

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING FAMILY PLANNING SERVICE DELIVERY

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Case Scenario

Male Leaders Participate in Mrs
Ndere's Family Planning Program

Increasing Community Participation in Family Planning Programs

Editors' Note

Community participation has long been recognized as an effective means of helping rural and urban people focus energy and mobilize resources to solve their health, environmental, and economic problems. When people from the community organize, plan, share tasks with professionals, contribute financially to projects or programs, and help make decisions about activities that affect their lives, programs are more likely to achieve their objectives.

Several countries have created ways for communities to participate in their family planning programs. They have found that individuals make better choices about contraception when they participate in the family planning program activities in their villages or urban neighborhoods.

Drawing on experience from Indonesia and Bangladesh, this issue explores ways that communities can participate in promoting and providing family planning services. It presents the conditions needed for effective community participation, and discusses approaches to planning, monitoring, and supporting community teams so that they can actively participate in local family planning program activities.

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—The Editors

The Family Planning Manager

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Understanding the Need for Community Participation in Family Planning Programs

Over the next decade, as resources become increasingly scarce, managers of family planning programs will have to rely more on the community for promoting, delivering, and paying for family planning services. To do this, managers will need to create an environment in which the community can actively participate in the family planning program.

By involving the community in promoting the family planning program, managers will gain greater support from the community and will find that the community takes more responsibility for making sure the program achieves its objectives. In addition, because practicing family planning frequently means that people need to make behavioral changes, involving community members in the family planning program can make these behavioral changes more acceptable and consistent with community norms.

By involving the community in delivering services, family planning managers can build on existing resources to improve service quality and expand access to services, for example, by organizing a team of volunteers to provide basic family planning services in rural villages.

To pay for services, managers will need to introduce cost recovery schemes. These schemes will allow managers to diversify their financial base. For example, managers may wish to cover some of the program costs by charging small fees for services, selling contraceptives, or subsidizing program costs by using people, materials, buildings, and equipment made available through the community.

This issue of *The Family Planning Manager* discusses some of the benefits of having the community participate in the local family planning program and explores ways to organize people in the community so that they can participate in family planning activities. It also explains how to prepare and implement a community participation initiative within a family planning program and how to measure the results of the community participation activities. ■

The Benefits of Community Participation

Having the community participate in the family planning program has many benefits; some of these are discussed below.

Benefits of Community Participation	How Benefits are Achieved
Increased commitment to family planning	When residents of a community actively participate in making decisions about family planning, people gain a better understanding of the health and economic benefits of family planning and thus increase their commitment to strengthening and expanding the program to reach a wider population.
Additional program resources	In addition to offering some of their time, community members often bring financial and material resources to the program. Existing stores or buildings may be offered to the program to be used on a shared basis at little or no cost.
Increased client motivation	Communities that take an active interest in the progress of a family planning program will develop improved approaches to motivating non-users to use contraceptives such as having citizen role models advocate for and promote responsible family planning practices.
More rapid program expansion	Working with community volunteers can help the family planning staff of governmental or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to reach more clients and expand program coverage.
Motivates government to include family planning in health services	In cases where family planning programs are not yet accepted as a part of government services, community participation can be an important source of pressure to get the government to recognize the need for family planning services.
Better solutions to service delivery problems	Involving the community in the program can lead to a greater awareness of service delivery problems and often members of the community can suggest appropriate and effective solutions.
More consistent demand for family planning	Meeting regularly to discuss family planning issues and program operations and to make decisions about how to carry out activities is important to building a feeling of community ownership of the program.
More effective planning and management	Involving the community in the program can lead to more effective planning, management, and use of resources for the whole community-based program.
Creates a bridge to other populations	Members of the community can serve as a bridge to segments of the community that may be hard to reach through formal program channels.

Making Community Participation Effective

Community participation in family planning programs occurs when members of the community actively participate in local family planning activities. Sometimes a community will select representatives who are designated to work in partnership with medical and administrative counterparts from family planning organizations to plan, implement, and monitor family planning activities. The activities

carried out by these community representatives supplement and support the activities of the family planning organizations.

By collaborating with members of the local government, citizen leaders, and people from the private sector, family planning managers can obtain access to additional human and financial resources. Organizing and managing these community resources can help managers to improve client motivation, service delivery, and contraceptive use.

Does Your Community Participate in Family Planning?

Do members of the community work on behalf of your program with governmental and non-governmental groups to promote a family planning agenda that supports your program?

