page. The young are vulnerable to a lot of myths. One young woman asked if it was ok to take the pill? Another Facebook page had said No. The young can send voice messages if they are embarrassed.

In answer to a question about whether there was a positive side, Camille responded that they get to write creative content for the Contact Centre, Facebook, and they support other organisations and collaborate.

Wrapping up Symposium: Dr Deborah Bateson

These are two very different countries settings, with some very different challenges in meeting family planning needs.

They embraced new technologies in these difficult times. They have made great advances, but we know there are technology rabbit holes and looking into the future, we will sort out what's evidence based and provide accurate information. Mobile uptake is a problem in PNG, and there is still a need to take the training, the services and commodities there.

There will be other crises ahead, and climate change is one where family planning, preventing unintended pregnancy, is crucial in reducing our footprint. There is growing global interest in green contraception, seeking minimal impact, reducing hormones. Long acting contraceptives (LARC) are very green.

There is huge unmet need and challenges we've been hearing about just in these two countries, and we thank you for enlightening us.

Marianne Christmann, Director, WPF

Thank you to our speakers, for exploring those challenges of technology, bringing to us what it is like on the ground, bringing to life what you do.

Thanks to TWC, to our long term supporters and to people who're joining us for the first time.

We hope you will support us to fund our NGO partners so they can have outreach health patrols, in-service training, and sexual and reproductive health education for adolescent garment workers, all of

which give women choices and makes a real difference.

My call to action to you is to donate if you can.

Marianne closed with a quote from the late Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Justice of the US Supreme Court, "**Contraceptive protection is something every woman must have access to, to control her own destiny**". This is what we in Women's Plans aspire to share.

Director Movements

We thank **Joanne Epp PhD** who recently retired from the WPF board after serving for 5 years most recently as Treasurer.



WPF WELCOMES:

Evan Oppen is a Chartered Accountant with a Master of Science degree and Post Grad Dip Accounting. He has worked as a Chartered Accountant for 14 years in public practices as well as two years at the Macular Disease Foundation Australia. He also has treasurer roles with the Sydney Community Forum and a small ski lodge. Evan has an interest in the Not-for-Profit sector.



Jane Malcolmson has held numerous senior leadership, management and creative roles in the national and international arts sector, working with four of Australia's most significant cultural organisations – the Asia Pacific Screen Awards (a subsidiary of the Queensland Events Corporation), the Australian Chamber Orchestra, World Orchestras and the Australian Festival of Chamber Music. This expertise has been expanded through consultancies and membership of several not-for-profit boards.

14 Actions from John Hopkins Centre

What FP and RH Programs can do now in the face of the COVID 19 Pandemic
14 actions to adapt reproductive health care and contraception
in the context of Covid 19.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has changed virtually every aspect of life around the world. Restrictions on movement and gatherings are impacting access to contraceptives and Healthcare. Community health workers and providers, who are key linkages to service provision in many contexts, are also limited in their movements. Adapting programs to this changing landscape, or even knowing where to start, can feel daunting. Several organisations have provided important guidance on voluntary reproductive health care and family planning and gender-based violence in the current context of COVID-19.

1. Incorporate advocacy messaging
2. Emphasise solutions
3. Recognise evolving needs
4. Integrate psycho social support
5. Re-think business processes
6. Explore new partnerships
7. Advocate for representation
8. Address fear stigma and bias
9. Offer humanitarian response training
10. Protect responders’ mental health
11. Update communication methods
12. Localise decision making
13. Learn from others
14. Act now.

CONCLUSION

The COVID 19 pandemic continues to test response structures at the global, regional, national, and sub-national levels. These recommendations will position programs and organisations to better adapt to shifting realities and help to ensure that the needs of women and girls are met in these uncertain times. The ability to act quickly, efficiently and effectively are critical in outbreak responses. As indirect impacts to reproductive health care and voluntary family planning continue to evolve, these skills will be paramount. And they will strengthen your program’s position no matter what the future holds.”

From **Knowledge SUCCESS at John Hopkins Center for Communication Programs**

<https://my.knowledgesuccess.org/covid-19-actions-fprh-programs-can-take-right-now/p/1>

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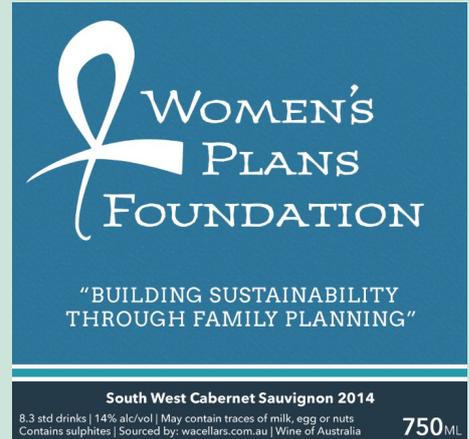
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WPF own-labelled wine

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<https://wacellars.com.au/fundraising/womens-plans-foundation-wine-fundraiser/>



DONATION FORM The work WPF is funding is critical, especially in these times, and your support is vitally important to our ability to make grants ensuring women and girls have access to contraception. Please consider giving generously now.

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A tax deductible receipt will be sent for all donations.

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Directors: Carolyn Blanden, Marianne Christmann, Sam Durland, Jane Malcolmson, Pauline Markwell, Anya Poukchanski, Alice Oppen OAM, Evan Oppen, Dr Lina Safro

Observer: Anastasia Symons; **Administration:** Natalie Brandon

Events & Media Committee: Dr Lucinda Barry, Emma Challen, Ros Espie, Jenny Hall, Jeannette Kalek, Margaret Milne, Anni Macdougall, Jane Malcolmson, Pauline Markwell, Leon Muller, Alice Oppen OAM

Development: Pauline Markwell; **Evaluation:** Sue Funnell, Emma Challen, Jessica Collins

Women's Plans Foundation, ABN 64-823-197-874, ACN 608 291 630

3 Madeline St. Hunter's Hill, NSW 2110, T: 9817-5175, M: 0428 866 491