



FalahNama

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Message from the Chief of Party:

Dear Friends and Colleagues,



Over the last quarter, the USAID supported Family Advancement for Life and Health (FALAH) project in Pakistan achieved a number of crucial milestones. The major highlight was the completion of many of our training activities including sensitization sessions for religious leaders in the FALAH districts. Nearly 1,500 religious leaders in 15 FALAH districts have been trained on the benefits of the healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy (HTSP) in light of Islamic injunctions. Follow-up visits show that not only are religious leaders appreciative of the effort but also have started talking about the need for adopting HTSP in their sermons and interactions with community members. The sensitization has also in some cases influenced their personal lives as well. A heartwarming story of one of the beneficiaries is included later in this newsletter.

As part of its efforts to improve pre-service medical education, FALAH has developed a “Basic Minimum Family Planning Contents Package”. This package includes recent evidence-based technical information on contraceptive technology provided by JHPIEGO, which is an affiliate of John Hopkins University. The purpose of this package is to increase the knowledge of future medical practitioners to help them deal effectively with the reproductive health needs of their patients. This package has been endorsed by the University of Health Sciences in Lahore and Khyber Medical University in Peshawar. This package was introduced to public sector medical colleges affiliated with the Khyber Medical University at a workshop inaugurated by the Vice Chancellor of the university. FALAH continued its community mobilization activities through the Community Based Volunteers (CBVs) model. During the last quarter, over 86,300 men and women were reached and mobilized by CBVs working in areas not covered by Government of Pakistan (GOP) Lady Health Workers (LHWs). The CBVs provide information on the benefits of the healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy and the range of contraceptive choices available, and they address misconceptions and fears of side effects from using contraceptives.

FALAH worked closely with the National Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Program (NMNCH) to train master trainers on HTSP and provided

them with relevant information, education, and communication (IEC) materials for use by their community midwives (CMWs). The federal and provincial MNCH Programs endorsed the HTSP messages developed by FALAH. These messages help promote the benefits of healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy for improving the health of mother and children. FALAH provided a comprehensive briefing to District Managers in the health departments in 14 intervention districts on the importance and utility of geo-reference maps developed by FALAH showing the distribution of public and private sector health facilities and outlets in the district with reference to population density, human resources and infrastructure availability. District Managers also learned about a GIS separate application developed by FALAH, which can be customized to individual districts' needs and priorities.

We disseminated the results of an evaluation of trainings for LHWs on the Client Centered Approach (CCA). The six days CCA training explains the Salutation, Assessment, Help and Reassurance (SAHR) framework for holistically identifying client needs and helping them meet these needs through a process of information exchange. TNS Aftab Associates (Pvt) Ltd, an independent consulting firm, conducted the assessment, and the findings were shared at a dissemination workshop with the national and provincial coordinators of the National Program for Family Planning and Primary Health Care and members of the donor and NGO communities on June 7, 2011. The evaluation shows that in areas where the LHWs had been trained on the Client Centered Approach, the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) was significantly higher compared to the control areas. The clients of the trained LHW's were also better informed about HTSP messages and more satisfied with the services provided to them.

There was an early American Independence Day celebration at the residence of the U.S. Consul General in Lahore on June 30, 2011. FALAH, along with other USAID-funded projects, set up a stall to showcase project activities. FALAH displayed a range of IEC and training materials, which attracted a lot of attention from guests at the event.

The FALAH team looks forward to another rewarding quarter of continuing its activities to help improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Pakistan.

Dr Ali Mohammad Mir

HIGHLIGHTS

Dr. Marilyn Wyatt attends Women's Group Meeting conducted by FALAH in Jhelum

FALAH organized a visit to Jhelum in Punjab for Dr. Marilyn Wyatt, the wife of the U.S. Ambassador, and Ms. Shanda Steimer, the USAID FALAH Program Manager, on April 15, 2011. They observed a women's group meeting conducted by a Lady Health Worker trained by FALAH, interacted with the meeting participants, and had a discussion with the LHW on her work in the community. They also visited a Skills Lab at the Nursing School in Jhelum and observed the students using equipment and materials including an interactive e-learning package and a pelvic model used for practicing the insertion and removal of intrauterine devices (IUDs).

Dr. Wyatt also met with district managers who appreciated the support offered by USAID to help improve the lives of mothers and children in the district.