Does family planning get on the agenda of public meetings?

Are special community meetings regularly arranged to discuss family planning?

Do community members help to set family planning program objectives and monitor the program's performance?

Does your family planning program benefit from human, financial, and material resources available from within your community?

Do members of your community educate and motivate potential clients to use family planning services?

Are members of the community actively engaged in family planning activities, such as distribution of contraceptives, client follow up, and referral services?

Requirements for Effective Community Participation

Community participation in family planning does not come about through good intentions alone; it must be carefully managed in order to be successful, sustainable, and beneficial to the community. Effective community participation requires that managers find ways for community members to participate in the family planning program.

Managers should help the community establish:

- clear goals and objectives for their participation;
- clear responsibilities and functions for working with the family planning team;
- specific activities related to the objectives they have set.

Creating Ways for the Community to Participate in the Family Planning Program

Creating a program that actively involves community members usually requires bringing family planning services as close to the community as possible. Managers need to identify individuals in their community who can actively participate in their programs, and develop a clear set of activities that these community members can undertake to actively support family planning.

As a manager, you should discuss the strategies presented below with your staff, members of your community, managers of other programs, and local government officials. Work with the community to make a plan for incorporating some of these approaches into your program. You may need to phase in activities over time, or combine several different approaches that are appropriate to your particular setting.

Organizing People to Participate in the Family Planning Program

Managers can create program bridges to the community by organizing people to promote and deliver family planning services. You can start by developing and establishing relationships with some of the following types of organizations.

Local non-governmental organizations. Program managers from the public or private sectors can work with other local NGOs to mobilize community members concerned about family planning. These community organizations can carry out a variety of activities that will promote and educate members of the community about family planning.

Community-based service organizations. Program managers can work with community-based organizations that provide services in areas such as literacy, education, agricultural extension, and water and sanitation systems. Family planning education can be incorporated into the activities of these organizations.

Local governmental organizations. Program managers can collaborate with local governmental organizations such as schools, health agencies, or hospitals. By sharing information and resources, including government officials in local program planning, and looking for ways to promote the local government agenda through family planning activities, managers can help to encourage participation in the family planning program.

Special clubs for user groups. Program managers can work with existing clubs for mothers, youths, and men. These clubs can address the special needs, issues, and problems that club members are likely to face in using contraception effectively and can help prevent discontinuation. Clubs can promote greater awareness of the benefits of family planning, link members to income-generating activities, and inspire members to motivate other members of the community to accept family planning. Clubs often give rewards or prizes for exceptional performance in continued use of contraceptives or for motivating other community members. This helps to provide an incentive to be a model contraceptive user and creates role models for other community members to emulate.

Promoting the Use of Family Planning

You can build into your program some opportunities for the community to promote and reinforce the use of family planning.

Create public recognition. Program managers can give awards to those community members whose behavior and public support for family planning provide a good example to the community. These awards create public awareness of the importance of family planning and provide the recipients with greater social prominence and a larger voice in community affairs.

Continued on the next page

Develop new clubs or forums. Program managers can identify special groups in the community that are hard to reach and can work with community representatives to develop new clubs or forums for promoting family planning among these potential clients. Often an existing community center can be used for holding meetings, or community participants may be willing to hold meetings in their homes.

Provide opportunities for skills development. Program managers can provide formal or informal vocational training to continuing family planning users that can result in greater employment opportunities.

Develop economic opportunities. Program managers can develop simple agricultural credit and income-generating activities that provide continuing users with access to capital for developing and supporting their business or agricultural initiatives.

Delivering Services to the Greater Community

You can create a wide range of service delivery activities in which the community can participate. Following is a discussion of several types of community-based service delivery systems for promoting family planning and distributing contraceptives.

Community-based services (CBS). The program site is the community. Usually, several members of the community are selected and trained to visit people in their homes on a regularly scheduled basis to motivate them to use contraceptives; to supply oral contraceptives, condoms, and injectables; and to follow up on clients who have questions, complaints, or side-effects. These community members, neighbors, or relatives of the clients can often make family planning more acceptable to clients and can serve as role models for potential users. Because they often live in the community, they can respond rapidly to questions or problems which, if unattended, could lead to discontinuation or ineffective use of a contraceptive. These community representatives are sometimes paid for their work or may receive payment in kind.

