Workshop Report

“Program Review Workshop on South-South Experiences” on the ‘Alternative Approach for Sustained Improvement in Reproductive Health Program’

17-20th September, 2002
Cairo, Egypt

Partners in Population and Development
IPH Building, Mohakhali
Dhaka, Bangladesh

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I. INTRODUCTION

The “Program Review Workshop on South-South Experiences’ was held in Cairo, Egypt during 17-20th September, 2002. It was attended by twenty-five South-South Experts (SSEps) covering three regions Asia, Latin America and Middle East and North Africa involved in implementing the five projects under the “Alternative Approach for Sustained Improvement in Reproductive Health” (annex 1). The participants were from: Thailand, Vietnam, China, Bangladesh, India, Egypt, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Panama, Mexico, Honduras, Peru, Morocco and Tunisia. Their expertise ranged from service delivery, training, IEC, Adolescent, STD/STIs research representing Government (GO) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO). The Health and Population, Expert from the European Union (EU) was also present at the workshop.

The workshop was organized, facilitated by Partners and Development Secretariat based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The Cairo Technical Office (CTO) in Cairo provided all the logistical, media coordination and hospitality arrangements. It was financed by the Department for International Development (DFID) funded project titled ‘Global Research and Communication Program’ implemented by Partners in Population and Development.

II. BACKGROUND

Partners in Population and Development (Partners), is an inter-governmental alliance of nineteen developing counties with a mandate to build the capacity of institutions and individuals of South. This approach will allow institutions and individuals to respond effectively to population, reproductive health and development issues through South-South exchange and sharing of information, knowledge and skills.

During the past two years, Partners has been managing five long-term South-South projects financed by the European Commission, known as ‘Alternative Approach to Sustained
Improvement in Reproductive Health’ involving 16 developing countries. These projects were launched in Dhaka in August 2000.

The five projects are in their final phase of implementation. The South-South Experts (SSEps) who lead the projects in their respective agencies and countries have gained substantial experience and were ready to share information with each other on their achievements as well as on the elements that made their project implementation effective or ineffective.

**Partners** organized this workshop to provide a common platform to review and share their programmatic achievements, experiences and lessons learned and to propose new interventions from emerging issue. A Concept Note on the workshop is attached. ([annex 2](#)).

### III. OBJECTIVES:

The workshop had three main objectives:
1. To document experiences and lessons learned from the five projects.
2. To disseminate the lessons learned.
3. To develop a new project proposal with sub-components for further South-South Collaboration.

### IV. THE PROCESS:

Fifteen (15) institutions presented their experiences in implementing South-South projects. The thematic areas covered were:
- Adolescent and reproductive health services
- Reproductive Health services for Muslim Religious Leaders
- STD/STI testing and diagnosis
- IEC/Advocacy
- Quality of Care (QOC)
- Training

On day I, Dr. Moshira Es Sheffai, Director, Cairo Technical Office, in Egypt and PCC of **Partners** chaired the opening session. She introduced the agenda ([annex 3](#)). The Executive Director, **Partners**, Dr. Timothee Gandaho made the Opening statement. Dr Josephine Moyo, Program Manager for Alternative Approach Projects, welcomed the participants and briefed them about the objectives of the workshop. Dr Giovanni Cascone of the European Union (EU) had also made a statement regarding the relevance of such consortium in addressing global health issues. He informed the participants about the recent Call for Proposals by the
European Union. He shared the detailed information on the Expression of Interest Form for the grant requests and the Guideline for Grant Applicants responding to the Proposals.

The project teams made their presentations on the following topics highlighting their results, Impacts and experiences (annex 4):

1. Project 1- ‘South-South Cooperation: Mexico, Dominican Republic, Honduras and Peru’.
2. Project 2- ‘Reproductive Health for Adolescents in four Latin American cities- applying lessons learned from South-South cooperation’.
3. Project 3- ‘Support to Muslim Religious leaders for the Promotion of RH and FP among Muslim Communities’.
4. Project 4- ‘Increasing accessibility to integrated RH/FP services in two provinces in Vietnam with technical assistance from Thailand’.
5. Project 5- ‘South-South collaboration in the Diagnosis and Prevention of STIs Morocco and Tunisia’

A profile of the South-South Experts was prepared during the workshop. A Database will be available on the Partners website.

