EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM IN SURINAME

This Rotarian Action Group Healthy Pregnancies / Healthy Children educational program in Suriname started in March 2017. The project will last until December 2018 and is executed with funds from the Rotary Foundation and Dutch Rotary clubs. The main objective of the project is to reduce teenage pregnancy and improve the health and well-being of young women. The program focuses on preconception care, education about sexual health, and awareness of the importance of folic acid use.

The program has been implemented in one of the main secondary schools in Paramaribo, with 393 students, 62% of whom are girls. The average age of the students is 17 years. The program includes sessions on healthy start for babies, pregnancy planning, and fetal development. Students learn about the importance of a healthy start for babies and the role of folic acid in preventing neural tube defects.

Teenage mothers are an important focus of the program. The first lesson focused on preconception care, while the second lesson focused on sexual resilience using illustrative cases for group discussions. The interactive educational program focuses on a healthy start for babies by pregnant women, starting a pregnancy or postponing a pregnancy, and awareness of the importance of folic acid use. The program is executed in an open-minded and joyful atmosphere, leading to respectful handling of each other's atmosphere.

The program has a multi-ethnic population with an average number of 10,000 annual births. One out of every ten births is to a young woman. Teenage mothers are an important focus of the program. The proportion of women delivering before the age of 20 is high (18% are teenagers). Teenage mothers often have less education and knowledge about sexual health, pregnancy planning, and preventive measures. The program aims to empower young women to make well-considered reproductive choices, take responsibility for themselves, their partners, and the next generation.

The program uses a suitable tool for teachers to provide comprehensive sexual education and reproductive health education in an open-minded and joyful atmosphere. The program also encourages young people to take care of their safety and well-being during the turbulent phase of their life. The YOLO game is receive well and is used in lessons Biology and Social Studies or Human Rights.

In order to increase the chances of a healthy start, the program promotes the making of well-considered reproductive choices and awareness of the importance of folic acid use. This educational program in Suriname is executed by the Royal Dutch College of Midwives (from the Netherlands) and the Perisur Foundation Paramaribo Residence. Partners are TNO Healthy Living, Leiden University Medical Center, and the Rotary Club the Rotarian Action Group Healthy Pregnancies / Healthy Children.

How you can help:

- **Initiate an activity for your club or district:** 'Multi-stakeholder conference'.
- **Create awareness in your community:** 'Letter to my dear daughter, dear son'.
- **Join Us! Donate:** Our RAG HP/HC would like to benefit from your views, expertise, resources for campaigns, demonstration projects, feasibility and pilot studies in your area.