E2A in Burundi: Expanding Contraceptive Choice

About E2A

The Evidence to Action for Strengthened Family Planning and Reproductive Health Services for Women and Girls Project (E2A) is USAID’s global flagship for strengthening family planning and reproductive health service delivery. The project aims to address the reproductive healthcare needs of girls, women, and underserved communities around the world by increasing support, building evidence, and facilitating the scale-up of best practices that improve family planning services.

Awarded in September 2011, this five-year project is led by Pathfinder International, in partnership with the African Population and Health Research Center, ExpandNet, IntraHealth International, Management Sciences for Health, and PATH.

www.e2aproject.org

Background

In a small, landlocked, and densely populated country like Burundi, where the average woman still has more than six children in her lifetime, making a broad range of family planning methods available is necessary for a healthier population and healthier future for the country. To brighten the country’s outlook and reach ambitious national health goals—particularly those related to family planning and ending preventable maternal deaths—E2A has been assisting the Government of Burundi with making sure family planning services are conducive to encouraging the use of contraceptives.

E2A works in provinces where significant proportions of the population have an unmet need for contraceptives. Among other achievements, E2A has assisted with expanding the contraceptive method mix by giving providers the necessary skills to offer Jadelle implants and has supported a robust cadre of community-based distributors to provide rural populations with family planning information and services. E2A’s assistance has helped to encourage contraceptive use by expanding the contraceptive options from which women can choose.

Broadening Method Choice: Focus on Jadelle

From 2012-2013, E2A’s focus was strengthening family planning service delivery in Kayanza and Muyinga provinces, particularly the provision of the contraceptive implant Jadelle. By enhancing the training capacity at health facilities for providers’ provision of implants and working with the Pathfinder International-led Maternal and Child Health Project to increase access to the method, Jadelle implants have become a popular choice.

The number of women who chose to use implants increased five-fold during the first six months of 2013 (after E2A’s assistance) as compared to the first six months of 2012. Public sector health facilities in Kayanza and Muyinga report a broad range of short- and long-acting contraceptive methods now being offered, and E2A has prepared Burundi for scale-up of Jadelle to other provinces.

Prior to E2A’s assistance, Jadelle had only been provided in one clinic in Muyinga through an International Planned Parent-

Burundi Health Indicators

Population: 10.2 million
Total Fertility Rate: 6.4
Contraceptive prevalence rate, married women: 22%

Source: Population Reference Bureau, 2014
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Engaging a Comprehensive Community-Based Health Workforce

In Gitega, Makamba, and Rutana provinces—rural provinces with the lowest contraceptive prevalence rates and highest unmet need for family planning in Burundi—E2A is working with the National Reproductive Health Program and UNICEF- and UNFPA-funded projects led by Pathfinder International to scale up community-based family planning services and provision of Jadelle. E2A and its partners are applying innovative approaches to leverage existing human resources for health and strengthen community-based family planning services. Through a task-sharing strategy, community-based providers are also being trained to offer injectables.

Volunteer, Community-Based Nurses

Burundi's health system has limited resources to employ all nurses who have graduated from pre-service education despite a shortage of health workers. E2A and the National Reproductive Health Program have recruited and trained unemployed nurses to serve as volunteer community-based family planning providers in the three provinces. The nurses provide long-acting methods such as Jadelle and intrauterine devices at the community level and through mobile outreach services.

Integration with Nutrition Program

In Makamba and Rutana provinces, E2A trains and supports community health workers who currently work with a Pathfinder International-led, UNICEF-funded nutrition program to expand their role and serve as community-based distributors of family planning. E2A also supports the training of Mamans Lumières (Enlightened Mothers)—community role-models who have been identified as “positive deviants” for their capacity to raise healthy children—to integrate counseling on healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy and Lactational Amenorrhea Method with nutrition education.

Strengthening Service Delivery & Sustaining Progress

All community-based providers are directly connected to health facilities and meet at the health facility monthly to review progress and obtain support. To ensure that clients referred to health facilities are able to access quality family planning services that appropriately meet their needs, facility-based providers in the three provinces are being trained to offer the full range of family planning services and referrals for permanent methods. To sustain the interventions in the long-term, the capacity of provincial and district health teams is being strengthened.