



PHILIPPINES

Expanding private-sector family planning services and mobilizing the business community

PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

In the Philippines, the Commercial Market Strategies (CMS) project works to expand and improve the private sector's provision of family planning products and services, and to spur national dialogue on family planning policy.



Demand for contraception in the Philippines will likely increase in the coming years. The total fertility rate is 3.5 — but the desired family size is 2.7. And, according to a recent national survey, 90 percent of all respondents said that it is important for Filipinos to be able to plan their families.



Over 70 percent of all family planning users in the Philippines get their products from public-sector clinics. USAID, the primary supplier of contraceptive products to these clinics for the past 35 years, is phasing down its donations and the Government of the Philippines has not yet procured its own supplies. This will likely lead to limited supplies or stock-outs in the public sector and greater demand for private-sector products and services. CMS/Philippines, therefore, is working to strengthen the private-sector provision of family planning.

CONTEXT

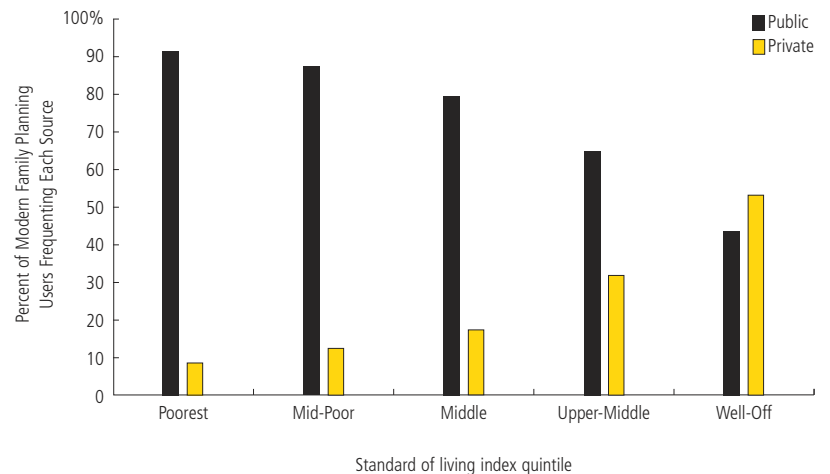
In 2003, there were 81.6 million people living in the Philippines. At the current annual growth rate of 2.2 percent, the country's population will double in under 30 years. Already, roughly 40 percent of the population lives at or below the poverty level.

Total contraceptive use among married women was 49 percent in 2003 (35% for modern methods) and has been increasing. The Philippines has a very young population. Women age 15 to 19 outnumber women age 45 to 49 by a ratio of more than two to one. In addition, millions of women who report wanting to space or limit births are not using family planning. The total fertility rate is 3.5, but, in the 2000 DHS, desired family size was reported at 2.7. And, according to a recent national survey, 90 percent of all respondents said that it is important for Filipinos to be able to plan their families by controlling their fertility. As a result, demand for contraception will likely increase in the coming years.

Through its public-sector clinics and hospitals, the government of the Philippines provides family planning to 72 percent of all users in the country. Family planning products and services are offered regardless of clients' income or ability to pay. But many women who use the public sector have the means to pay for private services. Nearly 70 percent of women in the upper-middle quintile obtain their contraceptives from the public sector, as do nearly almost half of all women in the wealthiest quintile (see Figure 1). The vast majority of these women, however, indicate they are willing to pay for family planning services. Segments of the population who live in poverty or reside in rural areas do not have access to family planning other than through public-sector clinics.

For more than 35 years, most public-sector contraceptives provided in the Philippines have been donated by USAID. But this is changing: In 2002, USAID announced plans to phase down contraceptive donations and redirect its resources toward more sustainable programs (that is, programs that

Figure 1 ■ Source of contraceptives for modern-method family planning users by standard-of-living index quintile, 1998



promote a transition to contraceptive self-reliance). Accordingly, USAID has encouraged the Philippine government to take responsibility for purchasing contraceptives. Despite a budget allocation for contraceptive procurement, however, the national government has yet to procure contraceptives for its public-sector program. (In the fall of 2003, the Arroyo Government announced that it would support a family planning effort that focuses on natural methods.) Meanwhile, local governments, which have been assigned the responsibility for local health care provision, are taking up this function in an inconsistent manner.

