

Expansion of Comprehensive Abortion Care (CAC) Services in Nepal

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Introduction

In Nepal, more than 50 percent of maternal deaths are attributed to unsafe abortion. Although safe abortion was legalized in Nepal in 2002, access to safe abortion remains a significant challenge. Moreover, an estimated one in four married Nepalese women has an unmet need for family planning. As a result, approximately 15% of the total clients served at six FPAN clinics during the first semester of 2010 received abortion related care, indicating a high demand for these services¹.

The Global Comprehensive Abortion Care Initiative (GCACI), launched in 2007, intends to improve access to comprehensive abortion care services in six rural districts of Nepal.

Results

The GCACI was an important catalyst for scaling up comprehensive abortion care (CAC) service delivery at FPAN, resulting in the certification of six new clinics for the provision of surgical and medical abortion services.

Providers were trained on supportive counseling, the latest protocols on surgical and medical abortion, infection prevention and contraceptive technology. A consistent focus on quality of care resulted in a number of improvements in CAC service delivery - the number of abortion clients in the six participating clinics increased significantly to a cumulative number of 5,115 clients by the end of June 2010; the uptake of long acting post-abortion contraceptive methods increased from 0.8% during the period March – June 2008 to 17% in the first semester of 2010 and the follow-up of clients provided with an abortion increased significantly from 4% to 64% during the same period².

Effective demand generation activities undertaken at community level, focusing on the importance of seeking safe abortion services as early as possible, resulted in a significant increase in the number of underserved and marginalized clients seeking services at the Member Association clinics. Moreover, as chemists are often the first points of contact for clients seeking information on safe abortion services FPAN works with 150 private pharmacists and chemists to provide accurate safe abortion information and referrals to women in their communities. The success of this innovative strategy is demonstrated by almost 40 per cent of the clinics' safe abortion clients being referred by these chemists.

One of the unique features of the project was installation of a clinic management information system (CMIS). The CMIS is a tool that uses an Open source Electronic Management Record system that handles clients' data, products/services and income data, i.e the full visit cycle. It aims to make the collection, analysis and use of service statistics more efficient and to enable programmatic decisions to be informed by clinical data.

Next steps

With mid-level providers recently being approved to provide abortion services and following the introduction of permanent contraceptive methods within the package of services offered at the clinics, FPAN will build on the investments made and continue to expand access to comprehensive abortion care and contraceptive services.

¹ Family Planning Association of Nepal (FPAN) Annual Report 2009

² Service statistics reports (2008-2010)