USAID MCH Program - Health Communication Component

Report on World Population Day Celebration
Population Mela
September 1 and 3, 2015

Rural Support Programmes Network
World Population Day has been celebrated every year on July 11 since 1989. In 1968 world leaders proclaimed that individuals have a basic human right to determine freely and responsibly the number and timing of their children. World Population Day was initiated in 1989 when the world population surpassed five billion, marked on July 11, 1987. The UN authorized the event as a vehicle to build an awareness of population issues and the impact they have on development and the environment. Since then, with the United Nations Population Fund’s (UNFPA) encouragement, governments, non-governmental organizations, institutions and individuals organize various educational activities to celebrate the annual event.

World Population Day aims to increase people’s awareness on various population issues such as the importance of family planning, including gender equality, poverty, maternal health and human rights. The day is celebrated worldwide and the theme of this year's World Population Day is **Vulnerable Populations in Emergencies**.

**USAID’s MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH PROGRAM**

USAID has been a stalwart partner to Pakistan. USAID’s current flagship Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Program with its five interrelated components: 1) Family Planning/Reproductive Health (FP/RH); 2) Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH); 3) Health Communication; 4) Health Commodities and Supply Chain; and 5) Health Systems Strengthening, is an innovative program designed to improve health outcomes of women and children in target areas.

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Communication Programs (JHU-CCP) in partnership with Center for Communication Programs Pakistan (CCPP), Mercy Corps and Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) is implementing the Health Communication Component (HCC). Under this component the RSPN/RSPs are responsible for demand creation of MNCH/FP services and referral to public and private facilities. In addition, the RSPN/RSPs are responsible for community mobilization. Celebration of International days/advocacy events is an important component of community mobilization. In this regard, the RSPN in collaboration with the National Program for Family Planning and Primary Health Care (NPFP&PHC) and Population Welfare Department will celebrate the World Population Day in ten focus Districts (Matiari, Umerkot, Sukkur, Sanghar, Mirpur Khas, Larkano, Naushehro Feroze, Ghotki, Shikarpur and Jacobabad).

**WORLD POPULATION DAY**

Population Melas were organized at the community level, to celebrate the World Population Day 2015, by the RSPN in collaboration with Population Welfare Department where District Population Welfare Offices took lead of the event. The Population Melas were a one day event in which the communities from RSPN-HCC intervention areas, the representatives of implementing partners of MCH Program and district level health sector stakeholders were invited.

The objective of the celebration was to provide the implementing partners of MCH program and health department of government with a platform to inform the communities about their projects and services in the area, highlight the issues related to frequent pregnancies and its effect on maternal and child health and provide a platform where the communities can be motivated for adoption of the birth spacing/FP for better maternal and child health, to access information regarding MNCH/FP issues and services, and to provide the communities with an opportunity to raise their voices related to health issues, and know about the available health services in their respective areas.
The day was celebrated during the Population Week celebrated by Population Welfare Department from August 31 to September 4. In Umerkot, Mirpur Khas, Sanghar and Matiari the Population Melas were organized on September 1 while in Sukkur, Larkano, Ghotki, Naushahro Feroze, Shikarpur and Jacobabad the event was organized on September 3.

In Matiari district the event was held at Ghazi Marriage Hall, in Umerkot at RHS Centre Ground Civil Hospital, in Sukkur at BHU Tando Thatti Union Council Long Bhatti, in Sanghar at Abhpur Village, in Mirpur Khas at Musarrat Hall, in Larkano at Population Welfare Department Office, in Naushheiro Feroze at Community Center Hall, in Ghotki at Circuit House, in Shikarpur at THQ Lakhi Shah and in Jacobabad at District Town Hall.

**ACTIVITIES**

The main activities of the event included information sharing on the importance of World Population Day, real-life experience sharing on birth spacing methods, skits by community volunteers on family planning, information sharing on health facilities and services provided and quizzes and competitions.

**Importance of World Population Day**

The importance of World Population Day was shared by District Population Welfare Officers with the participants where it was stated that World Population Day aims to increase people’s awareness on various population issues such as the importance of family planning, including gender equality, poverty, maternal health and human rights. The services provided by PWD, MSS and other health facilities were also mentioned.

**Information Session about Marie Stopes Society (MSS) and its Services**

While sharing the information about the working of MSS and the services they provide, MSS officials explained that birth spacing is important because it helps mother’s health and prepares her for her next pregnancy. They gave religious reference to breastfeeding for 2 years and highlighted the importance of spacing for the healthy growth of children as well. Information on MSS Suraj Social Franchises and Mobile Service Units was also
given, mentioning that Mobile Service Unit is present at the venue and potential clients can avail the services at the end of the event.

**Promotion of MSS Helpline**

The MSS Helpline (0800-22333) was particularly promoted which is available 24/7 for all reproductive, maternal, child health related issues/concerns. MSS Helpline cards and telephone cut-outs prepared under MCH program were disseminated during the event. The Helpline was also displayed on chart sheets and banner at the venues.

**Skit on Family Planning by Community Volunteers**

To further endorse the importance of FP services, in each district a skit was performed by the community volunteers. The participated communities appreciated this effort and a very cheerfully positive response was noticed. Through the skits, the community volunteers emphasized on the importance of birth spacing and the role of family members specially of husband and mother in law in adoption of any method.

