

Leading Change: Women's Leadership for Achieving Sindh's Family Planning 2020 Commitments

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HEALTH POLICY PLUS



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Introduction

FP2020 Commitments in Sindh

In 2015, Pakistan's Sindh Province approved the country's first provincial-level, five-year costed implementation plan (CIP) for family planning. The CIP is critical for delivering high-quality family planning services and meeting Pakistan's and Sindh's commitments toward Family Planning 2020 (FP2020) goals.

The Population Welfare Department (PWD), Department of Health (DOH), and several other senior government stakeholders jointly developed the CIP, which aims to contribute to a national goal of 55% contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) by taking Sindh from a CPR of 30% in 2015 to 45% by 2020.

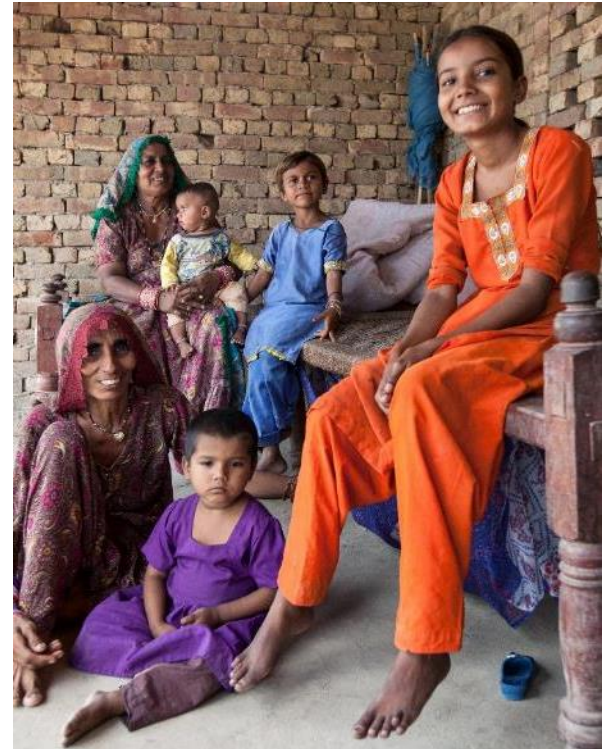


Photo by Khaula Jamil for Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs



Introduction

HP+ in Sindh

In Pakistan, the USAID-funded Health Policy Plus (HP+) project aimed to improve the enabling environment for FP2020 goals through improved stewardship, policy implementation, advocacy, and accountability. Specifically, HP+'s three main goals in Sindh were to:

- Strengthen population sector stewardship
- Strengthen implementation of policies and plans for accelerated progress toward FP2020 goals
- Strengthen individual and institutional capacity in advocacy, policy communications, and accountability

HP+'s women's leadership initiative worked toward: expanding opportunities for women to participate in dialogue; promoting collaboration among women champions from public and civil society organizations at all levels; fostering accountability among stakeholders in the health system; and equipping women with the right skills and messages for influencing decision-makers.



Photo by Khaula Jamil for Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs

Introduction

Why Women's Leadership for FP2020?

To ensure the Sindh provincial government's commitment to FP2020 goals, it is critical that women's voices are central to the process for achieving them. Investing in women's leadership can yield far-reaching dividends; not only for women themselves, but also for the institutions they represent, their communities, and society. HP+ supported a series of three workshops and interim activities as part of a comprehensive capacity development initiative to strengthen women's roles and voices in defining provincial priorities and promoting Sindh's ongoing support for family planning and reproductive health.

“The workshop and learning made me realize the immediate need to be involved in the FP2020 process.”



Introduction

Participants

Eighteen women—including representatives from government (Population Welfare Department [PWD] and Department of Health [DOH]), implementing partners, and civil society (from both Karachi and the province's interior)—participated in a competitive selection process to join the women's leadership initiative.

