

SINGAPORE

Less than 2% of youths know of support avenues for pregnant teens: Study

By Haikal Latiff

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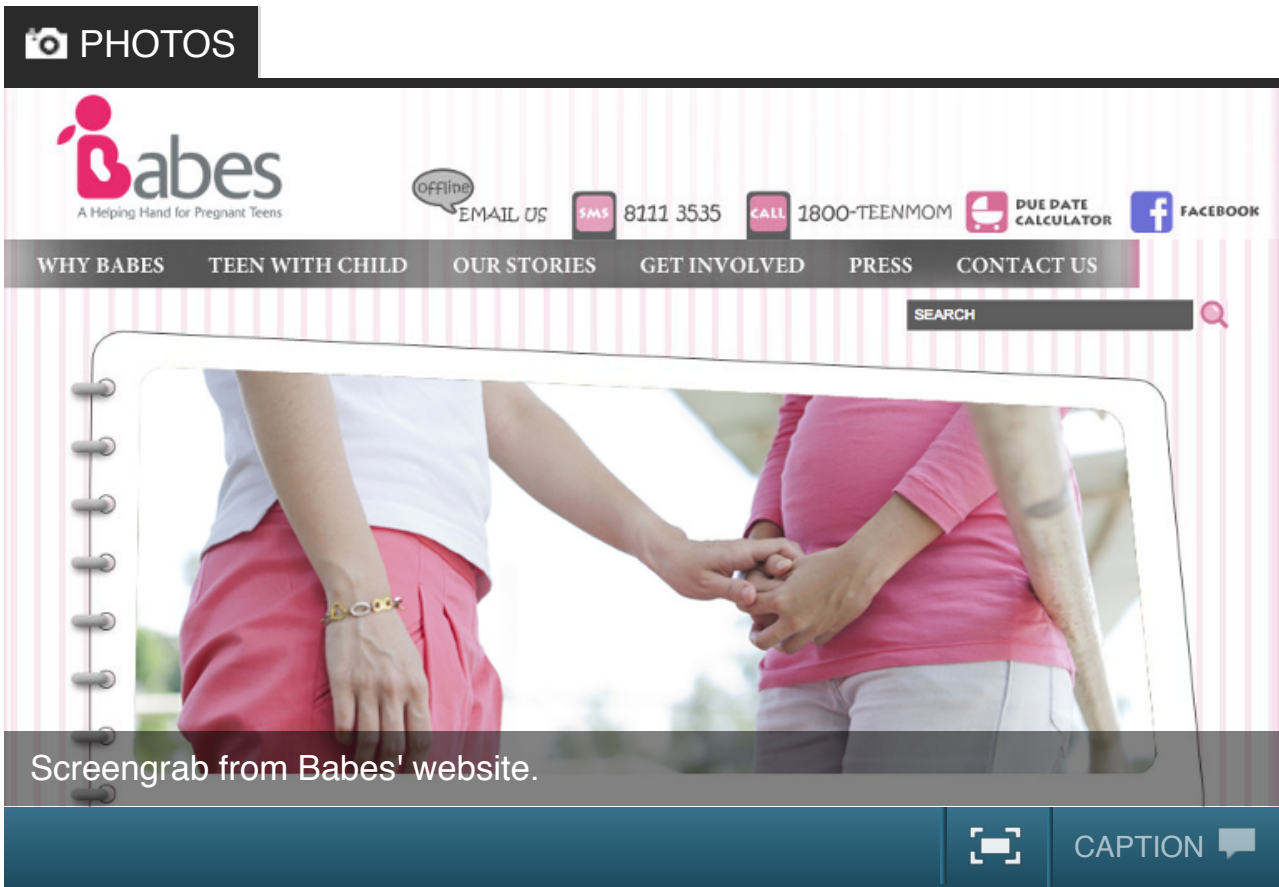
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To raise awareness about who pregnant teenagers can turn to for support, pregnancy crisis support organisation Babes is running a roadshow on the challenges these young women face.



SINGAPORE: A study carried out by four final year students from Nanyang Technological University's Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information has revealed that most young people in Singapore are unaware of the support avenues that are available for pregnant teenagers to seek help.

The study, which aimed to understand youths' perceptions and attitudes towards teenage pregnancy, showed that one in two youths knows of at least one pregnant teenager, but less than 2 per cent of them know where they can direct their pregnant peers to seek professional help and advice.

The findings came from a study conducted among 591 youths aged between 18 and 25 in October last year. It was part of Baby Steps, an ongoing campaign that the students are working on with Babes Pregnancy Crisis Support Limited (Babes) to address the knowledge gap that youths face about teenage pregnancy.

Close to half of those surveyed also revealed that they would turn to the father of the child first in the event of an unplanned pregnancy, while 22.89 per cent said that they would confide in their friends.

Seeing how youths can turn out to be key pillars of support for pregnant teenagers, the students, together with Babes, are holding an immersive roadshow at *SCAPE on Jan 31 to raise awareness about the challenges faced by these young women.

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Said Ms Shaziah Wasiuzzaman, executive director of Babes:
"When teenagers do get pregnant, they tend to turn to their peers in the first place. The findings have confirmed this.

"So when we do our outreach now, it helps us be more targeted, and try to target young people to create more awareness of Babes, so when they do get into this situation or when they know of their friends who get into this situation, they know where to direct their friends."

Participants will take on the role of a pregnant teenager and understand some of her fears. They will also be able to find out the services that Babes provides.

Said Ms Wasiuzzaman: "Pregnancy is a life-changing event for every woman. Even when planned, the emotional and physical changes can be daunting."

"These fears are heightened, especially when faced by pregnant teenagers who often have to walk through this journey without as much support. It is thus crucial for these girls to receive guidance and to know that they do not have to go through their pregnancy alone," she added.

To date, Babes - which is the only voluntary welfare organisation in Singapore that deals with teenage pregnancy - has reached out to 436 girls. The Report on Registration of Births and Deaths published by the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority in 2013 showed that there are an average of 1,300 cases of teenage pregnancies annually.

- CNA/dl

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