Depot services. A “depot holder” system is a variation of the community-based distribution system. In this arrangement, a member of the community stores several months’ supply of condoms and oral contraceptives and is responsible for distributing them. This person is often paid a small fee as compensation for time and effort and as an incentive for continuing to provide the service. The depot holder system ensures that a person in a permanent location is available all the time to provide information and contraceptive supplies. This approach requires that only a few community members be involved in the family planning program. However, the depot holder represents an important first step in promoting participation in family planning at the local level.

Satellite services. Family planning and maternal and child health (MCH) services can be provided by clinic personnel and volunteers at specific times and at designated locations in the community. These services help to increase the acceptance of family planning services because they provide a setting where family planning can be integrated with MCH services. This approach also provides an opportunity for many different community members to contribute to the program and advances the institutionalization of family planning in the community.

Volunteer services. These services involve community members who may work up to several hours a day to assist government workers or professional field workers employed by local NGOs. Similar to full-time family planning workers, these volunteers carry out functions related to motivation, resupply, and follow up but generally serve only 20 to 30 households. They may receive some tangible rewards: a small honorarium for their efforts, reimbursement for their travel expenses, materials or uniforms that identify them as volunteers, or refreshments during volunteer meetings. Often volunteers come from the same social sector as the clients they serve, so they can be very effective in generating enthusiasm for family planning within their community. With some training and supervision, they can be a powerful force for expanding program coverage.

Using Volunteers to Provide Family Planning and MCH Services

In Indonesia, the major responsibility of government field workers is to manage a complex set of community activities, to perform on-the-job training, and to supervise a large team of volunteer workers. Government field workers no longer carry out direct motivation and contraceptive distribution: that role has now been almost entirely taken over by grassroots volunteer workers of various kinds.

The Posyandu

The major event for which these volunteer workers are responsible is called the *Posyandu*, an acronym for “post for integrated services.” It signifies both the event and the location for the major source of maternal, child health, and family planning services in rural Indonesia. *Posyandus* are conducted once a month in 225,000 sub-villages in Indonesia each year. A *Posyandu* might be held in a villager’s house, in the village community hall, or any place large enough or easily accessible to village residents. The staff of the sub-district health center provide immunizations and other types of simple medical care in about one fifth of the *Posyandus*, but in the others volunteer workers provide most of the services.

The Five-Table-System

Posyandu activities are organized around the “five-table-system,” and the specific functions performed at each table are identical throughout Indonesia. Children are registered at Table 1, weighed at Table 2, and the results are recorded in the child’s growth chart at Table 3. At Table 4, the mother is given information on how to improve her child’s health (through better nutrition, oral rehydration, immunization, breastfeeding, and/or postponing the birth of a subsequent child). At Table 5, the child is given any medical treatment needed and a supplementary snack prepared by the volunteers.

Family planning clients follow a similar system. A potential or existing contraceptive user goes first to Table 1 to be registered, then to Table 4 (the information and motivation table) to discuss with the volunteer her interest in becoming a contraceptive user, any problems with her existing contraceptive use, or her desire to change her contraceptive method. If the woman is new to family planning, or if she has problems beyond the capability of the worker at Table 4, she is referred to Table 5 where she is seen by the government health center official who is usually a trained midwife. If the woman presents serious health problems, or needs a contraceptive method not provided at the *Posyandu*, the midwife will refer her to the sub-district health center or to the hospital in the nearest urban community. In many cases *Posyandus* offer IUDs and contraceptive implants as well as simpler contraceptive methods.

Volunteer Responsibilities

Volunteers use the preparatory and evaluation meetings that take place before and after each *Posyandu* to plan their family planning activities. The time, the location, and the broad objectives of the *Posyandu* have usually been decided beforehand, but volunteers meet three days before to make decisions about which women and children should receive special attention, who will be responsible for providing that attention, and who will be responsible for providing the supplementary snack. Two days before the *Posyandu*, volunteers go house-to-house to encourage their neighbors to attend. The day before the *Posyandu*, they check to see that all the equipment and provisions are in place. After the *Posyandu*, they meet to evaluate their achievements and prepare data to report to higher levels.

[Source: Hamijoyo and Chauls, 1992]

Creating a Favorable Environment for Community Participation

Before beginning efforts to promote community participation, managers must strengthen their programs so that they are able to support the work of community members. Following is a discussion of some of the things that you can do to help introduce a community participation initiative.