Should the Philippine government fail to respond to this situation, it could lead to stock-outs in the public sector. And a significant segment of public-sector clients who are too poor or too rural to have access to private providers could be adversely affected. These less-fortunate clients are likely to adopt less-effective traditional contraceptive methods, or give up contraception altogether.

To prevent this outcome, USAID is supporting efforts to strengthen the private-sector provision of family planning, particularly for women from higher standard-of-living groups. The underlying strategy is to encourage or require clients with an ability to pay to obtain their contraceptives from the private sector, so that limited government resources can be targeted to clients with the greatest need.

Since most family planning users — of all income levels — have sought care from government clinics for the last three decades, private providers' knowledge and attitudes of modern contraceptive methods is sometimes dated. Therefore, early in 2002, CMS began working with physicians, midwives, and pharmacy sales staff to improve their family planning knowledge and counseling skills — critical steps in preparing these providers to play a larger role in meeting the country's reproductive-health needs. In addition, CMS facilitates the involvement of the Filipino business community in what the community refers to as the "population management" debate. Along with other social leaders, the commercial sector is increasingly concerned that the country's economic growth will be outpaced by population growth, making it difficult to reduce poverty and improve quality of life. Business leaders are now considering providing family planning information and services to their employees. And they are encouraging the government to expand its role as well.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Two broad strategies underlie CMS's work in the Philippines: (1) training for private providers to increase their comfort level and skill in offering family planning; and (2) supporting the business sector to expand its provision of family planning information and services to employees, as well as to transform its growing population management concerns into an effective public policy voice. Both strategies stem from CMS's country assessment, as well as a market segmentation analysis that estimated the potential growth of the private sector if it were to respond to the country's increasing contraceptive demand (coupled with the programmatic interventions required to achieve that potential).

STRATEGIES TO EXPAND THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR

To support efforts to shift clients with the ability to pay to the private sector, CMS analyzed the size of the Filipino family planning market, projected market growth by method, and described potential clients and strategies for reaching them.

CMS's analysis shows how the private sector — manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and providers — can expand their marketing and service-delivery activities to tap into new markets. Examples of activities that can shift clients to the private sector include:

- Method-specific media campaigns that direct consumers to private-sector products and outlets
- Intensified detailing activities by pharmaceutical companies
- Training of private providers
- Marketing interventions that increase access to affordable brands.

CMS's findings are also useful for policymakers and providers, demonstrating that many public-sector clients can access and afford to use the private sector. In addition, policymakers can use a variety of mechanisms to target limited public-sector supplies to the neediest clients, including:

- Geographic targeting
- Means testing
- User fees



Pharmacies provide half of all condoms used in the Philippines. Although not currently a significant contraceptive method in the country, CMS research estimates that condom use will double between 1998 and 2007.



CMS established a partnership with the Midwives Foundation of the Philippines to help expand the private sector's role as a source of family planning services. Midwives are typically located in areas accessible to lower-income and rural women.

ACCREDITATION: A STRATEGY TO ENSURE QUALITY OF CARE

Establishing clinical protocols and standards is a proven strategy to improve service delivery. To implement this strategy in the Philippines, CMS is investigating the feasibility of developing an accreditation or certification program for private providers offering family planning services.

Building on past experiences and lessons learned, CMS is reviewing international and Filipino medical accreditation initiatives — like the public-sector *Sentrong Sigla* initiative. *Sentrong Sigla*, a joint effort of the Philippine Department of Health and local government units, promotes quality services in public health centers and hospitals. The program has developed national quality-assurance standards, and certifies facilities that consistently meet a pre-defined set of protocols. To date, more than 1,000 facilities have received certification. Certified facilities receive a yellow sun logo — signifying quality and competence to consumers — to use in their communication and outreach efforts.

