Message from the Chief of Party:

Dear friends,

On behalf of FALAH I would first like to state that our thoughts and prayers are with the millions of women, children and families who have been devastated by the recent floods that hit Pakistan. We are confident that working together, we will overcome the tragedy and bring hope back to the affected people for a better life.

FALAH has been implementing a number of activities to promote birth spacing and other preventive guidelines under Healthy Timing and Spacing of Pregnancies to help reduce maternal and neonatal mortality and move the country closer to achieving the MDG goals.

I am pleased to inform you that as one of the major communication interventions, FALAH has recently completed district level recording of 13 episodes of TV talk shows that highlight some of the key issues and challenges in this area. Organized on the pattern of town hall meetings, these shows were recorded in the districts of Jhelum, Multan, D.G. Khan, Rajanpur, Bahawalpur, Ghotki, Sukkur, Larkana, Hyderabad, Thatta, Karachi and Sanghar most of whom are FALAH districts. Panel discussions represented a cross section of views from participants consisting of district level officials of the Department of Health and the Department of Population Welfare, service providers from both the public and private sector, religious leaders, community notables, representatives from NGO’s and other influential’s.

The purpose of the program is to bring grass root perspective to the attention of policy makers, planners and intelligentsia. I want to thank USAID for generously supporting this program and to all those who worked so hard in the implementation of the event. The episodes will be aired in the month of December, 2010.

Ashfaq Rehman

USAID’s Administrator Endorses Birth Spacing in Pakistan

"USAID’s top priority is to help Pakistani women lead a healthy and productive life by making use of the available contraceptive options". This was stated by Dr. Rajiv Shah, Administrator, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) while addressing a National Consultation on 'Birth Spacing in Pakistan' organized by the Ministry of Health on July 18, 2010 in Islamabad. Also present at the occasion were officials from the Ministries of Health and Population Welfare, Civil Society Organizations and representatives from USAID and International Development Organizations. Dr. Shah highlighted the fact that 50 percent of maternal deaths occurred in just six countries of the world and Pakistan unfortunately is one of them. He therefore stressed that birth spacing undoubtedly has a key role in Pakistan achieving its Millennium Development Goals.

Dr. Zeba Sathar in her presentation entitled “The Imperatives of Investments in Birth Spacing and Fertility Decline” called for sustaining of government policies, introducing pro-poor services, improving quality of care, escalating income generating opportunities for women and more investment in girl’s education and jobs for women. She said we have the opportunity to remove the adversity of these stated factors through the provision of birth spacing services.

Ms. Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Sector termed birth spacing as an efficient and effective strategy for better health of the mother and the child.
Mission Statement

"FALAH's mission is to improve health and save lives of mothers and their children through adoption of birth spacing practices and prevent pregnancies that are too early or too late in women's lives, whether they happen by chance or by choice."

Helping Identify Problems and Issues Faced by People in Family Planning and Birth Spacing through Talk Shows

With an audience of more than 150 people in each district, a series of talk shows was successfully recorded in 13 districts of the FALAH project from 15th June 2010 till 20th July 2010. The heat wave along with the remote locations of the recordings made this activity tougher than usual.

The objective of these talk shows was to bring to focus some of the major obstacles and issues to the acceptance of family planning or birth spacing and use of contraceptives as perceived by various target audiences. Problems related to the smooth and effective supply of contraceptives and the delivery of services primarily through public sector outlets were also discussed. The audience turnout at the shows was remarkable, which is a clear indication that people in the far flung areas are now better informed about the health related issues that surround them.

"The lady doctors in our district do not want to meet us. The last time when me and my wife decided that we should practice birth spacing we went to see the lady doctor, however, at the clinic I was not allowed to accompany my wife to the doctors room as she observed purdah from men. My wife is not a literate and therefore she is unable to properly understand things about family planning and spacing as explained by the doctor so what should I do in such circumstances?” said one of the husbands present in the FALAH talk show and this is indicative of the type of issues identified by the participants.