Dr. Marilyn Wyatt, wife of U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan observing a women's group meeting being conducted by a FALAH trained LHW in District Jhelum

FALAH's Participation at an American Independence Day Open House in Lahore

As part of an early American Independence Day celebration, an open house was held at the residence of the U.S. Consul General in Lahore on June 30, 2011. FALAH along with other USAID funded projects set up stalls on the occasion to showcase project activities. FALAH displayed its IEC materials and training manuals. The video documentary on the views of religious leaders regarding healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy was also shown throughout the evening and received much appreciation.



US Consul General, Ms. Carmela Conroy and Dr. Ali Mir CoP FALAH, at the FALAH stall

The stall was visited by many invitees who showed a keen interest in FALAH's activities and picked up FALAH publications. It also provided an opportunity for the different USAID funded projects to share experiences and learn from each other. The U.S. Consul General addressed the ceremony and reiterated the U.S. government's support for Pakistan's development through assistance in the fields of health, education, and women's empowerment.

NMNCH adopts FALAH's HTSP Messages

The National Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (NMNCH) program has endorsed HTSP messages developed by FALAH. These messages help promote the benefits of healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy to improve the health of mothers and children. A major achievement during this quarter was the issuance of an official notification by the NMNCH of including these messages in their communication strategy.

HTSP Messages on Regional FM channels

Six local FM channels including FM-99 in Dadu, FM-105 in Sanghar, FM 105 in Larkana, FM-92 Nooriabad in Karachi and Thatta, FM-91 in Ghotki, and FM-92 Khairpur in Sukkur have aired daily key HTSP messages with the FALAH jingle and an acknowledgement of USAID, the Population Council, FALAH, and HANDS.

During the quarter, 7,020 spots totaling 3,852 minutes were broadcast in the local Sindhi language. Additionally, six longer duration talk shows in Sindhi were aired on six channels, for 1,620 minutes. In these talk shows, different district government officials, HANDS and FALAH team members, and FALAH trained public sector providers and trainers for religious leaders participated and discussed

issues as outlined in FALAH's FAQs about myths and misconceptions regarding contraception.

The talk show aired in Sindhi also included listener responses, and many community members provided comments or asked questions about HTSP and contraceptives. Questions were answered in follow-up programs broadcast after every two weeks.

Interactive Theater *The Entertainment -Education Approach*

Interactive theater is an entertainment and education communications event, which has been organized in rural areas of FALAH districts in Sindh. The story lines follow the pictorial flipcharts developed by FALAH, and the plays compare the lives of two couples, one where pregnancies have been planned and one where pregnancies have been unplanned. Participants have become involved in the plays by acting out the parts and providing favorable endings to the stories.

In this quarter, FALAH with its partner, HANDS, conducted 84 interactive theater events with 7,536 participants in Dadu, Sanghar, Sukkur, and Thatta in Sindh.



A view of an interactive theater performance by FALAH

Mobile Service Units- A Follow up after Interactive Theaters

Mobile Service Units (MSUs) are follow up events organized by FALAH after the interactive theaters, through which family planning and maternal and child health services are provided in areas where health service delivery facilities are currently unavailable. Women in the remote areas of FALAH districts without easy access to health facilities have benefitted from mobile service units at their doorsteps.

For this quarter, 161 MSUs were organized in the districts of Sanghar, Thatta, Sukkur, Dadu, and Ghotki in Sindh. Services



A woman in Sanghar is being examined by a mobile service unit

were delivered to 5,481 beneficiaries including 1,205 clients for family planning services.

FALAH's Collaboration with NMNCH Program Continues

As part of FALAH's collaboration with the NMNCH, we sent them a range of IEC materials including contraceptive brochures, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) brochures, contraceptive banners, flipcharts, story booklets, advocacy brochures for community notables, religious leader documentary videos, and audio cassettes in six languages this quarter. The target audiences for these materials are district-level MNCH managers, community midwives, community people, and married women of reproductive age.

The National MNCH Program and Birth Spacing - The Way Forward

FALAH spoke to Mr. Farooq Akhtar, National Program Manager for the NMNCH Program, about the concept of HTSP and its role in the NMNCH program.

As the head of the NMNCH program in Pakistan, how do you see the concept of healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy introduced by the FALAH project in Pakistan? In your opinion, how will this concept help your program achieve its objectives?

I think the concept of healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy is important and will prove an effective strategy for improving maternal and child health outcomes.

For all future maternal and neonatal child health interventions, I would recommend HTSP be given top priority.

What is the strategic importance of the concept of HTSP in promoting maternal and neonatal health in Pakistan?