Encourage local decision-making in the family planning program. A national family planning program that promotes decentralization as a means of improving its performance will increase the local manager's ability to get support from community members, local program providers and administrators, and local government authorities. Decentralization helps to bring the decision-making process closer to the people who will be most affected by the decisions. Under decentralization, the program office at the national level gives authority to local levels such as provinces, districts, subdistricts, or municipalities to make certain types of decisions concerning resource allocation and the implementation of various programs. Policies that support decentralization permit managers to develop strategies that are appropriate to the local environment, encourage positive attitudes toward family planning, and improve program performance.

Involve other voluntary organizations in your program. Family planning programs that involve local NGOs in their work are often able to mobilize additional resources for implementing their programs. These additional resources can be used to carry out a variety of activities that the government program may not be able to afford. Such activities, planned and implemented by community members who belong to the NGOs, help the community to identify more closely with the family planning program. Furthermore, by adding its own resources to the program, the community is likely to be more interested in program success and to hold family planning program managers accountable for program performance.

Identify leaders in the community. Community participation may require new strategies for delivering family planning services, including new types of service sites or personnel. Community participation may also require establishing relationships among government and NGO facilities and may involve changes in the roles of family planning providers as they work more closely with the community. To make community participation effective, resources may need to be transferred from government agencies to the community. This type of change may be met with strong resistance from firmly established interests. Strong leadership that encourages managers to take risks and try out new approaches becomes imperative. Effective leaders will defend the interests of the community and advocate for change among policy makers and other sectors of society.

Develop skills within the community. As the community becomes more involved in implementing the family planning program, community members will need new skills in order to perform their new functions. Family planning managers can provide different kinds of technical support to community members so that they can assume a greater role in preparing action plans, training volunteers and members of different committees to help implement the program, accounting for resources, monitoring expenditures, supervising activities in the field, and monitoring the progress of the program.

Find resources within the community to encourage and support participation. Incentives that promote change are more effective motivators than incentives that compensate for work done. Incentives can take many different forms and include increased access to agricultural, credit, and small business programs. Managers should emphasize to community members the improved social and economic status that having a smaller family will eventually bring about.

Obtain outside sources of funds to initiate community activities. Even when the community mobilizes some of its own resources through donations, levies, user fees, or reallocation of budgetary sources, it may still require additional funds for starting new activities, training volunteers, or equipping satellite service sites. Small incentive grants can help to give the communities the extra push they need to maintain momentum for their community participation initiative.

Guard against creating dependencies

Often donors are the principal sources of incentive grants. However, once the community approach takes off and starts to produce tangible results, managers should consider ways to increase community contributions. Whenever outside resources are being used as incentives, managers need to be on guard against creating dependencies that can subvert sustainability.

Preparing for Community Participation

The community participation initiative needs to be carefully prepared. Acquiring basic information about the current program and meeting with key people are important first steps in ensuring that your community participation initiative will be successful. The final step in the preparation process is to develop a long-term plan for community participation.

Prepare a geographic and demographic profile of the local area. To prepare this profile, which you will use when you define and select the community or communities you will serve, you will need maps that identify the location and distribution of the population, the administrative divisions, and the physical geography of your region. Local planning and administrative offices may be able to supply you with this information. If you cannot obtain it, you may have to create your own map. Communities that you identify can be of various sizes and encompass

different administrative groupings, depending on whether they are in urban or rural areas. The communities can be based on existing divisions such as villages, or on various groupings that you determine. (For more information on how to prepare and use maps, see Volume I, Number 5 of *The Family Planning Manager* “Using Maps to Improve Services.”)

Conduct a baseline survey of family planning program performance. Baseline information for the local family planning program can be taken from the program’s information system or, for larger administrative units, can usually be obtained from special national surveys such as the Contraceptive Prevalence Survey (CPS) or Demographic and Health Survey (DHS). If the data from the information system are not reliable or if the special survey results are difficult to obtain or out of date, you can conduct a rapid survey in the communities in the region. Data in the baseline survey should include the number of men and women of reproductive age and the number of current family planning acceptors. Baseline information will help to define community boundaries and set performance objectives for individual communities.

Meet with local government officials and local NGO staff. To develop a common understanding of the goals of community participation and to identify resources for providing community action incentives, it is important to meet with local government and NGO staff. *All senior officials who have influence or decision-making authority at the local level should be contacted and involved in the planning process from the start.* Their help will be needed in getting administrative approvals, in allocating resources, and in expanding the program as time goes on. In meetings with local medical officers, representatives from the interior or local government ministry, board members and executive directors from local NGOs, and local elected officials, you should build consensus about the meaning of community participation, what elements should be included, how communities should be defined, and how the strategy fits into the national program.