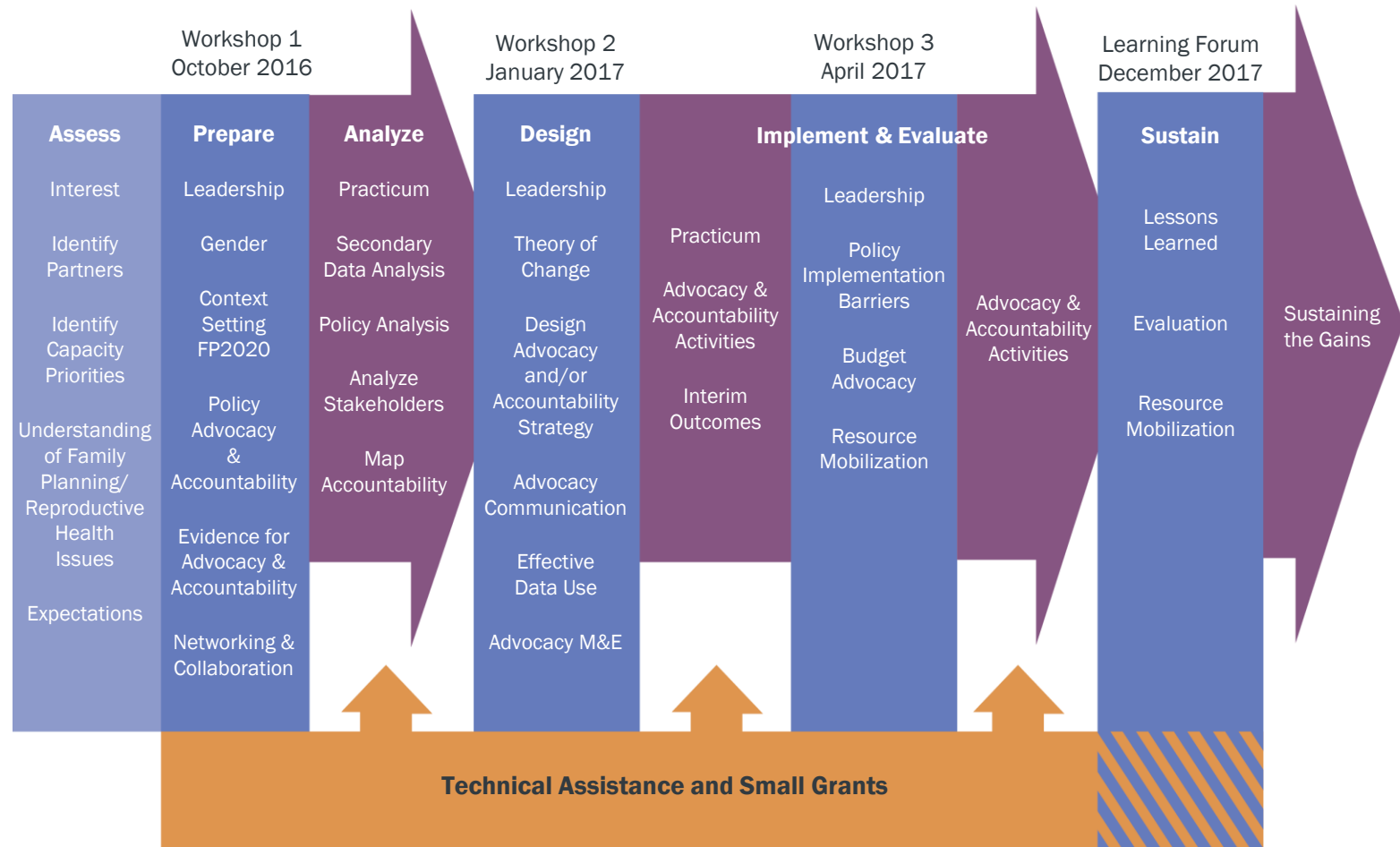
Over time, new women representing key stakeholders were invited to join, thus forming an ever-growing group of dynamic and strategically placed women leaders.

