



Design of Young Women's Support Groups Initiative

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1. This is a report of an assignment to design an initiative that will enhance young women's access to the information, support and resources required to take care of their own and their children's health. The design work was undertaken in the UK in late January and early February 2012 and involved the participation of all key members of the PRRINN-MNCH Output 6 team.
2. Reaching young women has so far proved difficult in the PRRINN-MNCH community engagement intervention sites. Constraints on young women's physical mobility and self-expression mean that they have been largely excluded from the change processes underway at community level. A targeted approach is required to reach and empower these women.
3. PRRINN-MNCH will use the term 'Young Women's Support Groups' to describe its work with young women. The target group for the initiative will be ever-married women aged 20 years and below. It is anticipated that a focus on ever-married young women will be very acceptable to decision-makers and opinion leaders at household and community level.
4. The PRRINN-MNCH clustering studies indicated that although there was clear correlation between lack of social support and child death, this was independent of age. Hence further targeting within the age-specific approach will be required to reach particularly vulnerable young women.
5. The programme will adopt a two-pronged approach to building young women's social, financial and human assets. Direct support will be given in some key areas, while support will be leveraged from government, NGOs, other donors and the wider community in other areas. A focus on building MNCH-related knowledge and support for accessing services will form the bedrock of the YWSG curriculum. Support will also be provided in some new areas, namely personal hygiene, nutrition, reproductive health, rights and obligations, and key life skills such as conflict resolution, decision-making and negotiation skills, managing relationships and aspects of gender violence.
6. The Young Women's Support Groups will be facilitated by female mentors who are no more than a couple of years older than the group members. The qualities and experience required by the mentors are similar to those required by Community Volunteers; hence the mentors will be drawn from this cadre. The involvement of individuals who have already been

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trained by the programme will help fast-track YWSG implementation.

7. The Young Women's Support Groups will be implemented in sites that have benefited from comprehensive support from PRRINN-MNCH for at least six months. These communities have already been exposed to new ideas about MNCH and about social inclusion, and have established community systems to support women's access to essential MNCH services. This is likely to mean that implementation of YWSG takes place in clusters one to five only.
8. It will be essential to ensure that the groups are linked to and supported by all other systems and structures

that comprise the 'community health unit'. The design process clarified where and how different community engagement activities need to link together or be integrated. A comprehensive work plan was produced as part of the design.

9. A large number of activities need to be implemented over the next 18 months if the four key results set out in the proposal to DFID are to be achieved. The level of effort required is considerable and the challenges involved should not be underestimated. As has always been the case, the Output 6 team will review performance on an ongoing basis and adjust implementation strategies accordingly should this be warranted.



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Please email info@prinn-mnch.org for the full report

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