

Enhancing Equity and Sustainability of Public-Sector Family Planning

“The main agenda in the years immediately ahead will be one of learning to do with less external aid and shifting the cost of programs to national government budgets and to families seeking services in the commercial sector.”¹

PATH has received a grant from the Fred H. Bixby Foundation to enhance equitable and sustained access to family planning by strengthening country-led, public-sector decision-making within a total market context. A whole or total market approach has been defined as “a coordinated approach that responds to the multiplicity of family planning needs in a country...[and] ensures that the entire market of clients—from those who require free supplies to those who can and will pay for commercial products—is covered.”² Over a three-year period (2009–2011), PATH will work with governments in Nicaragua and Vietnam to develop operational plans for public-sector contraceptive distribution to targeted market segments. PATH will also strengthen public-private dialogue around family planning service delivery—including for the poorest populations—and collaborate actively with private-sector initiatives. Lessons learned will be disseminated to promote widespread readiness for a country-led decision-making approach that draws on the total family planning market.

RATIONALE

Against a backdrop of the largest cohort in the history of the world entering reproductive age, ministries of health are struggling to provide for the contraceptive demands of their family planning programs. Further, governments are increasingly required to make strategic decisions about these programs without the capacity and expertise for such decision-making. For example, governments in many developing countries historically received sufficient financial and technical support from international donors to provide free contraception to all segments of the population. They have limited expertise with targeted service provision in the context of reduced resources, including specifically how to reach the poorest quintiles of the population with services and products.

Increasing demand and scarce resources therefore highlight the need for governments to find new ways to provide family planning for all. Meeting family planning needs by ensuring access to contraceptives now and in the future requires recognition and integration of various market sectors—including NGOs, as well as subsidized and commercial options—a total market approach. However, it is rare that managers of family planning programs make plans and decisions in the context of the “total market,” in which different provider segments reach different consumer markets. Others have described this role as stewardship, or “setting and enforcing the rules and incentives that define the environment and guide the behaviors of health-system players.”³

Barriers to a total market approach include a lack of information about who uses the private sector, for what services and products, what prices they pay, and consumer perceptions of the services and products available in the private sector. Knowledge gaps between the public



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2. Sarley D, Rao R, Hart C, Patyewich L, Dowling P. Contraceptive security: practical experience in improving global, regional, national, and local product availability. Arlington, VA: John Snow, DELIVER; 2006.
3. Lagomarsino G, de Ferranti D, Pablos-Mendez A, Nachuk S, Nishtar S, Wibulpolprasert S. Public stewardship of mixed health systems. *Lancet*. 2009;374(9701):1577-8.

and private sectors also persist, as each sector may not be aware of the other's priorities. Market-oriented research on family planning user needs has yet to be translated beyond recommendations and into concrete programmatic action—including decisions regarding contraceptive selection and resource allocations. For example, while several countries have attempted to lay the groundwork for a total market approach by analyzing family planning use through market segmentation analysis, few have had the capacity to actually implement the recommendations that were developed. Other projects focus on supporting and expanding the private sector without linking to the public sector.

Our project is unique in partnering with the government to support its role as the leader and steward of a total market approach. A deliberate planning process is therefore required to determine which family planning sectors should serve which groups and how, and what other changes are required. The following figure illustrates the project's collaborative process for developing a total market plan.

