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## ImpactNOW DEMONSTRATES THE SHORT-TERM BENEFITS OF INVESTING IN FAMILY PLANNING

*Brief*

Photo credit: Makis

ImpactNOW—a new model developed by the USAID-funded Health Policy Project (HPP)—helps decisionmakers and policy advocates make the case for investing in family planning by demonstrating the near-term (2–7 years) benefits of doing so.

ImpactNOW fills an important knowledge gap in the family planning (FP) policy and advocacy landscape, as existing models have focused on demonstrating the long-term gains generated by increased FP uptake. A lack of concrete information on near-term benefits has hindered efforts to increase immediate investment in FP. Without this evidence, policymakers and program planners have found it difficult to establish realistic, achievable goals or secure the funding needed to expand access to high-quality FP services.

HPP is implementing ImpactNOW in two countries: Ethiopia and Malawi. In Ethiopia, the model is being applied initially in the Amhara Region, where stakeholders have placed particular emphasis on the linkages between FP uptake and a reduction in maternal and child deaths. ImpactNOW will be applied in Malawi

to support parliamentarians' efforts to advocate for an increase in the newly established FP budget line item. ImpactNOW is already generating interest in other countries as well.

### About the Model

Building on the Impact2 model developed by Marie-Stopes International (MSI), ImpactNOW models gains in three areas as a result of FP uptake:

- Financial savings to the healthcare system (e.g., maternal health costs averted)
- Maternal and child deaths averted
- Unintended pregnancies averted

The model does so by generating three possible scenarios (business-as-usual, modest progress, and rapid progress) based on changes in one of the following:

- FP budget
- Unmet need for FP
- Contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR)

The resulting outputs can be used to generate policy dialogue and build consensus on optimal policy goals and budget support in the particular local context. For example, ImpactNOW can reveal mismatches between policy goals and available (or allocated) funding for FP service delivery.

## ImpactNOW in Ethiopia

HPP is partnering with the Regional Health Bureau (RHB) to apply the ImpactNOW model in Ethiopia's Amhara Region. Ethiopia struggles with persistently high maternal mortality. While maternal mortality declined significantly between 2000 and 2005 (from 871 to 673 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births), since then progress has stalled. Between 2005 and 2011, the number of maternal deaths (676) remained virtually unchanged. This occurred despite a near doubling of CPR from 15 percent to 29 percent. During this same period, unmet need declined to 26 percent from 36 percent, and the total fertility rate fell from 5.4 to 4.8.

In partnership with HPP, the RHB and other key regional stakeholders—including universities, NGOs, and other regional government departments—are using the ImpactNOW model to explore how investing in FP could help bring about further reductions in maternal and child mortality. In August 2013, HPP and RHB provided a live demonstration of ImpactNOW for stakeholders and gathered additional feedback to shape its implementation in Amhara.

The stakeholders' response was overwhelmingly positive. They highlighted the following features of the model as particularly useful:

- User-friendliness;
- Pre-loaded default country-specific data—saves users time and enables them to begin exploring modeling scenarios without delay;

- Inclusion of costing data and economic outputs—allows users to easily see and demonstrate the costs and benefits of different policy scenarios;
- Ability to model changing FP method mix over time; and
- Scenario comparison feature—helps users determine the best FP policy goals and budget levels for their particular context.

ImpactNOW can also be used to determine whether countries are on track to meet the national goals established at the London Family Planning Summit (FP2020) and (if not), begin discussions on how to get back on track.



Photo credit: Laura McPherson, Health Policy Project

Participants at the ImpactNOW meeting included (from left to right): Mesfin Gebremedhin, Deputy Head of the Bureau of Finance and Economic Development; Dr. Kurabachew Abera Alemu, Country Director of HPP Ethiopia; and Sister Zebideru Zewdie Abebe, Deputy Head of the Bureau of Health, Amhara Region, Ethiopia.

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