Never underestimate the importance of including national and senior officials

Even after your plan has been completed, make sure you continue to include national and senior officials in special community events. The presence of senior officials tells the community that its work is important and that it is valued by the nation. These officials should be present when the action plan is presented at a community meeting, at the opening of special events such as campaigns, or at special training programs. It is also very beneficial to include senior officials in meetings or workshops in which the results of the program are presented.

Develop a community participation plan. Once this consensus is reached, you should draft a preliminary community participation plan together with members of the community. The plan should show how the process of introducing community participation will proceed over a specified period of time. This plan should focus on elements related to community participation, such as establishing a definition of community, developing criteria for selecting communities, and identifying resources that the community will contribute. The same principles used in developing a program plan should be applied to developing a plan for community participation. (For more information on developing program plans, please refer to Volume II, Number 4 of *The Family Planning Manager*, “Developing Plans and Proposals for New Initiatives.”) When developing your plan, consider the following questions.

What defines a community unit? The community unit will depend on the size of the population, its density, and its rural-urban distribution. In selecting the unit, you should try to find a community group that has a sufficient number of women of reproductive age, resources, and potential leaders to support local activities. In rural areas, units can be large villages or groups of small villages under one

administrative authority. In urban settings, the units can be wards or municipal subdivisions that have their own representatives or local government institutions.

How will the communities be selected?

Performance criteria should be considered first. In countries where contraceptive prevalence is generally high, many managers prefer to choose communities with the highest contraceptive prevalence rates. Often such performance indicates that the community is well-organized, motivated, and suitable for taking on the responsibility of managing its own program. The selection can be made based on the baseline data that you have collected.

In areas where contraceptive prevalence is low, managers may choose communities on the basis of interest, commitment, and leadership. Usually a community’s willingness to contribute resources as well as the amount of resources, whether in cash or kind, is a good indicator of its interest.

What resources will be needed? The program manager needs to be assured that resources will be made available from within and outside the community. The manager will have to negotiate these resources with the national program, donors, and community leaders. As part of your negotiations, you should plan for the community to make contributions in cash or in kind that represent a certain percentage of the total budget for the action plan. (Ten percent is reasonable for the first year.) In general, the first year’s budget may be relatively large because of start-up costs. Therefore, you may need to find some additional outside funding to supplement the community’s contribution in order to provide the necessary incentives for the plan to be implemented. ■

Build a Community Team

Because the community team will represent the larger community, it is important to create a diverse team that represents different social, commercial, and political sectors of the community. The team members will need to be oriented to work together collaboratively, be focused on achieving common goals and objectives, and be adequately trained so that they can effectively plan and implement their community activities.

Form your team. As a manager, your task will be to develop a team of different community members who can represent the community at large so that the community participation is not seen as a special interest of one group in the community. The ideal team could be composed, for example, of four or five persons such as a medical officer, a local family planning provider, a prominent community member such as a teacher or business owner, a religious leader, and a local administrative officer. Ideally, the team should have at least as many women as men.

Educate your team about the benefits of community participation. Team members will need an orientation that will show them how they can become effective participants in the family planning program. It is helpful to provide examples—from your country and other countries—of successful community participation in family planning or other development programs. Team members who have the opportunity to see community participation in action in neighboring communities are usually highly motivated to adopt new techniques or adapt them to their own situation.

Establish an organizational chart. The community action plan should include an organizational chart showing how the community will be organized to carry out the activities. Special committees that are set up to bring people together to discuss planning, implementation, and monitoring, or to carry out specific activities, will help ensure that action takes place. Task descriptions for each of the committees should be prepared. As the committees begin to function, it may be helpful to provide additional training on how to prepare agendas, hold meetings, and prepare reports.

Train your team in planning and implementation skills. The training for community members should be simple and brief, focusing on the skills that are essential for carrying out their activities: preparing action plans, organizing and conducting meetings, supervising volunteers, and accounting for funds and other resources.

In working with the team, you should provide models of action plans, supervisory checklists, and accounting procedures that the team can adapt as they plan and implement their local program of activities. Emphasize learning by doing.

Conducting Observation-Study Visits to Educate your Team

The Local Initiatives Program in Bangladesh has developed a program of visits to neighboring communities where family planning programs are already working with the local community. These visits are called *observation-study visits*. They are carefully planned visits with clear objectives and a well-organized program of observation, meetings with community members, and time for reflection and discussion about the observations. The observation-study visits emphasize how the community plans and chooses activities to support the national program, and how it makes decisions, implements activities, solves problems, and monitors its programs. These visits usually take about one week, not counting travel time.