It is strategically important, because it saves the lives of



Mr. Farooq Akhtar, National Program Manager, NMNCH Program

mothers and children. However, it needs to be incorporated more effectively into community based programs. I see a larger role for spreading this message in the minds of the community workers, especially the LHWs and CMWs, who act as change agents in the community. Furthermore, I believe that CMWs are fully trained in the concept of HTSP, so that they can advise families.

What do you think about the working relationship of the NMNCH program and the FALAH project? In your opinion, what are FALAH's major contributions to the NMNCH program?

FALAH has made an important impact in the area of reproductive health, and Dr. Zeba Sathar, the Population Council Country Director, has shown tremendous leadership in this regard.

The domain where NMNCH and FALAH have come closer is in the area of capacity building, especially with regard to healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy. FALAH's support has included trainings, geo-referenced maps, IT assistance, and provision of IEC materials. Furthermore, they have provided us with technical support to help move the NMNCH program forward.

Do you think that the CMWs trained by the FALAH project can play an effective role in providing HTSP services in their communities by acting as change agents?

Yes, definitely. If the CMWs are well trained, correctly follow procedures, and properly counsel clients, then I am positive we can bring about a huge change.

Do you see any challenges in the job description of the CMWs with regard to the HTSP concept? If yes, how can these be addressed?

I think that the topic on HTSP should be an integral part of CMWs in-service and post-service trainings.

In order to support the NMNCH program, FALAH has trained CMW tutors on Client Centered Family Planning (CCFP) services. How useful do you find this for the NMNCH program?

The FALAH project helped us in developing a cohort of CMW tutors who are well trained in the CCFP, and these trainers will add tremendously to the program by increasing the capacity of the CMWs to better communicate HTSP messages to the women in the communities where they work.

How do you see the incorporation of the FALAH project's HTSP messages into MNCH messages, and how useful they will be to the CMWs for promoting the benefits of birth spacing for mothers and children ?

HTSP is not only important for the health of the mothers but also for the health of the babies. Therefore, the benefits of these messages for the neonates and mothers are almost the same. We are in the process of incorporating HTSP messages into the NMNCH program's communication strategy.

IEC materials that have been developed by FALAH are invaluable and can be used by other projects and agencies. In fact, we have distributed these materials to the CMWs' tutors and schools, so that HTSP is part of the community midwifery kit.

Bringing HTSP Services to Communities in Non-LHW Areas

In this quarter, 16 training events on HTSP were organized for 259 female community based volunteers (CBVs) in Mansehra in KPK and Sanghar, Dadu, Thatta, and Sukkur in Sindh. There were also 16 training events held for 241 male CBVs in these districts.

Through group meetings and household visits, the CBVs have been playing an important role in mobilizing married women and men in non-LHW covered areas of FALAH districts by:

- Providing information about the benefits of HTSP
- Addressing myths and misconceptions about contraceptives
- Informing about available contraceptive choices
- Giving accurate information about common side effects of contraceptives
- Referring potential clients to health facilities and service providers for getting FP services.

Trained female CBVs conducted 1,677 group meetings with 27,153 married women of reproductive age (MWRAs), and male CBVs conducted 1,429 group meetings with 22,695 husbands during this quarter.



A view of a woman group meeting conducted by FALAH's trained CBV

TRAININGS

Orientation on Basic Minimum Family Planning Contents Package in Peshawar

FALAH's Basic Minimum Family Planning Contents Package has been developed by the Population Council and JHPIEGO to improve pre-service training, so future medical practitioners can meet the reproductive health needs of their clients. The package has already been endorsed by the University of Health Sciences and recently by the Khyber Medical University.

A two day event was conducted to orient the faculty members of public sector medical colleges affiliated with Khyber Medical University (KMU) on this package. The meeting was held at the Higher Education Commission in Peshawar from May 24-25, 2011. 17 participants from seven of the public sector medical colleges affiliated with KMU and one from KMU attended the workshop. Sessions were held on the



Participants of the Orientation Seminar held at the Higher Education Commission Peshawar from May 24-25, 2011

various modules of the package and how they relate to each other. At the event, the Director General of the Population Welfare Department in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa admitted that due to a lack of firm commitment by the government, efforts to implement family planning and promote reproductive health have been inconsistent so far. He supported FALAH's efforts to equip medical students with basic concepts of HTSP and family planning, and he further applauded FALAH's work to support both pre- and in-service training for health care providers.