The group currently stands at 22 participants.

Name	Organization
Aberah Farrukh	Center for Communication Programs - Pakistan
Aisha Fatima	Save the Children
Aleya Ali	National Committee for Maternal & Neonatal Health
Asma Jatoi	Department of Health
Azmat Waseem	Population Welfare Department
Baby Nirmilla Oad	Population Welfare Department
Bilquis Rehman	Council for Participatory Development
Farhana Shahid	Jhpiego
Farzana Bhagat	Population Welfare Department
Hamida Khokhar	Ra'ana Liaquat Craftsmen Colony
Khalida Bibi Soomro	Population Welfare Department
Madiha Latif	ShirkatGah
Misbah Jatoi	Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs
Musarrat Rani	Health and Nutrition Development Society
Noor Sabah Rakhshani	Precision Development Research and Advocacy Consultants
Noreen Zafar	Girls and Women Health Initiative
Rabia Manzoor	Department of Health
Sana Durvesh	Greenstar Social Marketing
Sana Khan	Aahung
Shahida Parveen	Health Department, Government of Sindh
Zahida Sheikh	Department of Health
Zeenia Shaukat	Consultant, Sindh HR Commission

Introduction

The Initiative At-a-Glance



The Journey

Understanding FP2020 and the CIP

To ground the women's leadership initiative, participants explored the context behind the Sindh CIP. In doing so, they expanded their understanding of the global FP2020 framework, Pakistan's commitments, and key components of the Sindh CIP and plans for its execution. A representative from Track20 shared Pakistan's progress toward achieving key family planning/reproductive health indicators, and the women engaged in a dynamic discussion about data quality and barriers to effective monitoring.

Between workshops, the women leaders reached out to various stakeholders to gain a deeper understanding of FP2020 and the CIP and how others perceived its key strategies and outcomes.

Over time, the women leaders have had multiple interactions with the technical advisor of the CIP Secretariat, PWD, other key decision-makers in DOH and PWD, and the FP2020 Task Force. They are well poised and seen as champions for CIP implementation.



“After joining the group I am more committed and motivated to do something for achieving Sindh’s FP2020 commitments.”



The Journey

Youth and Family Planning

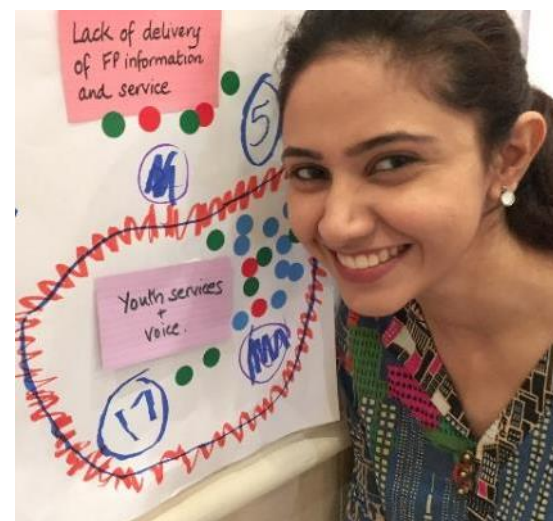
The Issue for Advocacy and Accountability Action

Leveraging their experience, technical knowledge, and passions, the women analyzed the strategic areas of the Sindh CIP to prioritize and short-list emerging or challenging family planning issues that need to be addressed effectively if CIP goals are to be met.

The group recognized an opportunity in the CIP's stated commitments to expand outreach and access to youth, which would need champions to bring it to fruition.

They decided to focus their advocacy and accountability efforts on ensuring that the mechanisms, guidelines, and support for expanded youth-friendly outreach and services were delivered in the field at all relevant service delivery sites.

“The youth need to know about family planning so that they can make better decisions for their family and the future of their country.”



The Journey

Strengthening Leadership

“The women’s leadership workshop(s) have provided me with the motivation to adopt a leadership role in my organization. I am leading a monitoring team now and I am prioritizing my goals more effectively compared to before. There is more logic and confidence in my opinions now.”



