Experiences from the Field: Oyo State Site: Atisbo
by Field workers and supervisors; edited by E. Heroy, N. Dike, and R. Olajide

The REACH experience helped me to realize that the dynamics of human subjects is central in social science led research. This means that as a social science researcher, I had to understand and respect all of the diverse religious, ethnic, social and educational backgrounds in the community that was being studied. I gained a lot of skills from the REACH trainings that helped me to interact with respondents in order to clarify concerns and collect data. REACH allows me to always reason from the perspective of the potential respondent in order to me understand respondents better. - Adedapo Adebimpe

The Oyo State field workers and supervisors acquired new research skills from REACH trainings, but they also learned new research techniques through experiences on the field.

Though the REACH team in one of the Oyo State sites (Atisbo) included eminent people – a pastor, a public hospital matron, a retired health worker, a university graduate and a royal princess; the community was a bit skeptical about the mission of REACH and therefore were uncooperative in working with REACH in the very beginning. This first challenge was solved by arranging special meetings with the kings/village heads, attending community meetings for further explanation, visits by the REACH postdoc, Dr. Emeka Anyamele, to field sites to hold meetings with stakeholders, and engaging with chiefs of the village to persuade and create a more conducive atmosphere for accurate data.

After the mission of REACH was clearly explained and outlined, data collection began. But the field workers and supervisors encountered challenges with respondents similar to what researchers experienced at other REACH field sites. Many respondents would not answer questions truthfully. Some Oyo State field workers overcame this by spending more time within the communities and with the respondents so they would feel comfortable to answer the questions honestly.

Pastor Samuel Abiola said that many respondents asked for free diagnosis and drug prescriptions. He had to explain to them that he was not a doctor, but could refer them to a qualified doctor. He also asked for the assistance of Mrs. Fehintola, the Oyo State supervisor who works as a public hospital matron.

All in all, many skills were acquired during the field work experience and REACH trainings in Oyo State. Field worker Tosin Ayannike describes his experience at REACH:

REACH has helped me to develop my research capacities. I personally gathered a lot of experience such as identifying of the enumeration areas and how to properly collect data. I learned that in order to achieve much in research work, research ethics must be respected. Also, community leaders and research targets needed orientation concerning the aims and objective of the REACH study in addition to proper mobilization. Finally, I came to understand the importance of good human relations in social science research: it helps to enhance quality data. - Tosin Ayannike

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Nigeria 's teen pregnancies 'rise'
from news.bbc.co.uk

Unplanned pregnancies among Nigerian teenagers and young women have risen despite improvements in educational levels, a report found. In 2003, 16% of pregnancies among girls and women aged 15-24 had been unintended, compared with 10% in 1990. The study from the New York-based Guttmacher Institute said low use of contraceptives was partially to blame. The institute said Nigerian authorities had failed to promote sexual health information for young Nigerians.

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It found the proportion of adolescent women with some secondary education had increased 16 percentage points (from 34% to 50%) between 1990 and 2003.

**Time bomb**

But over the same period the use of modern contraceptive methods among sexually active adolescent women in Nigeria had changed very little, from 4% to 8%. Also in that time, the proportion of sexually active young women who knew where to access family planning services nearly halved, from 32% to 18%, found the report - which analysed health data from Nigerian authorities and non-governmental organisations.

Nearly one-third of sexually active women aged 15-24 had had an unmet need for modern contraception in 2003, found the study. “We are failing Nigerian adolescents when it comes to providing them with the information and services. They need to delay marriage and avoid unintended pregnancies,” said the report’s co-author, Professor Friday Okonofua. She said this was leaving young women at risk from unwanted pregnancies and sexually-transmitted diseases, such as HIV. The study also noted the population of Nigeria - Africa’s most-populous nation, with 150 million people - was growing by 2.2% annually, and at that rate would double every 32 years.

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**HIV in South Africa ‘Levels Off’**

*from news.bbc.co.uk*

South Africa’s HIV epidemic has levelled off at an infection rate of 10.9% for those aged two or older, according to a new study. The survey also suggests the rate of infection in children and teenagers could be falling. This could be partly attributed to increased use of condoms, it says.

But the survey warned that the overall situation remained “dire”. South Africa has the world’s largest HIV-positive population, at 5.5 million.

Women aged between 20 and 34 continued to be the worst affected, with 33% carrying HIV, the report by the Human Sciences Research Council said. Olive Shisana, an author of the study of 20,826 people released on Tuesday, said there were “promising findings of a changing pattern of HIV infection among children and youth”.

“The good news is that the change in HIV prevalence in children is most likely attributable to the successful implementation of several HIV-prevention interventions,” she said.

**Challenges**

In children aged 2-14, HIV prevalence had dropped from 5.6% in 2002 to 2.5% in 2008, the report said. There was also a fall in new infections among teenagers aged 15-19. The overall level of HIV infection in those aged two and over, at 10.9%, had moved little. In 2002 the figure was 10.8% and in 2005 11.4%.

Reports of condom use were sharply up among young people. In 2002 57% of men aged 15-24 said they used a condom at their last sexual encounter - a figure which rose to 87% in 2008. The figure for women in the same age group rose from 46% to 73%.

“There is clearly light at the end of the tunnel,” said Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi. “There is real light.” However, the survey also listed a series of challenges, including a rise in the number of those who have many sexual partners and an increase in HIV prevalence among 15-49 year-olds in some provinces.

Fraser McNeill, an anthropologist at the London School of Economics who has studied HIV/AIDS among South Africa’s Venda ethnic group, told the BBC’s Focus on Africa programme that the report was “great news” if the statistics were reliable.

But he cautioned that programmes to tackle HIV could run up against cultural obstacles. “I found ways in which Aids intervention programmes are implemented are counterproductive,” he said. “People on the ground often believe that condoms actually cause Aids, and the women who are involved in the process of Aids education are often framed as vectors of the virus.”