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LUZONHEALTH: STRENGTHENING POLICIES AND SYSTEMS TO IMPROVE FAMILY HEALTH IN THE PHILIPPINES

In Luzon, the most populous island in the Philippines, trends in family planning stagnated or, for some methods, even declined over a five-year period since 2008. Teenage pregnancy was also on the rise.

To improve family health in 14 provinces and seven cities, LuzonHealth supports expanded access to high-quality, integrated family planning and maternal, neonatal, child health and nutrition services (FP/MNCHN).

We provide technical assistance to eight Department of Health Regional Offices — as well as provincial, municipal, and city health offices — to improve demand for and supply of FP/MNCHN services, and strengthen local health policies and systems.

Our end goal is to build and support strong service delivery networks toward ensuring a long-term and sustainable mechanism for service delivery providers to work together to provide efficient and quality FP/MNCHN services.

Our Impact*:

- Current FP users increased by 13.3 percent from 1.5 million in 2013 to 1.7 million in 2015.
- Deliveries attended by a skilled birth attendant increased by 32 percent from 440,000 in 2013 to 580,000 in 2015.
- Deliveries in health facilities increased by 62 percent from 340,000 in 2013 to 550,000 in 2015.
- The number of pregnant women who have completed four antenatal care visits increased by 6 percent from 530,000 in 2013 to 560,000 in 2015.
- In 2015, 57.6 percent of children were exclusively breastfed for the first six months, higher than the 50.8 percent recorded in 2013.

*Results of implementing demand, supply and health systems interventions in 21 Project sites from 2013 to 2015.



Jessica Supan (seated) reviews the SMRS records of the FP point person in one of the district hospitals. (NGonzales/RTI International)

“How can you advise a woman to practice family planning if FP commodities like pills are not available every month? It has been a challenge. Doing family planning is additional work for many staff who have other duties. We try to make things easier for them by providing a reporting system that is easy to use.

The Supply Management and Recording System forms are easy to fill out and understand. With this system, we keep track of stocks and ensure that all health facilities have what they need to implement their family planning program.”

—Jessica Supan, FP Coordinator,
Nueva Ecija Provincial Health Office



Left: Midwife Melany giving tetanus toxoid immunization to a pregnant client. (CBilbao/RTI International). Right: Felomina Mendoza (standing, left), a nurse supervisor, overseeing the conduct of data quality check by midwives. (FETFAPI/RTI International)

Spotlight: Data Quality Check in Siniloan, Laguna

Our Approach:

- **Build capacity for integrated service provision.** In addition to training, our team supports the conduct of post-training evaluations (PTEs), diagnostic workshops and supportive supervision to assess and improve the skills of health service providers. *Since the Project started, a total of 226 health staff trained in various courses underwent a PTE and were eventually certified by the relevant DOH Regional Offices . A total of 442 health facilities have trained staff in supportive supervision.*
- **Build the capacity of DOH Regional Offices** to conduct training and planning workshops, do monitoring, and review program implementation. *Since 2013, 818 DOH Regional Office staff assisting Project sites have been trained in the different Project interventions.*
- **Strengthen systems and processes key to the provision of quality services**, particularly health information systems, family planning logistics management, and health financing. *About 88 percent of health facilities in Project sites are regularly conducting data quality check, while 74 percent of health facilities are implementing the Supply Management and Recording System (SMRS).*

Melany Alidio has been working as a midwife for almost 20 years at the Rural Health Unit of Siniloan in Laguna. She was among Siniloan's nurses and midwives trained in Data Quality Check (DQC), a systematic process for validating, updating and correcting basic health service data by identifying and addressing the sources of data inaccuracies.

With the regular conduct of DQC, Melany has developed a sense of personal responsibility to ensure the integrity of the data that she reports. *"I know very well that reporting correct and valid data in a timely manner is really part of my responsibility as a local health service provider,"* said Melany.

Melany and her colleagues have realized that DQC is not simply about correcting data; it is also about making good use of the corrected data, especially in deciding on which programs, services, client groups, and villages to prioritize in terms of time and resources.

In 2014, Siniloan passed a local policy institutionalizing the conduct of DQC in Siniloan. In 2015, Siniloan received the Good Practice Award from the Philippines' economic planning agency for its successful implementation of DQC. FP use increased from 53 percent in 2014 to 63 percent in 2015. Deliveries in health facilities likewise increased from 62 to 75 percent, while exclusive breastfeeding increased from 27 to 48 percent.

LuzonHealth (Integrated Maternal, Neonatal, Child Health and Nutrition/Family Planning Regional Project in Luzon) is a five-year United States Agency for International Development health service strengthening project implemented by RTI International.

Contact Information:

Helen J. Hipolito, Project Development Specialist, USAID: hhipolito@usaid.gov

Easter Y. Dasmariñas, Chief of Party, LuzonHealth, RTI International: edasmariñas@ph-luzonhealth.rti.org