STEPS TO A NATIONAL TOTAL MARKET PLAN

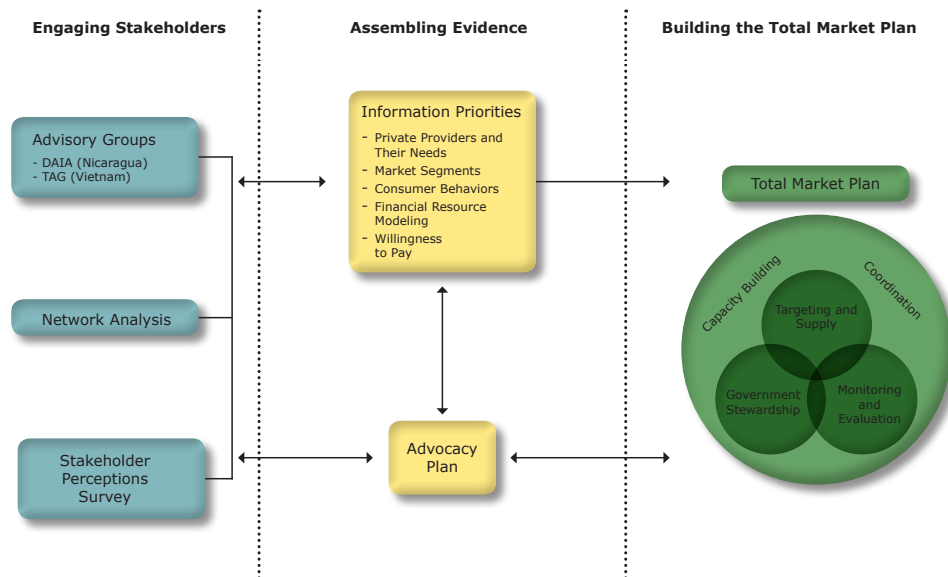


FIGURE 1. Steps to a national total market plan

These steps are described below with examples from progress in Vietnam and Nicaragua.

ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

In Vietnam, the network analysis process found that a closely connected network of family planning stakeholders exists, with the government family planning division of the Ministry of Health and UNFPA having the highest number of connections to others in the network. Consistently, when interviewees were asked to nominate organizations who are in a position to make or influence family planning decisions, the top ten responses were all governmental bodies with the exception of UNFPA. Private commercial family planning groups (manufacturers, distributors, pharmacists) were on the periphery of the network (see Figure 2).

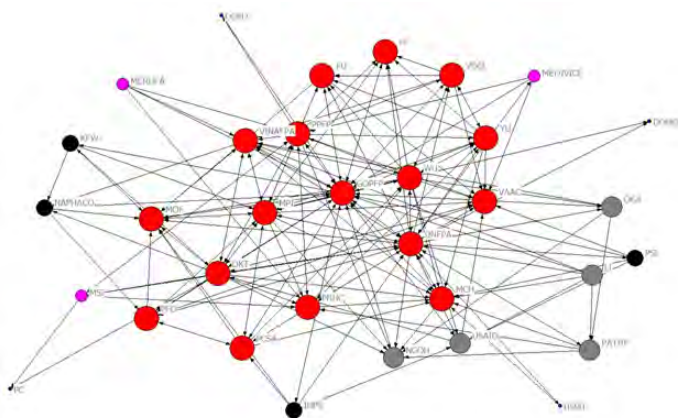


FIGURE 2. Vietnam family planning network analysis

Network and stakeholder analyses were especially helpful in enabling us to identify the range of players who are especially supportive of specific policy goals, as well as their relationships with each other and opportunities, obstacles, and strategies for engaging them in policy change. More specifically, using these tools enabled us to be thorough in identifying key stakeholders. For example, provincial government actors did not initially figure very prominently in our stakeholder analysis. However, after developing the network maps, we revisited our analysis and reconsidered where engagement with provincial stakeholders might be particularly important.

A major potential obstacle to a total market approach for family planning in Vietnam is real or perceived government opposition. In fact, the government stakeholders interviewed expressed support for promoting public-private coordination and establishing government stewardship of the family planning market. The fact that nearly all stakeholders identified the need for a coordination mechanism and for clear regulations for private-sector participation in the family planning market provides additional support for moving forward.

In Nicaragua, the network analysis resulted in expansion of the existing coordination committee to include three nongovernmental agencies that were identified as influential in family planning. In addition, stakeholders there expressed strong support for the principles of a total market approach, as shown in Figure 3.