**Information Session on MCHIP and its Services**

The information on MCHIP were presented by MCHIP District Coordinators, where they mentioned the role of MCHIP in improving MNCH services in the area by providing facilities at the health facilities. They also mentioned the number of health facilities they have upgraded in the districts and how they are building capacity of health care providers working at those facilities to improve quality of services and ensure patient safety.
Real-life Experience Sharing
In each district, two to three community volunteers shared their experience with different birth spacing methods and their family and society’s approval to its use. Couples and their mothers in law shared their response to the use of contraceptives and their satisfaction with the decision.

Placard Presentation on PWD FP Messages and Quiz
In this activity, community members carried placards, with very clear 16 key FP messages written on them, across the stage. As they passed by, the convener read the messages out loud to make the participants pledge to adopt healthy practices. After the presentation of the key messages through the placards, few short questions were asked to the community from the key messages and small prizes were distributed for every correct answer.

Remarks by Chief Guest
In each district there were different Chief Guests, they included District Population Welfare Officers, District Coordinators National Programme, Deputy and Assistant Deputy Commissioners. They all thanked USAID, Community Members, Government of Sindh, implementing partners of MCH Program, civil society members, sister organizations, and journalists present at the event. The community participation was massively appreciated especially of women. The chief
guests ensured that they would continue to extend their support for such events and work in future.

**Stalls**

At the end of event, announcements were made about the stalls set up for the community to gather information on matters related to health of mother and child. Stalls were set up by MCHIP, MSS, PWD, PPHI, HANDS, and other local NGOs. The stalls served as the awareness booths for the community members where they inquired and received information regarding their problems and available services in the area.

**FP Camp by MSS and PWD**

The FP camps were set up at the event venues where clients took free of cost FP services and received information about the available birth spacing options. Women participants specially appreciated this effort. The information of the nearby health facilities with available FP services were also shared with the clients for their future consultation and provision of services. MSS also gave away their helpline cards to the clients for information seeking on FP and MNCH.

**Vaccination Camp – Sukkar**

In district Sukkur, Vaccination camp was also organized at the venue to provide vaccination service to the participating communities. The participants were given TT shots, OPV and Pentavalent I and II, for free of cost, with the help of District Health Department and PPHI Sukkur.
Event Participation
In total 2606 persons participated in the 10 districts, of which 649 were men and 1957 were women. They included district government officials, representatives of partner organizations and local NGOs, media representatives, community notables, and men and women community members.

![District Wise Number of Participants](image)

Media Coverage
The event was widely covered in local newspapers. Below are few of the newspapers cuttings.
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Chippa Aabard: 13

Seminars on world population day were held in various cities. Seminars were conducted in several cities, discussing the importance of population control. The seminars were organized by various organizations and were attended by a large number of people. The seminars focused on the need for population control and the importance of family planning. The seminars were well received and were considered a success.
Speakers urge to join hands & make efforts to control the unchecked population growth

Ahson Baloch

SUKKUR: Speakers at a function on Thursday urged the government as well as non-governmental organizations to join hands and make efforts to control the unchecked population growth in the country as the task was so huge that neither of them could achieve success if they worked separately.

Speaking at a function organized to mark the World Population Day (WPD), at Basic Health Unit (BHU), Tando Thok, Rohri Taluka of Sukkur district on Thursday, they said that substantial progress could be made in the field if all organizations concerned worked jointly to bring down the population growth rate to a reasonable level.

The function was jointly organized by the Sindh Rural Support Organization (SRSO) under Health Communication Component (HCC), with collaboration of USAID’s MCH programme and Rural Support Programme Network (RSPN), Chief Executive Officer (CEO), SRSO, Muhammad Dital Kalhoro, Director Information Suhddar Syed Asif Ali Shah, Dr Abdul Aziz, Jamal Ahmed, Habib Akhtar Behdiwani, Ms Firdous Jamuni, Amarnath Bhaghi, Shabana Weesar and others also spoke.

They said that no matter how much progress a country made through industrialization or agricultural revolution, all its progress would be neutralized if it did not keep its population growth rate under control.

The speakers said that at present the annual population growth rate of the country was among the highest in the region as the growth rate in Iran, Bangladesh, India, China, Sri Lanka was well below it.

They said that population planning was not against the Islamic values and traditions as many Islamic countries like Egypt, Malaysia, Iran, etc had successfully brought down their growth rate to a desirable level.

They said that if the growth rate was not brought down to a desirable level the population which at present was around 140 million would be approximately 220 million by the year 2020.

The speakers said that the government through its over 450 family welfare centres, 38 reproductive health centres and 34 mobile service units was providing reproductive health services by providing various types of, temporary as well as permanent, contraceptives so that the couples could space their children in the province.

They said that efforts were being made to meet the unmet demand by extending the service delivery infrastructure so that the users could have an easy access to the contraceptives.

The speakers were of the view said that a woman’s health was also affected if she delivered more children as compared to the one who used contraceptives and gave birth to fewer children.

They said that a woman at an average during her child bearing age gave birth to four children in the country and efforts were being made to bring it down to two.

They said that unchecked growth in the population put an additional pressure on