Supporting women to reflect on and strengthen their confidence and leadership skills is a cornerstone of the program. Towards this aim, the workshops included sessions on:

- Leadership styles and characteristics
- Confidence-boosting skills
- Personal learning styles
- Emotional intelligence
- Situational leadership
- Ethics and leadership

Through candid discussion and supportive dialogue, HP+ encouraged the women to identify barriers to their personal leadership growth and understand how to overcome them. Throughout, the women leaders shared their personal leadership journeys and described specific outcomes that resulted from applying new skills and approaches in their daily lives, in their organizations, and at higher levels of engagement.

The Journey

Strengthening Advocacy and Accountability Skills

The workshops strengthened fundamental skills on advocacy for policy change, advocacy communications, governance and accountability within health systems, and using evidence effectively to plan, conduct, and evaluate advocacy.

Between workshops, the women worked in teams to further analyze relevant policies, secondary data, and explore stakeholders and accountability relationships related to delivering on the CIP commitments.

These skills were further strengthened when the women leaders used new knowledge and understanding of the context to design and begin implementing their advocacy strategy to ensure provision of services and outreach to youth through the CIP.



The Journey

Designing the Advocacy Strategy



“The workshop has been an opportunity for me to practically experience the process of devising an advocacy strategy.”

The women developed an advocacy strategy to ensure the CIP youth agenda was clearly outlined in respective government execution documents that would be used to allocate budgets and assign staff for implementation.

With this end goal in mind, they identified interim outcomes, specified activities to reach key audiences to garner their support and enlist them in reaching decision-makers, and crafted indicators for measuring achievements.

Along with designing the strategy, participants learned methods to monitor and adapt their approaches, to learn from implementation, and for advocacy evaluation.

Within a short period of time, the women moved from planning to action with several interim successes.

Achievements

Advocacy Win: Youth-Related Indicators Added to CIP Monitoring Framework



Upon reviewing the final draft indicators in the CIP's objective achievement chart, the women leaders noted that age disaggregation of CIP outcome indicators and indicators related to youth outputs were missing. Without measurement of youth-related outputs it would be impossible to know if the CIP was progressing toward its commitment to expand access to youth and achieving outcomes. With the window rapidly closing for revisions, a self-formed team among the women rallied over two days and formally presented their recommendations. The CIP Secretariat approved and has acknowledged the women for identifying and closing these important gaps.

“Two achievements we can directly attribute to the women leaders’ efforts: youth-specific content in the National Standards for Family Planning and youth-specific and age disaggregated CIP indicators.”

– Dr. Talib Lashari, Technical Advisor, CIP Secretariat, PWD



Achievements

Advocacy Win: Youth-Friendly Services Included in the National Standards for Family Planning Services

Through dialogue with the CIP Secretariat, the women relayed their observation that the National Standards for Family Planning were incomplete regarding appropriate guidance for ensuring high-quality youth-friendly services.

They seized on the resulting request from PWD to contribute to updating the standards and provided youth-relevant content.

The CIP Secretariat accepted their revisions. **Youth-friendly services are now part of the family planning standards.**



Achievements

Advocacy Win: Recommendations for PC-1 Accepted

In early 2017, the women learned that **the primary government execution document to specify the scope and funding for youth-friendly services** for the next five years (the CIP-PC1) was under revision.

By invitation, the women leaders presented 12 written recommendations to bolster the clarity and scope of activities already listed in the CIP activity matrix.

The CIP Secretariat confirmed that some of the recommendations had already been addressed in the new PC1 drafting process. Further, the CIP Secretariat highlighted several of the women's new ideas to consider in the revision process. The women are continuing their dialogue and advocacy to advance implementation of CIP plans for youth-friendly services.