The airing of the program was initially scheduled to take place after the month of Ramadan on PTV Home and regional channels, but due to the devastation caused by the floods, it has now been decided to air the program once the situation has improved and the displaced people have returned to their homes.

With the Assistance of USAID, FALAH Provides Flood Relief in Its Project Districts

Heavy monsoon rains and floods have caused widespread damage to the public infrastructure including health facilities in many districts of Pakistan. The people of these districts therefore have limited or no access at all to health facilities, thus leaving the pregnant women at a greater risk of complications and death related to pregnancy and childbirth.

Keeping in mind the health of these expectant mothers, FALAH is rehabilitating the Lady Health Workers (LHWS) by distributing 1500 kits to the LHWS affected in its flood hit districts of Charsadda, Mardan, DG Khan, Rajanpur, Ghotki, Sukkur, Dadu, Larkana & Jaffarabad which will be completed by November 2010. The aid package for each LHW will contain a tent, an adult weighing scale, a B.P. apparatus, a salter baby weighing scale, a stethoscope, a plastic chair, folding steel bed, an iron sign board, a torch and a blanket. The high intensity flood waters have left the health facilities either damaged or destroyed and the health providers without any support.

She said the country's health and population policies were on the anvil, which focused on equity and an efficient use of resources.

Mr. Ashfaq Rehman, Chief of Party, FALAH Project, emphasized on the need for enhanced research in identifying the factors to the unmet need for contraceptive services in Pakistan.

In order to develop a strategic plan for the birth spacing agenda and translate words into action, Mr. Khushnood Akhtar Lashari, Secretary Health, called for the formation of a national committee to be headed by both the Ministers and include other high level government officials and representatives from partner organizations and civil society.
The Population Council has also carried out relief activities for flood victims in FALAH districts, namely Sukkur and Shikarpur. A doctor from Population Council staff provided health care to around 1350 patients, mainly children and women in the affected areas. These people were mostly suffering from acute respiratory infections, diarrhea, scabies, dog bites etc. The activity was carried out with the support of a FALAH consortium partner, HANDS.

Changing Mindsets of LHWs through Client Centered Training

“Since the day my daughter was born, I wished to get her married off by the age of 16, just as soon as she completed her Matriculation (10 grade)” said Parveen Bano, a Lady Health Worker (LHW) in District Sanghar in the province of Sindh, Pakistan. Parveen is one of the LHWs who have had an opportunity to attend a training program on Client Centered Family Planning Services (CCFPS) conducted by FALAH. This training focuses on behavior change and enables the LHWs to:

- Apply communication/counseling skills more effectively to meet the identified needs of the clients, and empower them through exchange of information on an equal footing.
- Provide update on contraceptive technology (Birth Spacing/family planning)
- Use FALAH IEC material effectively
- Organize and conduct group meetings explaining the Birth Spacing and HTSP messages.

“Through attending the FALAH training program, my overall thought process changed completely. I now realize how dangerous and life-threatening it can be for my daughter or any other girl in her position to conceive at a very young age. I have decided not to get my daughter married until she is at least 18 years of age”. “

As of June 2010 FALAH through 4 trainings of trainers (TOTs has trained 114 master trainers in CCFPS and group methodology, who have in return imparted the same training to 9463 LHWs through 479 step down trainings in the project districts.