Training on Supportive Supervision for Lady Health Supervisors

"I was unaware of the difference between monitoring and supervision. However, after I attended FALAH's training on supportive supervision, my knowledge has really improved. I feel that I can now supervise the LHWs more effectively, which will improve the quality of their work in increasing the contraceptive prevalence rate," says Mariam Babar, a Lady Health Supervisor (LHS), who supervises 24 LHWs in the Chinni and Johi union councils (UC) in the district of Dadu in Sindh.

FALAH is conducting these trainings to explain the concept of Salutation, Assessment, Help and Reassurance (SAHR) framework developed by the Population Council for ensuring provision of client centered family planning services. The supervisors will in turn use this training to support and guide the LHWs to improve their performance.

In this quarter, FALAH organized a 7 day training of trainers on supportive supervision for 24 Lady Health Supervisors (LHS) from KPK and Punjab from the National Program for Family Planning and Primary Health Care in Islamabad. 24 step down trainings were also organized in DG Khan, Larkana, Dadu, Mardan, Swabi, Charsadda, Manshera, Rajanpur, Jhelum, Sanghar and Thatta for 421 LHSs.

Step Down Trainings of Religious Leaders at District Level

“A good thing about this training was that the trainers discussed issues related to the health of mothers and children and gave us very useful information on this subject. All our misconceptions regarding healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy were removed.” says Maulana Qari Rooullah after attending a step down training for religious leaders conducted in Charsadda.

FALAH conducts training of religious leaders to sensitize them on the significance of HTSP as a health intervention and its place within the context of Islamic injunctions.

From April till June, FALAH conducted 51 step down sensitization sessions for 1,184 religious leaders in FALAH districts. The sessions in DG Khan and Swabi were monitored by a FALAH monitoring and evaluation team, and overall, the sessions went well and received positive feedback from the participants.

Training of Village Health Committee Members

Village Health Committee (VHC) members are local influential leaders who include religious leaders, teachers, counselors, and social workers. These VHC members serve as a bridge between the LHWs and the male members of the community. 16 step down trainings for 313 VHC members were conducted in Swabi, Mansehra, Jhelum and DG Khan.

After being sensitized on HTSP and its importance, the VHC members can effectively promote healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy among men in the community through holding group meetings in their catchment areas. By using FALAH IEC materials, these committee members facilitate the role of the LHWs in the community.

Training of Provincial Population Welfare Department Staff on Geographical Mapping

Geographical Information System (GIS) is an important tool used by FALAH for setting priorities, planning, and helping increase health service delivery coverage by the appropriate placement of services. The mapping data shows the distribution of both public and private sector health facilities and outlets in each FALAH district. It also helps identify the existing gaps for establishing new facilities, which will avoid duplication of services and facilitate provision of services in underserved areas.

FALAH organized trainings for the staff members of the Departments of Health and Population Welfare in 14 FALAH

districts. Through these trainings, 382 staff members from both departments were oriented on the GIS mapping software.

“Use of FALAH GIS will improve service provision by a health care provider. Through this training, I have come to know how to use dynamic maps that can help me in district planning.” Executive District Officer, Department of Health, Charsadda District, KPK

Step Down Training of LHWs/LHSs

FALAH organized 45 step down trainings for LHWs/LHSs on Client Centered Family Planning Services (CCFPS), family planning methods, and group methodology in the districts of Bhawalpur, DG Khan, Larkana, Dadu, Sukkur, Mardan, and Charsadda. A total of 982 LHWs/LHSs were trained through these sessions and are now better equipped with information on the importance of HTSP, counseling techniques, information on side effects and their management, and contraceptive choices.



LHWs getting training on CCFPS in District Larkana

Training on Inserting Intrauterine Devices

FALAH is helping ensure a wide range of contraceptive methods are available to family planning by improving service providers' intrauterine uterine device (IUD) insertion skills. To ensure the providers are inserting the IUDs correctly, the training involves hands on practice in well-supervised clinical settings.

During the last three months FALAH has conducted 14 step down trainings on IUD insertion skills for 143 public sector providers. These trainings were held at Reproductive Health Services (RHS-A) centers in Sukkur, Larkana, Multan, and Karachi.



Participants of the training

Training on Standard Days Method

FALAH organized a one day training on the Standard Days Methods (SDM) on June 9, 2011 in collaboration with the District Population Welfare Office in Rajanpur. A total of 37 Female Welfare Workers (FWWs) attended this training. The participants were briefed on the technical details of the SDM, given a practical demonstration, had time to practice, and had a question and answer session.

