



FAMILY PLANNING AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH



Some 200 million women in developing countries have an unmet need for effective and available family planning services. Meeting this need would prevent 23 million unplanned or unwanted pregnancies per year. Women need access to high-quality reproductive health services, including family planning, in order to better plan the number and healthy timing and spacing of their children. This has benefits for the mother (reducing anemia during pregnancy and overall mortality), for the newborn (decreasing risk

of preterm birth and early death) and for the family (improved nutrition and health for older children).

Paying special attention to the needs of more vulnerable groups, including adolescents and people with HIV/AIDS, IntraHealth is a leader in improving reproductive health, including access to quality family planning services. We currently incorporate this expertise into projects in Armenia, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Mali, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal and Southern Sudan. Our key approaches include:

Improving Health Worker Performance

To perform at their best health workers need up-to-date skills and knowledge, motivation to do a good job and adequate equipment and supplies. They also need clear job expectations and regular feedback on their performance. IntraHealth assesses and solves problems in each of these areas through its comprehensive approach to

strengthening the performance of health workers in family planning and reproductive health.

With funding from USAID we have created innovative, easy-to-use resources to improve provider effectiveness. These include *Stages, Steps and Tools*, an interactive step-by-step guide to performance improvement, and *Learning for Performance*, a training approach that focuses learning on specific job responsibilities and competencies. As we use these approaches in our own projects we build the capacity of our colleagues in the countries where we work to apply them in their own organizations, systems and projects.

Examples of our work to strengthen health worker performance over the past decade include:

- Building the capacity of Bangladeshi organizations to train more than 45,000 health and family planning personnel
- Assisting the government of Rwanda to train health center and hospital nurses to provide long-term and permanent family planning methods
- Improving the quality of family planning counseling and increasing provision of contraceptives by pharmacy agents in Benin's two largest cities.

Strengthening Education and Training Systems

For almost 30 years IntraHealth has worked in countries around the world to improve pre-service education and in-service training programs that support improved quality of family planning and

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The people and government of the United States have supported this health-promoting work via the funding and technical partnership of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

IntraHealth International mobilizes local talent to create sustainable and accessible health care in developing countries. A not-for-profit organization, IntraHealth has worked in more than 50 countries over the last three decades.

reproductive health services. This work includes curricula development, institutional and faculty strengthening, training of trainers, information system strengthening, and the design and adaptation of on-the-job and alternative learning approaches.

Recent highlights of this work include completing a national-level training of family planning trainers in Rwanda as part of the government's initiative to reposition family planning and using the *Learning for Performance* approach to finalize family planning and reproductive health curriculum modules for a nursing school benefiting three underserved regions of Mali.

Integrating Family Planning with other Health Care Services

Chronic shortages of health workers in developing countries make it essential to leverage opportunities to integrate family planning services with other vital health care services. In Ethiopia, Namibia and Rwanda we have integrated family planning counseling and services with services to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Recent results from Rwanda show a 70% family planning acceptance rate among HIV-positive women at facilities where IntraHealth trained providers in family planning.

We supported private-sector nurse-midwives in Kenya to integrate family planning counseling and services with treatment for women suffering complications from unsafe or incomplete abortion—a key strategy to help these women prevent future unwanted pregnancies.

Expanding the Roles of Health Workers in Family Planning

IntraHealth has expertise in assisting countries to capitalize on opportunities to use a broader variety of health workers to deliver appropriate family planning services, supported by policy changes as necessary. In addition to pharmacy agents in Benin, we have worked to strengthen family planning services and awareness-raising through volunteer health promoters in the Dominican Republic, pediatricians and family physicians in Armenia, indigenous medicine practitioners in India and community outreach volunteers in Bangladesh.

Creating Adolescent-Friendly Services in Reproductive Health Clinical Settings

Adolescents, especially those engaged in high-risk sexual behaviors, are often among the hardest to reach with needed family planning and reproductive health services. In Uganda, Ghana and El Salvador, IntraHealth worked on programs to change provider attitudes about adolescents and attract youth to primary-level health care facilities for reproductive health services, including family planning for sexually active adolescents.

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