Achievements

Increased Confidence, Capacity, and Connections

Throughout the initiative, the women assessed their own levels of understanding as well as their confidence to apply new skills in key areas. While responses showed markedly increased levels of understanding across the board, what is perhaps most prescient for future performance is changes in confidence to act. By the end of the third workshop and two practicums, nearly all of the women rated their confidence to apply all skillsets as good or excellent.

Solid Basis of Understanding



Pronounced Confidence to Move Forward



Achievements

Increased Confidence, Capacity, and Connections

As could be expected, the women consistently assigned very high importance to the skills-building workshops for strengthening their new advocacy and accountability capacity. More interesting is how the women rated the other four aspects of the initiative as contributing to their capacity over time.

Early on, close to 80% of respondents ranked “applying new leadership and confidence-boosting practices” as most important to their advocacy and accountability abilities. By the last workshop, the women rated “building new connections or stronger relationships” as the second most important contributor to their performance, having ranked it lowest early on.



With a powerful blend of capacity, confidence, and connections, the women add to a growing list of achievements at the personal, organizational, and policy level.

Achievements

Increased Confidence, Capacity, and Connections

The women reported how new skills, leadership, and self-confidence emerged at personal, organizational, and external environment levels. At the personal level, common themes include expressing ideas in different settings, taking initiative, and speaking up on sensitive topics with organizational leaders. At organizational levels, they are adapting and institutionalizing new strategic approaches; incorporating family planning, gender, and women's empowerment into current or proposed projects; and creating new connections with other organizations.

"At the external level, we applied this knowledge. We motivated male [community] members to allow their females to get education. **We opened adult literacy classes, and now 44 female students are attending our adult literacy class. So we got good outcomes.**"

"I was successful in including gender and youth programming related knowledge in our new proposals. When one of our activity proposals was rejected by our donor, I was able to engage my existing network resources for the same activity. **We were able to complete the activity through collaboration.**"

"My networking and communication skills have improved after this workshop, which is **evident from my newly formed alliances!**"

"At the Sindh Human Rights Commission, I encouraged the **inclusion of health and family planning matters in the human rights discourse.**
During field visits to the government hospitals I made specific references to the availability of family planning services and their significance."

"I conducted a similar stakeholders' engagement exercise and mapped stakeholders for health, which was really helpful. **Now, the same process is being used by all project teams—not limited to health only.**"

"At a personal level, I feel more confident while presenting my ideas in large settings. I have also **started taking more initiative.**"

Achievements

Fostering Readiness for Implementation—Sindh Forum on Youth Engagement for FP2020

Having influenced several policy documents that will drive the youth-friendly family planning agenda in Sindh, the women leaders focused on translating these policy commitments into action. In October 2017, the women leaders, with HP+ support, and in collaboration with the CIP Secretariat, assembled key implementation stakeholders from the PWD and DOH to review the CIP's youth focus and to clarify each department's roles for providing youth-friendly family planning services.



The seminar was attended by the leadership of the PWD and DOH, and included the heads of the Lady Health Worker (LHW) and Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health (MNCH) programs. District population welfare officers—PWD's district-level implementing staff—from the 10 CIP districts also attended. The forum was an opportunity for the government to highlight its focus on youth and for district officers from both PWD and DOH to engage in a lively discussion about operationalizing functional integration—a strategic area of the CIP. **The leadership of PWD and DOH pledged to work together to expand outreach and deliver youth-friendly family planning services.**



Achievements

Fostering Readiness for Implementation— Consultative Workshop with Sindh LHW Program

In January 2018, in partnership with Save the Children Pakistan, the women gathered the LHW district coordinators from the 10 CIP districts to consult with representatives of the provincial LHW leadership and the CIP Secretariat about the pivotal role that LHWs could play in promoting family planning among young couples.



The women leaders presented findings from RAPID and ImpactNow Youth models to underscore the need to reach the 15–24 age group and young married couples with appropriate information, counseling, and services.