Orientation Seminars for Chemists

With the support of its private sector partner, UDL, FALAH organized 11 chemist orientation seminars in Bhawalpur, DG Khan, Manshera, and Jhelum. The purpose of these sessions was to sensitize chemists about contraceptive methods. Approximately 342 leading chemists attended these seminars, which focused on the importance of healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy, contraceptive methods available in Pakistan, and the features and benefits of Happy Life Condoms.

Leadership Development at District Level

The 16th Strengthening District Population & Health Systems Through Effective Leadership and Client Centered Services workshop was held from May 23-31, 2011 at the Hillview Hotel in Islamabad. 18 participants attended the workshop



Participants of FALAH's 16th Leadership Workshop

including district managers from Jhelum, Rajanpur, and Bahawalpur and provincial representatives of the health and population departments from Baluchistan, Punjab, KPK, and Sindh.

The goal of this training was to transform district population and health policymakers, managers, service providers, and administrators into effective leaders who can act as change agents for healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy as an intervention for improving reproductive health services in the public and private sectors in FALAH districts. The nine day workshop focused on four main components of leadership development including leadership and self awareness, leadership management, exercising effective leadership, and leadership through knowledge. Since the beginning of the project, FALAH has trained 328 participants in 16 batches.

Impact - Improved Intersectoral Collaboration Leads to Training of Traditional Birth Attendants in Rajanpur

The major outcomes of the leadership training are the development of an action plan and the emergence of intersectoral teams in FALAH districts, which work closely to achieve common goals.



A view of the TBAs Training Session

Through the efforts of the Rajanpur District Leadership team, a one month training program for Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) was arranged in April 2011. The Health Department, the Population Welfare Department, and the National Rural Support Program (NRSP) worked together and organized this event. Lack of collaboration and coordination among these departments has always been one of the main obstacles in the effective implementation of health programs. FALAH's leadership training has been successfully helping address this challenge.

During the TBAs training in Rajanpur, the Health Department provided the training facility at the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital (THQ), while the Packard project provided the daily allowance and safe delivery kits to the TBAs at the end of the training. The main objectives of the training were to ensure that TBAs conduct safe deliveries,

raise awareness about the danger signs during delivery, and establish an effective referral system to the nearest hospitals for patients with complications. This collaborative intervention will help contribute to improving maternal and neonatal health indicators.

SUCCESS STORY

A Religious Leader and a Lady Health Worker Help Spread the Message of Healthy Timing and Spacing of Pregnancy in Their Community:

Qari Ameer Ahmed Shah is a religious leader and scholar who runs a religious seminary in the village of Palai Mardundh in KPK. The community he lives in and belongs to is very poor and has no health facilities for mothers and children. Most people have little or no access to medicines even for routine illnesses.

His wife is a Lady Health Worker (LHW). As a religious scholar, he always used to argue with her about her profession, because he felt her work was against Islam.

"I always criticized her and felt that she and others like her were trying to stop people from having more children," he told us. "So much so, that I did not allow her to use the Health House board, which was given to her by the program."

In May, 2011, the FALAH project invited Qari Ameer to a three day training workshop for religious leaders in Charsadda.

Qari Ameer said, "While attending the training, I realized that I had a very narrow vision and knowledge about family planning." The FALAH project told us about the benefits of healthy mothers and children, and they talked about healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy rather than limiting the number of children, which cleared up most of my misunderstandings and opposition to such activities. In fact, I would say everyone in the meeting hall agreed with the idea of healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy."

"The FALAH training has really changed the way I think about family planning," he continued. "The first thing that I did after completing the training was to apologize to my wife for my previous behavior! I also asked her to display the Health House board outside our house, and most importantly, I am conveying the healthy timing and spacing

of pregnancy messages I learned at the FALAH training in my Friday Juma sermons and during conversations with people who visit the mosque after evening Ishah prayers."

Now, Qari Ameer not only is an advocate for FALAH's messages on healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy but also provides information on available contraceptive choices to the people who come to seek guidance from him. He regularly maintains a record of all the people who have been referred by him to health facilities to get family planning services.

Many of the villagers have told him that family planning was a major issue in their lives, but previously, no one else ever discussed the topic of healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy with them. Couples who visit their Health House keenly listen to his wife's advice, while he tries to influence their husbands. More than that, Qari Ameer and his wife have successfully convinced six families to delay the marriage of their daughters who were all younger than 18 years of age by educating them on the consequences of pregnancies at a younger age.

"Our community and its people are really benefitting thanks to the training provided by the FALAH project," says Qari Ameer.



Qari Ameer Ahmed Shah



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