

Promoting access to modern contraceptives among hard-to-reach ethnic populations: Bangladesh experience in the Chattogram Hill Tracts

Key Partnerships with ethnic minority leaders facilitates an increase in community uptake of family planning commodities

BACKGROUND

- The Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT) has one of the high rates of unmet family planning needs (18% compared to national rate of 12%) in the country. Providing access to quality family planning services is a challenge due to the hard-to-reach landscape, rural tribal population, language and cultural barrier, lack of awareness and the lack of government health facilities.
- The **USAID Advancing Universal Health Coverage (AUHC)** strategically coordinated with local governments and other stakeholders to design a comprehensive strategy to increase access and uptake of family planning services in that area.



INTERVENTION DESIGN

- AUHC worked with a local NGO, Green Hill, to operate **18 primary care clinics**, and instituted a multistakeholder engagement model which brought together tribal leaders, elected representatives, hill district authority, and the health administration.
- The model included regular satellite health camps in the community, community health outreach visits, and the distribution of FP commodities.
- With 18 clinics and 18 satellite teams, piloting began in 2020 and FP sessions were conducted in **86 locations** covering **18% of the 3 targeted district's population**.
- AUHC received positive feedback from the pilot and secured approval from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to officially launch the program.
- 58,764 eligible couples** were targeted through this intervention and the program instituted an MIS system to capture relevant data.

KEY STRATEGIES

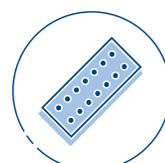
- Awareness camps with community leaders and elected representatives
- Door-to-door counselling and commodity distribution
- MoU with leading FP commodity supplier company for an uninterrupted supply of commodities
- Support in the referrals to government facilities for Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARCs, e.g., Implanon and IUD)



RESULTS



72%
more couples received FP counseling



93%
increase in use of birth control pills



226%
increase in injectable birth control method



274%
increase in condom usage among men

Uptake of FP services on rise



LESSONS LEARNED

- The AUHC project ensured providers who belong to the ethnic groups, were the ones who brought the services to their doorsteps and continued promoting FP services.
- This experience demonstrates the importance of local government coordination, considering geographic and socio-cultural context, engaging multi-sectoral stakeholders, and formalizing health authority support to access government FP commodities and reach more hard-to-reach communities.
- Based off informant interviews, a key reason for the intervention's success was the involvement of local leaders in the awareness program. Local leaders supported the program by providing land, infrastructure, and logistical support relating to the supply of FP commodities.
- This intervention strengthened the relationship between the government and NGO which led to improved scale, coordination, and sustainability of FP services in the region.