Linking the Demand with Services in non-LHW Covered Areas

Community Based Volunteers Model

FALAH project partner Rural Support Programs Network (RSPN), with the technical assistance from the Population Council, is conducting a pilot test on linking the community mobilization with services delivery through the Community Based Volunteers (CBVs) in Union Council (UC) Kinjher of District Thatta and UC Bachroo of District Jacobabad. The pilot project was initiated in April 2010 in non-LHW covered areas and under this initiative, RSPN has trained 34 female and 33 male CBVs through community mobilization on the important of birth spacing, contraceptive methods, Islam and family planning, referral of clients to Basic Health Units (BHUs) and private sector Lady Health Visitors (LHV). Till late September 2010, the newly-trained CBVs had referred 992 married women of reproductive age (MWRAs) to BHUs and private sector LHVs in both the Union Councils. Out of the total referred cases, 482 were in Thatta and 510 in Jacobabad. Among the 992 MWRAs, 517 received family planning services and are now practicing birth spacing, 407 women received the services from private sector LHVs whereas 101 were provided contraceptive services at BHUs.

Extending the Birth Spacing Services in Rural Areas in Partnership with PWD and GSM

RSPN through its partner Rural Support Programs (RSPs) network is also involved in community mobilization for birth spacing in the far-flung non-LHW covered areas. So far they have conducted group meetings with more than 100,000 married couples on the adoption of the birth spacing and have referred a number of women to static centers of public sector to receive further counseling. Most of those referred women were unable to get the services from public sector due to various reasons. In this quarter the services were also extended to 1104 women in rural areas through 41 mobile camps arranged in partnership with the Punjab Welfare Department and Greenstar Social Marketing.
**Strengthening District Population and Health Systems**

Under FALAH project, the Population Council organized its 13th training workshop on “Strengthening District Population & Health Systems through Effective Leadership and Client Centered Services” from July 20 – 28, 2010. The workshop was held to train 19 district managers of Dadu, Sanghar, Sukkur, Thatta, Jacobabad and Karachi from Sindh, Mardan Charsadda and Swabi from KPK, and D.G. Khan from Punjab.

Ms. Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Sector was one of the notable speakers in the conference. Dr. Farooq Akhtar, National Program Manager, MNCH Program, Ministry of Health, in his remarks at the closing session expressed how delighted he was to meet the district health and population officers at the forum. While endorsing the importance of Integrated Action Plans he said that the ultimate objective of both, the health and population departments is to improve the well being of mother and children and the family, and all other interventions of advocacy, awareness and birth spacing etc. are support this cause. He appreciated participants from all the districts for bringing up the crucial issues of implementing the population and health activities at the district level and suggesting new interventions and strategies in their plans. On an overall evaluation scale of 0-10 by the participants, the workshop as a learning environment, and as an inspirational opportunity was rated at 9.8.

**Launch of Happy Life Collection**

**A Family Planning Product**

United Distributor Private Limited (UDL) is one of the commercial private sector partners of FALAH working to expand the distribution and increase the sale of their full priced condoms to reduce overall program dependency on donors for future commodity assistance. In this regard the UDL launched ‘HAPPY LIFE COLLECTION’, a mix of 3 types of condoms in one pack in the last week of July, 2010.

In an effort to establish and increase the sale of this product, UDL took a number of initiatives that included: production and airing of a TV commercial on a number of regional and national channels, airing of audio advertisements on FM radio channels, hiring of a dedicated sales team and mechanized staff for the sale of the product on a wider scale, production of promotional material for large scale sale of Happy Life Collection condoms and also the orientation of chemists in the country about the product.

As a result of these initiatives, 2,397,023 Happy Life Condoms were sold at national level including FALAH districts during this quarter. The Happy Life Collection is available at pharmacies, general stores, departmental stores & kiriyani shops.

**Selected Issues in Family Planning for Health Providers and Students**

The FALAH project is preparing a multi-media product with the title ‘Healthy Timing and Spacing of Pregnancy (HTSP)’. The CD package will contain information on various aspects of family planning including Birth Spacing and will serve as an introductory e-learning package for medical students, medical faculties, nursing schools and Public Health and Midwifery schools.

The CD will be comprised of 4 modules-Overview of Birth Spacing, Counseling, Contraceptive methods details, IUCD insertion, removal and infection prevention. The CD contains text, photographs, video clips of mini lectures and counseling sessions and quizzes which the students need to solve at the end of each module. This will help the students and the faculty to learn at their own pace and own time and is designed to further increase the knowledge base of the institutions in Family Planning issues.