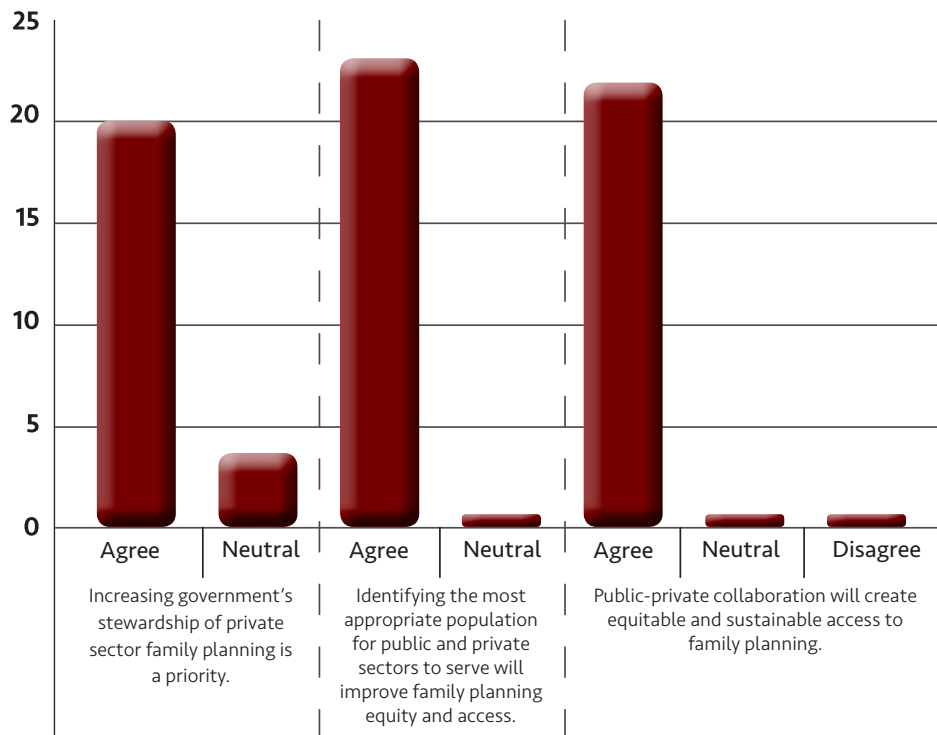


FIGURE 3. Respondent support for total market approach principles: Nicaragua

ASSEMBLING EVIDENCE

A key piece of evidence needed to implement a total market approach is information about wealth and use of family planning. In Nicaragua, this information was available from the Nicaraguan Demographic and Health Survey (DHS). In Vietnam, the DHS data on wealth were out of date, and the government had undertaken its own ability-to-pay study. PATH contracted with the Futures Institute to further analyze these data; they concluded that willingness to pay is concentrated among women living in urban areas and government workers (see Figure 4).

WILLINGNESS TO SELF PAY FOR FAMILY PLANNING (WORK STATUS)

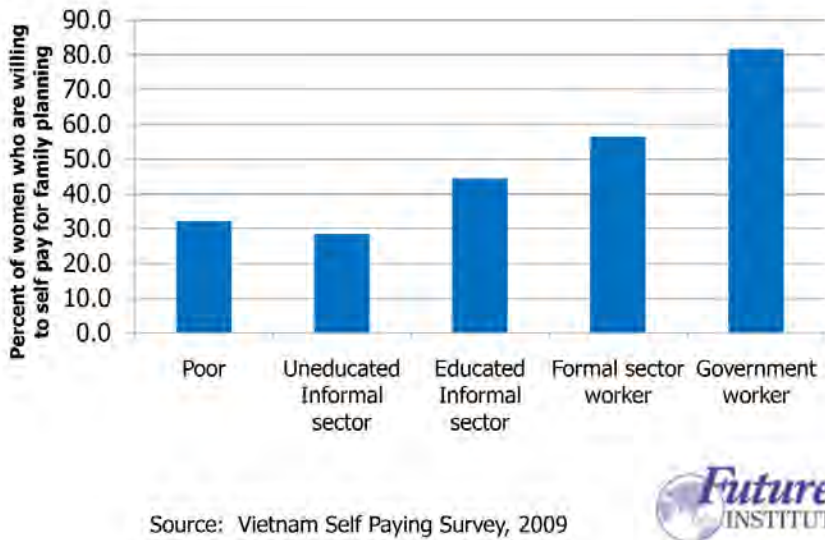


FIGURE 4: Willingness to pay in Vietnam

BUILDING THE TOTAL MARKET PLAN

Now that the stakeholders are at the table and evidence is assembled, we are in a position to strengthen the government's capacity to build a total market plan. We have made recommendations for each contraceptive method and identified market segments, as shown in the example below:

Contraceptive Method	Recommendation
Injectable	Expand categories of providers who can inject (pharmacists, community health workers outside of health center)

In the coming months, we will identify action steps for each recommendation, assign responsible parties, monitor timelines, and determine how to measure success. We will also strategically disseminate lessons learned to promote country-led decision-making around the total market approach.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Additional project briefs on Nicaragua, Vietnam, the total market approach, and country-led decision-making are available at www.path.org/publications/details.php?i=1695.

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