The project presentations followed by detailed discussions identified some Lessons Learned in South-South Implementation. These are:

1. Project design should consider risk factors associated with changes in Government during project implementation, the NGO-GO relationship, and the need for continuity of interventions emerging from project implementation.
2. Programmatic, financial and institutional sustainability is important.
3. Availability of foreign currency and fluctuations of conversion rates were a major challenge.
4. South-South projects are supplementary to on-going program activities. They involve entire institutions and wider participation rather than being merely a mechanism to boost current interventions.
5. Institutional commitment is critical. The South-South projects must not be taken as additional work but it should be part of the ongoing activities of the institutions.
6. Establishing an alliances with other institutions working in the same sector would maximize the project benefits.
7. The projects should be carefully designed in order to avoid any duplication of efforts.
8. Long-term collaboration was beneficial and the team was motivated to develop more collaborating initiatives in the future.
9. Evidences strongly suggest that South-South collaborations have yielded gains that far outweigh the resources invested in the effort.
10. Close coordination between central and field staff is desired. Decentralization of activities seem to be more cost-effective.
11. Good preparation/planning is necessary. A feasibility study is critical.
12. South-South projects should be long-term exchange with a duration of at least 3 years.
13. Establishing a Regional network/system to share information can boost the collaboration activities.
14. Separate budget lines for monitoring and evaluation need to be established.

Based on the experience and accomplishments made so far, the experts were ready to discuss new opportunities for collaboration either to expand or consolidate the scope of their ongoing projects. Six working groups were formed to present. On day 2, the working groups presented nine Concepts for the new proposal. These were:

1. ‘Reproductive Health and Education for the Religious Leaders in Afghanistan’.
2. ‘Technical Assistance in integrating and improving FP/RH quality and care of services in Laos and Cambodia’.
3. ‘Increasing Reproductive Health care and family planning in mountainous and difficult areas in Vietnam’
4. ‘Strengthening ongoing ARH programs in changing organizational policies to prioritize adolescent health issues’
5. ‘Training for the RH service providers and expanding regional collaboration for use of the Laboratory’.
6. ‘Increase coverage of the program to Prevention of STIs among Adolescents’.
7. ‘Religious leaders promoting FP/RH services in other autonomous regions of China’.
8. ‘Improving the Adolescents Sexual and Reproductive Health field and reduce teen pregnancy and HIV/AIDS among young people’.

On day two, the working groups discussed their concepts for proposal in the plenary session. The proposal was then modified in line with the requirements presented in the Format of the Expression of Interest by the EU.
On day 3, after the group work, the revised proposal with six separate interventions (sub-components) were presented. These were: (annex 5):

1. ‘HIV/AIDS Education and Care for Madrasa students in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, China and Thailand’.
2. ‘Providing Technical Assistance in integrating and improving FP/RH quality and care of services in Cambodia, Laos and in three selected provinces of Vietnam’.
3. ‘South-South Cooperation for improving quality of Sexual and RH Services for Adolescents in Venezuela, Panama, Ecuador, Colombia and Nicaragua: Closing the circle’.
4. ‘South-South Collaboration project on Prevention and Control of RTIs and HIV/AIDS among young people in Morocco, Tunisia, Mali and Mauritania.
5. ‘Improving Adolescents Sexual and RH services to reduce teen-age pregnancy and HIV/AIDS condition among young people in Dominican Republic, Honduras, Peru and Mexico’.
6. ‘Improving the RH services and HIV/AIDS education for young Muslim women in Thailand, Indonesia and Egypt’.

ANNEXES:
1. List of participants
2. Concept Note of the Workshop
3. Agenda
4. Project Presentations
5. Draft proposal (6 Interventions)
6. Profile of South-South Experts (SSEps)