Prior to the implementation of this program, the CD was pretested amongst the faculty members of the School of Nursing and Midwifery in District Jhelum on September 2, 2010. The CD’s were provided to the students one week prior to the assessment visit of the FALAH team. All the faculty members and the head of RHS-A, Jhelum participated in the feedback activity conducted by the FALAH team. The CD will be available at the end of September with the launch ceremony taking place by December 2010.

**Needs Assessment of Pre-Service Education in Nursing and Allied Institutions in Mardan**

A need assessment for introducing Pre-Service Education in Nursing and Allied Institutions of District Mardan was carried out by JHPIEGO on July 8, 2010. The objective was to brief the district partner Save the Children US about the strategy of Pre-Service Education (in Nursing & Allied Institutions), visit the EDO Health in the district for sharing the strategy of Pre-Service Education (for Nursing), and also to visit the clinical site of RHS-A, School of Nursing & Midwifery, Mardan. Based on the assessment, the next steps include:

- Follow up on the action Plan
- Provision of the Family Planning Skills Laboratory in the Nursing School
- Strengthening of Clinical sites
- Meeting with Chief Executive of Mardan Medical Complex, Mardan
- Training of the Nursing Faculty on Family Planning Updates & teaching skills
- Invitation to the clinical staff of all sites in the step down trainings to be held in Peshawar by Save the Children-US
- Identification of Clinical Preceptors
Contd....

The Imperatives of Investments in Birth Spacing and Fertility Decline.

Investments in birth spacing and fertility decline are crucial for achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) such as reducing maternal and child mortality, improving reproductive health, and ensuring a healthy population. By spacing births appropriately, families can better plan for their children, improve maternal and infant health, and avoid the economic burden of having too many children.

Birth spacing, defined as the interval between births, is a key determinant of family welfare and women's health. Optimal spacing of children can lead to improved health outcomes and better economic well-being. In many countries, governments and international organizations are investing in programs that promote birth spacing, such as family planning initiatives and maternal health care services.

These investments are not just about the individual benefits they provide but also about the broader impact on society. By promoting birth spacing, countries can reduce the risk of maternal and child mortality, improve educational outcomes, and contribute to economic growth. Therefore, it is essential to continue to invest in programs that support birth spacing and fertility decline.

In conclusion, investments in birth spacing and fertility decline are critical for achieving the SDGs and improving the well-being of populations worldwide. By supporting these efforts, we can create a future where all families have the opportunity to thrive.
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Training of LHW Trainers on Provision of Client Centered Family Planning Services and Group Methodology

Kakshak is one of the largest microfinance institutions in Pakistan. It has been providing technical and financial support to microfinance institutions and their clients. The Kakshak team has been working on the development of a comprehensive training program for LHW trainers on provision of client-centered family planning services and group methodology.

The Kakshak team has been working on the development of a comprehensive training program for LHW trainers on provision of client-centered family planning services and group methodology. The program includes a series of training sessions that cover various aspects of family planning services, including counseling, education, and referral. The training sessions are designed to help LHW trainers improve their skills and knowledge in providing client-centered family planning services.

In addition to the training sessions, the Kakshak team has also developed a comprehensive manual for LHW trainers. The manual includes detailed information on the key concepts and principles of client-centered family planning, as well as practical guidance on how to apply these concepts in real-world situations.

The Kakshak team has been actively working with various microfinance institutions to implement the training program and the manual. They have been providing technical assistance and support to help these institutions integrate the training program into their existing operations.

Overall, the Kakshak team is committed to providing high-quality training services to help microfinance institutions improve their family planning services and better serve their clients. The team is confident that the training program and the manual will make a significant impact in improving the quality of family planning services in Pakistan.