The visits also emphasize the roles of different members of the community such as government officials, NGO leaders, health personnel, family planning providers, and volunteers from the community at large, especially women. The managers of this program offer the following advice:

- To explore the possibilities of conducting observation-study visits to other communities, the family planning manager should contact national program officials, counterparts in other development sectors, and donors working at the community level. Very often the donors will know about community development programs that can serve as models and will have resources available to sponsor observation-study visits.
- If observation-study visits are not feasible, approaches to orientation may have to be more theoretical with some trial and error until the appropriate approach is developed. Access to books on community development activities can facilitate this process. There is a considerable amount of literature available on this subject. In many instances there are local organizations that specialize in community development, and these organizations are usually willing to help.

Developing the Action Plan

The action plan is one of the most important elements of the community participation initiative. The action plan sets forth the objectives for improving program performance, the activities that will be carried out to supplement the activities of the national program, the persons in the community who are responsible for carrying out the activities, and the resources that will be used to support the activities. Managers should work with the community team to develop the action plan.

Prepare a budget for carrying out the plan.

One of the most important elements of a successful action plan is a realistic budget. In developing the community's action plan, you should set an upper

limit on the budget to help minimize the possibility of community members building in costs that the program cannot afford.

The budget should be as detailed as possible and show the cost of each activity. The budget might cover costs for equipment, reimbursement for transportation of volunteers, refreshments for meetings, special signs for information, education, and communication (IEC) campaigns, or materials for making maps. Wherever possible, the community should make contributions in kind. The budget should not include salaries, honoraria, or any materials already provided by the national family planning program. When working on the action plan

Develop Effective Objectives for Your Community Participation Plan

The objectives of an action plan should be aimed at improving family planning program performance through community involvement. They should describe the contribution that community participation activities will make toward the achievement of the overall objectives of the family planning program. Community participation objectives can focus on: conducting a specified number of special campaigns to recruit additional volunteers; a targeted number of people to be educated about family planning; a number or percentage of clients to be referred for follow up; the number of satellite service sites to be set up to provide long-term methods; the number of clubs to be established for different community groups; or the number of users to be linked to income-generating programs or credit schemes.

Try to write your objectives so that you will be able to measure the extent to which the planned activities contribute to achieving the program objectives. For example, a current objective for your program might be to decrease the percentage of teenage pregnancies. To support this program objective, your community team can develop a plan to organize youth clubs and special events to educate sexually active youth about the prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The community participation objective would then be related to the program objective as follows:

Sample community participation objective: *To establish two community youth clubs in the next year to educate sexually active youth about the prevention of pregnancy and STDs and to provide access to contraceptives to decrease the number of teenage pregnancies.*

with the community family planning team, you should call attention to all unnecessary items and costs in order to help the team keep the budget to a minimum. (For more information on developing budgets, please refer to Volume II, Number 4 of *The Family Planning Manager*, “Developing Plans and Proposals for New Initiatives.”)

The first year’s budget is likely to be close to this limit because of start-up costs such as uniforms, equipment for volunteers, or tables and chairs. Subsequent budgets should be lower because the costs for these items will not need to be repeated and because everyone will have gained more experience and will have a better idea of what costs are necessary. As the total budget decreases, the community’s share should gradually increase until it can cover all costs.

Set up an accounting system to track the disbursement and use of funds. Along with the budget, the family planning manager must help the community to set up a simple accounting system. An accounting system is one way of ensuring accountability for the implementation of the action plan. It will help to ensure that all resources are used as planned, and that the community family planning team operates within the guidelines of the plan.

The accounting system should be simple but compatible with the accounting procedures used by the clinic or program. To the extent that it is possible, the family planning manager should audit community finances at least annually. This will also help to reinforce the concept of accountability.

