



Ethiopia Celebrates Community Reproductive Health Challenge

Of the nearly 70 million Ethiopians, over 80% reside in rural areas and have little to no access to public health facilities. In 2000, the contraceptive prevalence rate was 6.3%. Due to decentralization of health services, district officials were ill-equipped to plan and implement health services for populations residing one to two days walking distance from the nearest health center.



Photo: Pathfinder International.

Mr. Ebsa Tadesse, Bati Woreda Administrator and WAC Chairperson.

Rural citizens from four regional states voiced their views about how family planning changed their lives and why it is important to expand services throughout rural Ethiopia.

Results

The first National Reproductive Health Day in Ethiopia was celebrated on April 28, 2004. The President of Ethiopia opened the ceremonies in which over sixty CBRH agents and twenty district officials shared their experiences and successes. Rural citizens from four regional states shared views on how family planning changed their lives and why it is important to expand services throughout rural Ethiopia. Two years after initiating the USAID-funded program, Bati Woreda has mobilized all communities in a collaborative action for family planning, child health, nutrition, maternal health, and sanitation. They mapped the villages to avoid duplication and conducted surveys to expand community education. Ebsa Tadesse, WAC chairperson, also took the initiative in linking family planning services with the food security program in the district which has led to sustainable and structural social change in the district. All this has contributed to a contraceptive prevalence rate of over 35%.

Initiative

To expand health and family planning services in Ethiopia, USAID funded a Community Based Reproductive Health Program under the authority of Woreda district officials. USAID provides assistance and training to improve the management and operation of the program through transparency and public accountability.

Since its launch in 2001, USAID has helped establish nearly 200 Woreda Advisory Committees (WACs) and trained 5,000 community agents. The WACs meet quarterly to discuss and document all health activities of the district. WACs are actively involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the program.

WAC recipient - Bati Woreda of the Amhara Regional State in northeast Ethiopia - undertook a major initiative to solve male resistance in family planning by taking the role as lead advocate in public gatherings. The committee collaborated with religious leaders to lessen the problem of resistance and organized panel discussions to discuss the health situation of the district.

Case Study

