Engaging Young Couples to make Informed Family Planning Decisions

Annie Suchiang, Pallavi Kumar, Krithika Murali, Dr. Ashish Srivastava, Dr. Neeraj Agrawal

Context

The NISHTHA project, being implemented by Vihara with the support of USAID, has been working closely with the government of the state of Meghalaya to ensure the uptake of family planning services among young couples. This initiative is focused on strengthening family planning delivery through various intervention strategies and policies. The project is supported by the USAID-funded Accelerator Grant, which aims to improve family planning services and outcomes in the country.

Activity Description

The project has implemented various initiatives to engage young couples in family planning discussions. These initiatives include:

- **Young Hearts**: A safe space initiative for adolescent girls and boys to engage in discussions on important topics such as life choices, sexual and reproductive health, and family planning.
- **Ensuring Optimum Supplies**: A tool has been developed to facilitate incremental family planning uptake and outreach planning. This activity focuses on ensuring optimum supplies of contraceptives to health and wellness centers (HWCs).
- **“Lawei Baphyrnai”**: A life-planning tool has been introduced to engage couples in discussions about their future plans and family planning needs.

Facilitators

- The project has partnered with local community leaders and health workers to facilitate family planning discussions. The facilitators play a crucial role in providing reliable support and advice to young couples.
- The use of various tools and materials has been effective in engaging young couples in family planning discussions. These tools include flipcharts, discussed plans, and decision-making tools.

Challenges

- The project has encountered challenges in engaging young men in family planning discussions. Strategies have been developed to address these challenges, including targeted communication campaigns and sensitization programs.
- The project has faced limitations in reaching out to remote and underserved communities, requiring tailored strategies for these areas.

Lessons Learned

- The project has learned the importance of engaging young people in family planning discussions. By involving them in the decision-making process, the project has been able to improve family planning outcomes.
- The use of innovative tools and strategies has been effective in engaging young couples in family planning discussions. The project has demonstrated the importance of involving young people in the design and implementation of family planning interventions.

Evidence

The study evaluating the Young Hearts initiative found that young girls and boys who participated in these discussions were more knowledgeable about family planning options and were more likely to make informed decisions. The project has also observed improvements in equity, quality, and resource optimization, ultimately contributing to better health outcomes by increasing the uptake of family planning services.

Activity Impact

- The project has observed a 27% increase in family planning uptake among young couples. This improvement has contributed to a 9% increase in contraceptive prevalence, with 2.9 million young people now accessing family planning services.
- The project has established a strong network of community leaders and health workers, enabling the delivery of family planning services to underserved communities.
- The project has facilitated increased utilization of condoms as a contraceptive method. Condom boxes have proven to be effective in improving access to condoms while ensuring beneficiary anonymity.

Challenges

- Inadequate and inconsistent supply processes at both the Health and Wellness Centers (HWCs) and systemic levels have been identified as a challenge. The project has addressed this by establishing a strong supply chain management system.
- Transfer of data and information between the health and wellness centers has also been a challenge. The project has developed a robust data management system to address this issue.

Lessons Learned

- The project has learned the importance of involving young people in family planning discussions. By actively involving community members, including women, men, and adolescents, the interventions were successful in engaging young couples in family planning discussions.
- The project has observed improvements in equity, quality, and resource optimization, ultimately contributing to better health outcomes by increasing the uptake of family planning services.

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