PRIVATE-PROVIDER TRAINING

As noted earlier, the public sector has been the primary source of contraceptive products and services. Consequently, private providers are less experienced at providing family planning. Provider knowledge and counseling skills need updating, especially in an environment where potential users cite fears regarding side effects as the biggest barrier to adopting modern contraceptive methods.

CMS conducted a qualitative study of private providers' knowledge and attitudes toward family planning. Based on its findings, CMS determined that a multi-faceted approach involving formal training, targeted communications, and medical detailing would be the best way to improve private providers' contraceptive knowledge and counseling skills (particularly among pharmacy sales staff). Therefore, CMS established two teams of experienced private-provider specialists — six regionally based field specialists and 40 medical detailers — and launched an evidence-based medicine communications campaign.

Training at professional association meetings. In April 2003, CMS, with the help of its field specialists, began developing partnerships with private-provider associations. CMS aims to promote and facilitate the addition of family planning training sessions at professional venues, such as meetings and conferences. Partner associations include the Philippine Academy of Family Physicians and its local medical society chapters; two national midwives' associations; and the Drugstore Association of the Philippines. CMS organized a variety of reproductive health training sessions, such as:

- **Workshops** that provide participants with continuing medical education credits
- **Technical sessions** attached to association conferences
- **Meetings** that inform providers about the most recent findings in contraceptive technology, discussed within the context of evidence-based medicine and best practices

All sessions are designed to increase contraceptive awareness and knowledge among providers — in order to improve their ability to offer high-quality services.

Detailers reach out to individual providers.

To help private-sector providers become effective and confident sources of family planning services, CMS supplements the professional training sessions with medical detailing visits. Medical detailers visit providers (physicians, midwives, and pharmacy sales staff) bi-monthly, reiterating and reinforcing critical information related to contraceptive counseling and use. During these one-on-one meetings, detailers build on the group session content with carefully targeted, in-depth information on modern contraceptive methods, along with training and reference materials that inform and educate providers about effective counseling practices. This individual, private setting allows providers to ask questions and clarify specific concerns. CMS's detailing efforts are focused on the country's urban areas — areas that contain the highest number of women likely to use private-sector providers.

Placing articles in professional journals.

To further reinforce training and detailing efforts, CMS is implementing an evidence-based medicine communications campaign. (Evidence-based medicine integrates individual clinical expertise with the best available external clinical evidence from systematic research.) The campaign focuses on placing reproductive health articles, technical updates, and medical guides in familiar and respected provider publications, such as professional journals.

CMS is also exploring partnerships with pharmaceutical companies to educate medical providers and pharmacy sales personnel on reproductive health and contraceptive technology. In addition, CMS works closely with DKT, a USAID-supported social marketing NGO, to expand its oral contraceptive and injectable efforts. For example, CMS and DKT are coordinating private-sector medical provider and pharmacy staff training sessions, as well as sharing information on sales and potential market expansion.

FACILITATING BUSINESS-SECTOR INVOLVEMENT

Philippine business leaders are concerned that the country's high population growth rate is threatening national economic gains. Over the next few decades, they doubt that economic growth will be high enough to generate sufficient numbers of jobs. And they are increasingly concerned about the government's ability to provide adequate education, health, and social services for the rapidly growing population.

CMS is assisting business leaders and organizations to educate and mobilize their community — raising awareness about the impact of rapid population growth on the business sector.* In turn, an increasing number of business leaders are speaking out to insist that the government take a more responsive course of action.

In general, health and development professionals welcome business's entry into the debate: they look to the politically influential business community to give voice to the great majority of Filipinos who believe it is important for the country's citizens to be able to plan the size of their families. In the difficult political environment surrounding family planning in the Philippines, this majority view is often overshadowed by interest groups with a narrowly focused agenda. (See sidebar, *Allies in the Business Community*.)

Early in the project, CMS conducted qualitative research on business leaders' attitudes toward family planning. The results helped identify the family planning issues of most relevance to the business community, and to use the language business is most comfortable with in discussing these issues. CMS also used the study to identify approaches to work-based provision of family planning services that businesses might support.

