



Flexible Fund's New Grantee Meeting for Community- and Faith-Based Organizations

Meeting Brief

On January 9 and 10, 2012, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Population and Reproductive Health (PRH) convened a meeting with community and faith-based organizations to discuss implementation of community-based family planning (FP) in their organizational realities. A broad range of community and faith-based organizations attended, including Christian Connections for International Health (CCIH), International Youth Foundation, Medical Assistance Programs International, Salvation Army World Service, Save the Children, SIM USA, World Concern, WellShare International, World Relief, and World Vision.

The meeting was convened by PRH's PVO/NGO Flexible Fund and focused on issues pertaining to technical areas are critical to the successful implementation of community-based FP programs. The first day provided participants with an overview of USAID's FP program, including compliance to the laws regulating programs, limitations on expending U.S. Government (USG) funds, and an orientation on resources and technical support available. The second day was set aside for organizations to share how they integrate and/or foresee integrating FP into existing programs and discuss these integration strategies with other partners.

The overall objectives of the meeting were the following:

1. Provide participants with a brief orientation to USAID's FP program, compliance to the laws and policies that regulate FP activities, and appropriate expenditure of USG funds.
2. Provide a venue for participants to discuss integrating FP and create opportunities for shared learning and developing collaborations.
3. Share technical information on implementing FP projects and provide an overview of resources and technical support available.

Highlights from the Meeting

Twenty-six representatives from 10 community and faith-based organizations with members of USAID, ICF International, and World Learning participated in the meeting. The participants' primary goals were to share experiences, learn from one another's experiences and expertise, and discuss both technical and faith issues related to FP programming.

Day 1

Scott Radloff, Director of PRH for USAID, welcomed the participants and presented an overview of USAID's FP program, highlighting that voluntary FP is a key intervention for health and development and that USAID's program aligns with the Global Health Initiative and Millennium Development Goals. USAID currently has 24 priority FP countries, 23 additional assisted countries, and 21 countries that have graduated from the program. USAID has prioritized community-based FP, integration of FP into maternal and child health services, and funding to the field—with targeted support from headquarters.

Amie Batson, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Global Health for USAID, expressed the administration's appreciation for the work that community and faith-based organizations are doing and acknowledged that they face a huge challenge in that their programs must be efficient, effective, and sustainable, as well as immediate and fast. She also spoke about USAID Forward, the agency's ambitious reform effort, and using money to have maximum impact, which includes leveraging the skills of partners who play an important role in building local capacity and building local ownership.

Ray Martin, Executive Director of CCIH, presented an overview of faith and family planning. He highlighted some of the policies and positions of different religions on FP methods and summarized findings from a 2008 survey CCIH conducted with their members, which found that none were opposed to FP, providing it was de-linked from abortion and was not tied to any set of contraceptive methods. CCIH is mobilizing a greater global consensus on the importance of FP and was one of the initial endorsers of the Interfaith Declaration to Improve Family Health, which was drafted in Nairobi, Kenya, in June 2011, and promotes planning "the timing and spacing of their pregnancies consistent with [one's] faith."

Victoria Graham, Senior Technical Advisor for the PVO/NGO Flexible Fund for USAID and meeting facilitator, introduced participants to key opportunities and strategies for community-based FP programming and encouraged participants to consider how these important program elements could be included in their programs, including (1) task-shifting FP services to lower-level providers; (2) healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies; (3) abortion prevention and the importance of FP integration into post-abortion care; (4) integration of FP into postpartum services; (5) increasing community access to FP through mobile services; (6) addressing the needs of youth; and (7) using social and behavior change communication.

Beverly Johnston, Senior Policy Advisor at USAID/PRH, presented on the various legal and policy requirements that apply to USAID-funded FP programs. Many of the legislative and policy requirements that guide USG FP assistance are based on and support longstanding principles of quality of care, such as voluntarism and informed choice. The requirements also support a client-centered approach to deciding the number, timing, and spacing of children, and to respect reproductive health (RH) rights. In addition, she emphasized the importance of actively monitoring compliance and documenting all of the efforts being made to promote and monitor compliance.

Linda Cahaelen, Health Development Officer at USAID/PRH, presented on FP commodities. She explained the Reproductive Health Commodity Security (RHCS) Committee and how it plays an important role in achieving Millennium Development Goals 5 and 6. She strongly recommends that all community and faith-based organizations involve themselves in the process and join the appropriate RHCS Committee, which should exist in every country.

Susan Pascocello, Assistant General Counsel at USAID, discussed the impact of the Establishment Clause on USAID funding and program decisions. Faith-based organizations are afforded the opportunity to compete for funding for activities on equal footing with all other types of organizations, but it is not permissible to set aside procurements or assistance opportunities exclusively for faith-based organizations. USAID-funded programs must be secular in purpose, but faith-based organizations are still permitted to engage in their own religious activities with non-USAID funds.

Adrienne Allison, a Technical Advisor at World Vision U.S., spoke about World Vision's "seven steps" approach to integrating FP into their Mother-Child Health programs. She emphasized the importance of knowing the current data around healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies and using this data to inform program messages and advocacy efforts. She also encouraged working with FP champions as part of a successful strategy.

Leah Elliott, FP/Reproductive Health (RH) Technical Advisor with ICF International, **Amy Metzger**, Program Manager for CCIH, and **Douglas Huber**, Co-chair of the CCIH FP/RH Working Group, introduced key FP resources and talked about technical assistance available. Key resources highlighted included the Family Planning Handbook and Wall Chart (2011 update); eToolkits available through K4Health; USAID's eLearning courses; training curriculums, technical updates, and case studies available through the Flexible Fund Web site; and faith-based resources available through the CCIH Web site.

Day 2

Organization Presentations

The second day was set aside for organizations to share how they foresee integrating FP into existing programs and to discuss these integration strategies with other partners. Each organizational presentation included (1) a brief description of the organization and the current activities being implemented; (2) a thorough description of current and planned FP interventions, including a description of what program FP is integrated into

and what the main entry points are; and (3) which levels are engaged and how (e.g., policy, state, district, community). Following the presentations, time was set aside for participants to discuss each other's program in detail, creating opportunities for shared learning and collaboration.

Closing and Next Steps

Participants were pleased with the opportunity to share experiences, learn from one another's experiences and expertise, and discuss both technical and faith issues related to FP programming. They expressed appreciation for the participation of Amie Batson, Scott Radloff, Susan Pasocello, and others from USAID, and they welcome opportunities to work with USAID on addressing FP.

Some recurring themes that surfaced during the meeting included (1) the appreciation for the opportunity to come together with a group of peers and openly discuss FP programming within each organizational reality; (2) the challenges of implementing quality FP projects with limited funding; (3) the need for additional information on the types of religious messaging that can be included in USAID-funded programs; and (4) the desire to continue to work together as a group to increase participants knowledge on best practices in FP.

Next Steps

- Another Flexible Fund Partner's Meeting will be held in 1 year (early 2013), and participants will be invited to come together again and see what lessons have been learned over the past year.
- Participants agreed that formation of a listserv would be useful to continue these discussions on community-based FP, as well as to address technical support needs. CCIH will chair this listserv.
- CCIH will add FP sessions to their annual meeting, which will be held in mid-2012.