The Technical Advisor, CIP Secretariat, set the context for action through narrating the CIP story and its priority on youth-friendly family planning services. The Deputy Director of the LHW Program and the Director of Reproductive Health, DOH, reinforced the need to mobilize LHWs to reach young couples and adolescents. Leadership heard from the district coordinators what would be important to put in place to operationalize this role.



Achievements

Recommendations for the Sindh LHW Program

Through discussion at the consultative meeting, the district coordinators and LHW leadership agreed on several key recommendations for the LHW program:

- DOH should invest in training LHWs and lady health supervisors on family planning counselling for young couples.
- Supervisors should provide on-the-job support to observe and improve LHWs' capacity to interact with young couples.
- Services for young couples should be a standard agenda item in monthly progress review meetings held with the LHWs, supervisors, and district coordinators, where LHWs should be acknowledged for improving provision of family planning services to newly-wed and young couples.
- LHWs should sensitize community members on the importance of better adolescent health, in part through sessions with adolescents and their mothers during home visits.
- The LHW program should develop informational material for LHWs to use for counselling young couples and newlyweds. Similar material should also be displayed at all LHW health houses.
- Young people (both male and female) should be a part of health committees to ensure youth issues are addressed.
- The LHW program should change LHW recording formats to include age of all couples so that supervisors can follow up on newly-wed and younger couples. LHWs should also record and report progress on newly-wed and younger couples' counselling, uptake of methods, and referrals to health facilities in order to identify issues and progress with youth-friendly services implementation.



The Way Forward

Pause & Reflect on Learning and Evaluations to Inform the Future

HP+ closed the initiative with a learning forum in January 2018 to reflect on what worked, what the women leaders learned to guide future advocacy, how they wish to move forward as a collective group, and how HP+ could adapt the program for better impact. Highlights from this dialogue, the women's activity monitoring, HP+'s outcome evaluation process, and a third-party advocacy evaluation, include the following points.

- The initiative's diversity modeled what can come from an intentional collaboration between PWD and DOH as well as nongovernmental partners within and outside the health sector. Participants' diversity not only made for better advocacy, but working toward a common goal transformed relationships and resulted in a deeper sense of others' values for meeting FP2020 goals.
- Multisectoral advocacy and accountability for implementation of Sindh's CIP strategies—particularly for youth—is a complex, layered, and long-term endeavor. Advocates must know, adapt, and contribute to a dynamic policy environment to be relevant and respected voices for action.
- As the women leaders field requests from stakeholders to collaborate to expand both women's leadership and access to family planning among young people in Sindh, they will have excellent opportunities to adapt the approaches they have learned through HP+ and apply it in new contexts.



USAID's Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting Framework & Key Concepts (available at <https://usaidearninglab.org/node/14633>)

The Way Forward

Areas for Implementation Advocacy & Accountability on Youth-Friendly Services

Based on findings of a December 2017 rapid assessment that HP+ conducted among policymakers and implementers to understand plans for expanding youth-friendly services, as well as the women's reflections about their future engagement and remarks at the HP+ January 2018 final dissemination meeting, recommended areas for future advocacy and accountability include:

- Track age-disaggregated data on family planning in the CIP and monitor progress toward expanding access to youth
- Support processes to incorporate new and specific age-disaggregated family planning indicators into the Department of Health Information System (DHIS)
- Continue efforts to re-orient outreach staff from both DOH and PWD to promote family planning counseling for newlyweds and low parity couples
- Advocate for values clarification training for all DOH and PWD service providers to reduce bias against family planning for young couples
- Track the operationalization of evening services at PWD clinics



The Way Forward

The Journey Continues

With their passion for creating impact and improving policies to improve the lives of women and children across the province, the women leaders have made significant strides. They have successfully influenced operational policy documents for expanded family planning outreach and services for youth and have brought together key implementers to discuss implementation in the districts. The initiative has fostered a group of women who—through their individual and collective efforts—plan to continue as change agents and partners to help ensure Sindh reaches its family planning commitments in 2020 and beyond.





Women's Leadership

+ Advocacy & Accountability

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