Check your plan. When developing the plan, make sure your objectives are specific and measurable. An effective plan should be widely replicable, show results quickly, and be cost effective. It is helpful to check your plan against these three criteria:

- **Replicability.** Although community participation takes place on a community-by-community basis, managers must be able to mobilize enough communities in a relatively short time to affect program performance. Community participation should be implemented in several communities simultaneously, and new communities should be brought into the program annually.
- **Timeliness of results.** The plan should be designed so that some results will be visible within a reasonable period of time after community participation activities have begun. For example, if a national program sets a five-year period to meet its objectives, managers at lower levels should expect to see results within two or three years.
- **Cost.** The plan should be designed so that the cost the initiative is reasonable and the results of can be determined. Tangible benefits in the areas of improving quality, expanding coverage, and strengthening demand and sustainability should be identifiable. ■

Monitoring and Supervising Community Participation

Community participation requires supervision and monitoring. Staff should coordinate a visit to the communities at least three times per year, and more if the community needs additional support. Each visit will take at least one day and possibly longer, so the family planning program will need to be able to cover the food and travel expenses of the supervisors.

Developing guidelines for supervisors and the community to use during these visits is extremely useful and will help to direct attention to critical elements in the community participation initiative. The guidelines should specify indicators and suggest

questions to ask, observations to make, and records to check. The guidelines should also include criteria that help to assess how well the community is conducting activities and achieving the intended results. The following general indicators and specific information on the community's ability to carry out activities can be monitored jointly by the supervisor and community team members.

Status of the action plan implementation.

Determine which activities have been completed, rescheduled, or are currently scheduled for implementation. Check with local family planning providers to verify the status of special activities. Also review the status of community contributions in cash and in kind.

Knowledge and attitudes about the community participation plan and special activities. Try to determine how aware people in the community are of the objectives of the community action plan and how well the plan has been accepted. If any special activities have occurred, determine if they were well attended, how they were received by the community, and the extent to which the community provided support for these activities.

Organization of the community to carry out special activities. Determine whether the community at large has been informed about any special or planned activities. Also check to see whether local family planning providers and other community members attend meetings regularly and jointly implement special activities.

Quality of implementation. Examine the activities being conducted by the community. These might include such activities as motivational visits by volunteers, depot holder activities, satellite services, and special users clubs. Assess the representativeness of community participation, how frequently volunteer turnover occurs, whether volunteers have been trained, and the need for resources to support the activities of the community team members.

Control systems for managing supplies and money. Make sure that contraceptive supplies are accounted for and that all accounts are in balance. ■

Assessing Community Participation Performance

Once community participation has begun, the performance of the initiative should be assessed from two perspectives:

- How successful the communities are in assuming responsibility for selected family planning activities;
- How successful community is participation in improving family planning program performance.

Remember that the purpose of involving the community is to improve the performance of the family planning program. Keep in mind that the plan has been developed to *improve quality, expand coverage, and strengthen the sustainability of the program—through the continued use of family planning and the contribution of resources by the community in support of the program*. You will need to develop indicators of quality, expansion, and sustainability to determine in what ways community participation is contributing to the performance of the family planning program.

Sample Indicators for Assessing the Performance of Community Participation

The following sample list shows some indicators that may be useful in assessing community participation and program performance. The community family planning team should be involved in selecting the indicators. If you use some of these indicators, you will need to determine with your community team members what performance levels you expect to achieve. The indicators below should be expressed as numbers or as percentages.

Quality Indicators

- Women who had ob/gyn problems diagnosed and treated correctly at satellite service sites before receiving a contraceptive method
- Men and women of reproductive age at high risk of pregnancy or STDs referred to clinic for services
- Discontinuers who were brought back into the program by community workers
- Volunteers who received refresher training
- Clients referred for long-term methods

Expansion Indicators

- New contraceptive users
- New male and adolescent users
- Men and women accepting sterilization
- Clients requesting long-term methods
- People attending motivational meetings

Sustainability Indicators

- Active community members
- Facilities providing special services for sexually active youth
- Communities charge fees for services while maintaining or increasing contraceptive use

In addition to looking at the long-term indicators of quality, expansion, and sustainability, you should measure short-term performance using standard *input* indicators, such as the numbers of people visited for motivation, as well as standard *output* indicators, such as the number of new contraceptive acceptors. The family planning manager can use focus groups, exit interviews, and a variety of rapid assessment techniques to determine if changes in these indicators can be attributed to the community participation strategy. ■

Providing Technical Support

A community participation initiative is relatively easy to launch, but sustaining the effort requires considerable support over time. As a manager, you will need to make sure that you support the community family planning team. This support should be closely linked to the periodic assessments that will help to show the community's ability to implement and manage their activities. As you find weaknesses in their capabilities, you should take immediate action to improve their skills.

Types of Support the Community Team May Need

There are many different types of support that you may need to provide depending on the capabilities and experience of the community members and representatives. Most of the skills required will be practical techniques in organizing and using time efficiently. Some will be more sophisticated techniques involving problem-solving and integrating family planning with other development projects. The following list suggests the types of support you may need to provide to your community teams.