Increasing awareness and building consensus among business leaders. By providing technical assistance and organizational support, CMS helps to raise the public policy profile of Filipino business leaders' population concerns. For example, CMS used the electronic network that links geographically dispersed business association members (the Philippines is made up of 7,000 islands) to distribute *BizPop*, an bi-monthly e-newsletter that increases business owners' awareness of population issues. *BizPop* has highlighted the unique role that the business sector can play in population management, thereby helping build consensus for taking a public stance on the issue.

Transforming business concerns into a public policy voice. CMS supports its business partners in organizing information sessions at business forums and meetings to highlight the link between population management and business interests. These educa-

ALLIES IN THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Over the years, one of the biggest challenges to meeting family planning needs in the Philippines has been the central government's varying level of commitment. The business community is a powerful interest group and an important ally. By tapping their emerging population management concerns, we can help provide Filipinos with the means to plan the number and spacing of their children.

Susan Scribner, CMS Technical Advisor for Policy Change, gained a valuable business contact through an early country-assessment legislative visit. The legislator mentioned that several business leaders had begun exploring the link between the country's rapidly growing population and its future socioeconomic health — and cited a name: Donald Dee, President of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines.

Scribner called Dee's office and asked for an appointment. At their subsequent meeting, Dee explained that while he and several other corporate executives did see the need for increased attention to population management as a public policy issue, they hadn't yet found a way to shape their concerns into an effective advocacy tool. Scribner suggested that CMS, with its expertise in public-private partnerships, could provide technical assistance in transforming their concerns into tangible advocacy actions.

"What distinguishes CMS's work," Scribner explains, "is that we understand the needs of the business community — needs that center on, as Donald Dee candidly put it, the bottom line. That's not always a comfortable role for aid organizations." Scribner says CMS also understands that high-level CEOs can't be led to adopt an agenda; they have one of their own. "What CMS has done in the Philippines is find a way to advance our goals within the business community's agenda — and to help them structure their goals, so they can be more effective policy advocates."

* CMS's business partners include: Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce Inc.; Philippines Inc.; Philippine Exporters Confederation, Inc.; Mindanao Business Council; Personnel Management Association of the Philippines; Semiconductors and Electronics Industries of the Philippines, Inc.; and Employers Confederation of the Philippines.

PROVIDER TRAINING: VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Midwives

I would like to express my appreciation and thanks on behalf of the Midwives Foundation of the Philippines to the CMS project for its support of our continuing medical education (CME) projects on reproductive health and family planning topics. This timely project comes at a time when our uncontrolled population growth has reached alarming levels. Marketing specialist Eugene Rifareal, together with our training team, have been successfully conducting CME events, which is much appreciated by the participants — mostly midwives in private practice.

Cleotilde Elmedolan, President,
The Midwives Foundation of the Philippines

Pharmacists

A grateful thanks for your lecture on family planning and reproductive health....The knowledge that we acquired will surely be of great help to us in dealing with our customers. Looking forward to our next update from your group in the near future.

Ben Chua, President,
Drugstore Association of the Philippines

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to CMS for providing our personnel with valuable information and new insights on reproductive health. Your discussion on this topic is not only opportune but has given us greater understanding of its importance and potential to our business. The feedback we gathered from our staff is encouraging as evidenced by the lively discussion you had during your talk. We hope that this will be the start of their continuing education on reproductive health.

Amy Dizon, Operations Manager,
Emilene's Pharmacy, Inc.

tional efforts produced impressive results at the November 2003 annual meeting of the Philippine Business Conference and Exhibition: Conference organizers invited the four main political parties to discuss their population management views in a pre-meeting session, and they invited the presidential candidates to do the same in a post-meeting session. Both sessions were widely reported in the media, effectively moving business's population management concerns from the boardroom to the public arena. The presentations were also useful because they publicly documented candidates' population-management views for the upcoming 2004 national elections. In addition, the 800 business leaders attending the conference supported a resolution calling on President Arroyo to address the country's population issues. Currently, the Arroyo administration is on record as supporting only natural family planning methods — the approach long supported by the Catholic Church, which wields considerable political influence in the Philippines.

