

Building Ownership for Contraceptive Security Through a Regional Approach

In the summer of 2003, USAID's Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) launched a regional initiative to strengthen contraceptive security (CS) in eight countries. Eight years later, the LAC CS Regional Initiative has built a South-to-South exchange network by motivating country-level CS champions to work together toward achieving a common goal—increasing access to family planning (FP) services and supplies throughout the region.

Launching LAC CS Initiative Forum
Managua, Nicaragua, July

- Completed country/regional assessments.
- Formed most of LAC CS committees.



Advocating for CS Event
Antigua, Guatemala, September

- Shared country market analyses.
- Strengthened country commitment to improving access to FP.



Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition Global CS Event on LAC
London, England, April

- Shared LAC approach globally.
- Recognized countries for policy, supply chain, and procurement models.

Equity and CS Event
Antigua, Guatemala, September

Strengthened country commitment to improving access to FP.



Public-Public Alliances for Equity in FP Workshop
Managua, Nicaragua, May

- Public institutions commit to better coordinating services.
- Increased commitment of Social Security Institutes to strengthen FP programs.
- Increased coverage in some countries.



2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

2008

2009

2010

Regional LAC CS Forum
Lima, Peru, October

- Assessments presented.
- Country CS action plans developed.



LAC CS State of the Practice Event
Washington, DC, USA, September

- Donors and partners committed to coordinating CS more closely.
- LAC recognized as a global CS leader.



Supply Chain under Health Reform Workshop
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, September

- Supply chain and CS recognized as building blocks of health reform.
- FP better protected during integration and decentralization.



Options for Contraceptive Procurement Workshop
Cartagena, Colombia, September

- Participants oriented to best practices for procurement.
- Partners better-informed to support these practices.
- Procurement mechanisms improved in several countries.



Successes and Challenges to Achieve CS Event
Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, June

- Seven countries sign a declaration affirming their commitment to CS.





From the Implementers

In 2003, USAID's Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) launched the LAC Contraceptive Security (CS) Regional Initiative to strengthen CS and build a south-to-south exchange network to help sustain countries where USAID donations and family planning technical assistance are being phased out.

The Regional Initiative brings countries together to share lessons and solutions, which are then translated into results nationally. With eight countries continuously challenging and supporting each other to improve CS, the initiative has been a great success. For every CS improvement in one country, policymakers and technical managers in other countries emulate their neighbor's achievement.

Countries participating in the LAC CS initiative include Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Peru.

Interview with Maria Rosa Gárate

Maria Rosa, what is the key to the Regional Initiative's success; what is an example of one success?

The successes are not isolated. They result from the synergy of partners' efforts, the lessons learned, and the ongoing commitment of the CS champions, which can be the most difficult.

The annual meetings have been a good venue for LAC CS committee members to give feedback. Champions must not let problems discourage them or take breaks when the goals appear to be met. Major setbacks happen when we think that everything has been done and/or achieved. Our countries have many ups and downs; they need constant sensitizing. We must give them information to keep political decisions that are favorable to CS, or to make the necessary decisions to ensure CS. Champions strengthen strategic partnerships and keep CS on the public (and sometimes political) agenda.

Why are CS issues so important for you and your team working in the region?

I believe that contraception is not only a right, but also an ingredient for improving the quality of our lives. We must recognize and promote the benefits of knowing about and using contraception. Family planning not only reduces fertility rates and supports the right to decide on family size; it also fights poverty and seeks equity.

We must also remember the Millennium Development Goals; CS can help us achieve several goals—reduce maternal mortality, minimize malnutrition and child mortality, combat HIV and AIDS, and reduce gender inequality and strengthen women's empowerment.

Last year in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, an agreement, signed by seven countries, identified 11 key issues to sustain country improvements during the USAID phaseout. CS committees must be institutionalized and autonomous, the MOHs must implement CS policies, and include CS responsibilities in the decentralization reform processes.

We must constantly seek effective political commitment, ensure protected funding, and strengthen citizen oversight.

Ms. Gárate is the Regional Advisor for Latin America and the Caribbean for the LAC Contraceptive Security Initiative for the USAID Health Policy Project. She has more than 30 years of experience monitoring and evaluating operational research for reproductive health programs in both the public and private sectors. She has provided technical assistance on management information systems and provided FP training on quality healthcare for many reproductive health programs in LAC. She has supported human rights, gender, and multiculturalism in Peru's health system and initiated one of the first actions to eliminate the stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and AIDS. She was responsible for the first training manual for HIV and AIDS service providers in the MOH in her country.



Considerations for Continued Work Toward Contraceptive Security in LAC

by Nora Quesada

We have made a lot of progress in LAC. Poor families in my country, Colombia, and in Latin America struggle to access family planning. When they cannot get the products they need, they often face unwanted pregnancies and deaths.

Our CS work saves lives; it prevents unintended pregnancies, and averts maternal and child deaths. But, the work is not done. We still have contraceptive stockouts—but fewer than ten years ago.

Countries are facing USAID graduation while also facing profound institutional changes: like health system integration and decentralization. These changes can strengthen or weaken CS.

For example, the MOH in the Dominican Republic is transferring programmatic and service delivery responsibilities from province directorates to regional offices. To maintain their CS achievements, regional and district health, and commodity managers must advocate for family planning and preserve the integrity of supply chains. National-level CS champions must ensure that family planning and CS have priority attention within the new health system. Most USAID-supported countries are facing similar challenges.

We have not met all our goals for protecting CS. Countries still need to prioritize and maintain the supply chain during the health reform process. The goal of the health sector reform initiatives is to improve access to and equity of health care service provision. Part of this process includes guaranteeing the availability of preventative services—such as reproductive health and family planning—and their related supplies to everyone who needs them.

We must keep working to illustrate how a strong supply chain is the backbone of the health system and how, by investing in and prioritizing supply chains, we can contribute strategically to broader health system strengthening initiatives.

I look forward to working with countries to tackle these challenges in years to come.

Based in Colombia, Mrs. Quesada is the Regional Director for LAC for the USAID | DELIVER PROJECT. She has 21 years of experience in family planning, reproductive health, procurement, budgeting, donor coordination, commodity security, private sector initiatives, HIV and AIDS, market segmentation, policy advocacy and change, and graduation plans and strategies for USAID-assisted countries. Before joining John Snow, Inc., she developed the regional logistics and family planning training center while working for PROFAMILIA, Colombia.



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