

TESTED SOLUTIONS FOR

# Engaging Men in Family Planning





# Encouraging Postpartum Couples to Consider Modern Contraception

Pregnancies during the postpartum period have a higher risk of adverse outcomes, including maternal and newborn death. A critical challenge to reduce unmet need among postpartum women is engaging their male partners effectively. In close collaboration with postpartum women, their partners, health workers, and the Uganda Ministry of Health, we developed a solution package that aims to boost support for modern contraceptive use, encourage couple communication, and empowers women as active, joint decision-makers.

Findings from a pilot test suggest that our solution package reshapes men's understanding of the risks and benefits of modern contraception, prompts open conversations between partners, and encourages information-seeking at health facilities.





## How to Use This Guide

This tool guides you through the program components so you can see if you may want to adapt and implement this program in your own setting.

- 1** Learn more about the 3 different solutions that were tested
- 2** Consider how these could be useful for your programming
- 3** Download the actual files of the solutions for implementation
- 4** Read more about the formative research or pilot test results

# Tested Solutions



## “Together We Decide” Game

An interactive game through which players build wealth, make choices, and care for their families.

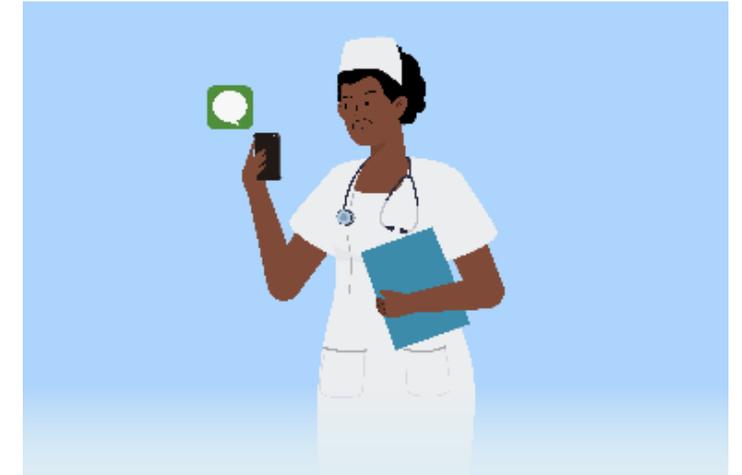
[EXPLORE](#)



## Child Spacing Planning Card

A card that encourages couples to talk about child spacing and contraception and visit a health clinic for further information.

[EXPLORE](#)



## Text Messages

Text messages sent to health workers to remind and encourage them to engage in conversations with men and women about child spacing.

[EXPLORE](#)



# “Together We Decide” Game

Creating a safe, fun space to learn and discuss child spacing with peers

Men play an important role in decision-making about child spacing and contraceptive use, but education and outreach programs primarily target women. Moreover, because men often approach these choices differently – with different priorities, assumptions, and preferences – strategies that are effective in increasing contraceptive use for women may fail to resonate with their partners.

**“Together We Decide” creates a safe space for men to discuss child spacing with peers in a manner that resonates with them. The game lets players “experience” the consequences of choices about child spacing and contraceptive use, build familiarity with contraceptive methods, and envision conversations with their partners and health workers.**

*“If you space your children well, you are able to save money and acquire wealth”*

**—Game participant**

*“[Players] were always eager to toss the dice and pick up the quiz card in order to try their luck answering the questions and earn more wealth”*

**—Game participant**

*“There was clapping and cheering for the winning household!”*

**—Game observer**



# How “Together We Decide” Works

1

Players gather in the community to play the game.



Creates a safe space to learn about child spacing methods and have open discussions.

2

Players are divided into “households” and pursue the goal of gaining as much wealth for their household as possible.



A relatable and competitive premise of the game engages players.

3

Players draw life event cards, which present choices about child spacing and contraception that result in financial losses or gains for the household.



Highlights unexpected costs, elevates perceived chances of pregnancy, and allows players to envision the benefits of contraception.

4

Players draw quiz cards, which give opportunities to build and demonstrate knowledge about contraception.



Combats misconceptions and builds confidence to engage in conversations and seek out more information.

5

Facilitators lead a discussion about child spacing.



Makes conversations about child spacing feel normal and comfortable.



# “Together We Decide” Game

## Considerations for Adaptation and Implementation

- You will need a game facilitator who has basic knowledge of family planning to read the card content. The facilitator does not need to be an expert in family planning, but can direct players to trained health workers for more information.
- The game is designed for 4-16 players and lasts about one hour.
- Players may benefit from attending multiple game sessions, which reinforces the content and allows them to demonstrate what they’ve learned.
- This game was designed to target men in postpartum relationships, but can be expanded to include other groups of men and/or their partners. If women are included, explore whether this impacts men’s comfort with learning and engaging with the content.