Promoting work-based family planning services. CMS educates businesses on the benefits of offering family planning services directly to employees. For example, recognizing the importance of the bottom line in business decision-making, CMS's e-newsletter, *BizPop*, has pointed out that workplace family planning programs reduce the direct and indirect costs of unintended pregnancies. *BizPop* has also noted that a significant portion of the costs of a work-based family planning program are off-set by benefits, such as:

- Increased productivity
- Reduced absenteeism and/or maternity leave
- Reduced costs for workers needed to fill in for mothers on maternity leave
- Reduced costs to replace mothers who decide not to return to work after a pregnancy

Some business leaders already understand the benefits of work-based programs. In these cases, CMS helps on a strategic level and provides up-to-date health and demographic data, as well as access to reproductive health resources. For example, since January 2003, CMS has provided technical assistance to the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP), an association that represents over 500 corporations (the government regularly consults the ECOP on labor-management, human resource development, and workplace health issues). CMS helps the ECOP to articulate its concerns regarding family planning, population growth, and economic development. CMS's assistance has already contributed to the passage of an ECOP national conference resolution that urges member firms to provide employees with family planning and reproductive health services.

CMS also provides practical support by documenting best practices. In partnership with the Asian Institute of Management, CMS is compiling case studies of work-based family planning programs. These studies will be published as a manual for firms that want to launch or expand similar initiatives.

PROGRAM RESULTS

CMS/Philippines is a relatively new program (it has only been in operation for less than two years) and impact data are not yet available. The CMS/Philippines research agenda focuses on increasing understanding of the current family planning environment and identifying the most fruitful approaches for improving it. Two documents of note are the CMS country assessment, *Prioritizing Actions for USAID's Private-Sector Family Planning Programs in the Philippines*, and an analysis of the Filipino family planning situation that identifies opportunities and challenges for enhanced private-sector participation, *The Potential Market for Expanded Private-Sector Family Planning in the Philippines*.

In addition, CMS conducted qualitative analyses of the two sectors at the heart of our work in the country: private-sector providers and the business community. These efforts probed family planning attitudes, identified preferred options for enhancing each sector's respective family planning role, and provided a baseline with which to measure program impact. At a future point, providers' knowledge and attitudes can be measured against these baseline results to assess the impact of CMS's initiatives.

Going forward, program monitoring and evaluation efforts will concentrate on measuring improvements in private providers' family planning knowledge and skills through tracking surveys and a mystery-client study.

Even within its short timeframe, however, there are indications that the CMS/Philippines program is having a positive impact. These include:

- Business association resolutions supporting population management, as well as political party and presidential candidate forums at the well-attended — and widely reported — 2003 Philippine Business Conference and Exhibition (by December 2003, CMS had briefed 3,815 business leaders on population issues)
- Increased interest among business owners in offering family planning services
- Intense efforts to update the contraceptive knowledge and counseling skills of private-sector providers, laying the groundwork for meeting increased private-sector demand for family planning services (by December 2003, CMS had provided medical training workshops to 1,038 physicians; 6,585 midwives; and 1,765 pharmacy sales staff)

CMS/Philippines has increased recognition of the importance of family planning to the country's future socioeconomic health and better prepared the private sector to provide needed family planning services, thereby enhancing the overall family planning environment.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CMS Country Assessment: Prioritized Actions for USAID's Private-Sector Family Planning Programs in the Philippines. 2002. Washington, DC: USAID/Commercial Market Strategies Project.

The Potential Market for Expanded Private-Sector Family Planning in the Philippines. 2003. Washington, DC: USAID/Commercial Market Strategies Project.

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FUNDED BY:
US Agency for International Development

USAID Contract No.
HRN-C-00-98-00039-00

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:
Abt Associates, Inc.
Population Services International

Commercial Market Strategies (CMS) is a USAID-funded project that aims to increase access to and demand for reproductive health and family planning products and services in developing countries through the private sector.