- Organizing planning workshops to prepare subsequent action plans
- Ensuring that women are involved in planning and implementation meetings
- Establishing criteria for selecting volunteers
- Training community field workers to supervise volunteers
- Identifying income-generation projects
- Preparing agendas, taking minutes, and leading discussions
- Keeping accurate records of activities
- Determining suitable ratios between volunteers and eligible couples
- Preparing schedules for satellite services
- Preparing annual schedules for monthly meetings of the committees
- Training in how to use information on family planning services to assess program performance
- Conducting supervisory visits to assess special activities carried out under the action plan
- Preparing schedules for supervisory visits to the field that are based on the action plan
- Auditing accounts
- Preparing financial reports

Publicizing and Sustaining the Community Participation Effort

All community participation efforts should include an annual one- to two-day program review workshop in which community teams and others involved in carrying out community-led activities meet to share their experiences; discuss specific approaches to improving quality; expanding coverage, and strengthening sustainability; and have a good time. These review workshops can help communities to share important lessons about improving program performance and can result in replicating successful approaches in neighboring communities. They can serve as a means of recognizing the achievements and contributions of all those from the community involved in the family planning program.

National family planning leaders should be invited to attend and participate in these workshops. The

organizers should produce a report on the workshop deliberations for wide distribution. Popularizing such workshops can often influence other managers and communities to launch community participation initiatives to improve family planning program performance.

As in all other endeavors, trust and confidence in the managers, providers, leaders, and officials who support community participation efforts will play a critical role in determining whether and how far the community goes in taking responsibility for the local family planning program. You can help to develop this trust and confidence by forming a strong partnership between the supporters of the initiative and the staff of the local family planning program. This partnership will unify the commitment to the goals of community participation and will help to make family planning an integral part of the community's efforts to improve its well-being. ■

Reviewers' Corner

A forum for discussing additional applications of FPM concepts and techniques

On replicating programs in other communities...*One reviewer emphasizes,* “Because different communities often have different local needs, managers should be careful not to replicate a community participation initiative without first conducting a survey of the community’s needs, including knowledge, attitudes and practices.”

On using community participation to recognize family planning needs...*One reviewer suggests,* “In cases where family planning programs are not yet an acceptable part of government service delivery programs, community participation becomes an important source of pressure and an effective strategy for getting politicians to recognize the needs of their constituents.”

On working with local shopkeepers...*One reviewer adds,* “Every community has a small shopping center or market area where people can buy common household items. These shopkeepers are usually trusted and respected members of the community and can serve as service delivery outlets in a community participation approach.”

On motivating volunteers...*One reviewer writes,* “Sometimes information can be a powerful incentive for volunteers. In our program, CBD workers are provided with service statistics so that they can readily see the results of their work. The data serves as a basis for discussion at meetings and has provided workers with an incentive to perform and has even resulted in some competition among workers. Now workers have a better understanding of why they need to collect data, what the data mean, and how the data is used.”

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Checklist for Increasing Community Participation

For Clinic Managers and Supervisors

- Explain to your staff the potential benefits of community participation and discuss ways in which your clinic might involve members of the community in your family planning program.
- Prepare a profile of the region and collect baseline data on the existing family planning program.
- Identify leaders and other members of the community to work with your program and create a community team.
- Develop a community participation action plan that sets forth a budget and clear objectives for the initiative.
- Train the community team in planning and implementation skills and work with them to clarify their roles and functions in the family planning program.
- Determine what kinds of technical support the community team needs and make sure that their essential needs are met.
- Publicize the results of the community participation program so that the community can see how the program is benefitting them.
- Invite senior government officials, local politicians, and influential members of the community to participate in your program and in any special events that you plan.
- Hold an annual review workshop to review the impact of the community participation initiative, making sure to look at the impact on the community and on the family planning program.

For Mid- and Senior-Level Managers

- Encourage clinic and program staff to work with the community to develop community participation plans and provide support to them in implementing those plans.
- Encourage local decision-making in the family planning program.
- Identify other clinics or programs in the country that could serve as community participation models.
- Secure the necessary resources for clinic and program managers to make observation-study visits to other family planning programs that have implemented a community participation initiative.

The Family Planning Manager is designed to help managers develop and support the delivery of high-quality family planning services. The editors welcome any comments, queries, or requests for free subscriptions. Please send to:



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