## Materials

[DOWNLOAD GAME INSTRUCTIONS](#)

[DOWNLOAD CARD CONTENT](#)

[EXPLORE MORE TESTED SOLUTIONS](#)



# Child Spacing Planning Card

Encouraging and modeling conversations and information-seeking

Couples often do not discuss the number and spacing of their children or whether to use contraceptives. Women may feel it's not their place to broach the topic of childbearing, and hence don't consider using contraceptives unless their partner proactively encourages it. Men may think the decisions about childbearing and contraception are theirs, but do not feel equipped with enough information to start a conversation.

**The Planning Card guides couples to make joint decisions about childbearing and child spacing. When brought to the clinics (as a couple, woman alone or man alone), it acts as a cue to begin conversations with health workers.**

*“[The cards] are very good, [they] carry the message and give couples confidence to come to the facility. They actually feel part of the facility when they have the cards.”*

**—Health worker**

*“At first men never wanted to be involved but now with the cards they are coming to the facility without fear.”*

**—Health worker**



# How the Child Spacing Planning Card Works

1

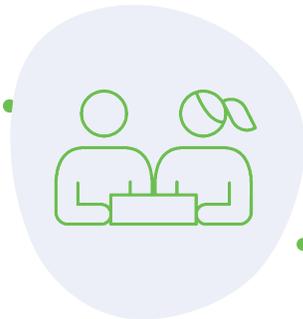
After learning about child spacing, a man or woman receives the card and is encouraged to begin a conversation with their partner about child spacing.



Models conversation, planning, and information-seeking, and makes it easier to start a sometimes awkward conversation.

2

Together, the couple decides and marks whether and when they want more children.



Prompts joint discussion and decision-making.

3

Together, the couple plans when they will visit a health clinic to learn more about contraception.



Generates a sense of commitment to follow through.

4

Couples see a range of contraceptive options and an invitation to discuss with health workers.



Welcomes couples to visit the clinic together and reinforces that there are options to meet their unique needs.

5

When the card is brought to a clinic, it serves as a physical cue to discuss child spacing.



Makes it easier for health workers or clients to initiate the conversation.



# Child Spacing Planning Card

## Considerations for Adaptation and Implementation

- In Uganda, the Planning Card was given to men after playing Together We Decide. The card can also be distributed in other moments when men or women learn about contraception and are encouraged to have conversations. It is designed to be distributed in communities and/or health facilities, to men and/or women.
- The Planning Card is designed to be appropriate for recipients with low levels of literacy, but who can read simple phrases in English or their local language. Descriptive images supplement the text to make it more easily understandable.
- The content and images used in the Planning Card may need to be adjusted for cultural relevance and to match the contraceptive options available in another setting.

## Materials

[DOWNLOAD PLANNING CARD](#)

[EXPLORE MORE TESTED SOLUTIONS](#)



# Text Messages to Health Workers

Reminding and motivating health workers to discuss child spacing with clients

Health workers do not consistently raise the topic of child spacing with all clients because they make assumptions about who needs and wants to hear about child spacing and contraception. Some assume that men who don't proactively ask about contraception don't want to hear about it. In addition, health workers' busy schedules and many responsibilities can cause them to focus on the immediate needs that seem most urgent, even if they intend to raise the topic more often.

**Text messages sent to health workers remind and motivate them to consistently discuss child spacing methods with clients, including men.**

*“Since the messages motivated me, I make sure clients receive all the necessary counseling they need”*  
—**Health worker**

*“The messages helped us bring on-board more staff to actively participate in supporting FP services”*  
—**Health worker**



# How the Text Messages Work

**1**

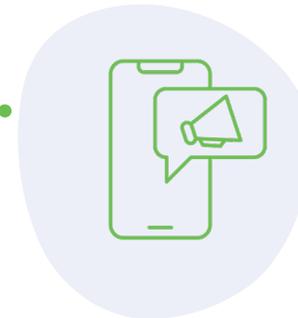
Reminder text messages are sent weekly or bi-weekly reminding health workers of the broad range of clients who can benefit from family planning counseling.



Reinforces the importance of consistently broaching the topic of child spacing with men and women.

**2**

Motivational text messages are sent weekly or bi-weekly to health workers who provide family planning counseling and services.



Acknowledges efforts and encourage health workers to keep providing high quality family planning counseling.



# Text Messages

## Considerations for Adaptation and Implementation

- The text messages will be most effective if sent to health workers who are trained and prepared to offer family planning and who have mobile phones and cell reception in clinics.
- In Uganda, the text messages were sent once a week on Mondays to ensure health workers could start their week with motivation and encouragement to provide family planning services.

## Materials

[DOWNLOAD TEXT MESSAGE CONTENT](#)

[EXPLORE MORE TESTED SOLUTIONS](#)

# Additional Resources

## LEARN MORE:

- **Supporting Couples to Make Active, Joint-Decisions About Childbearing**
- **Global Health Science and Practice Technical Exchange Presentation**



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## Together, couples can choose the timing and spacing of their children.

For more information about our tested solutions to improve uptake of family planning among postpartum women, contact the **ideas42 Global Health Team** at [gh@ideas42.org](mailto:gh@ideas42.org)