



Pragati: “Fertility Awareness for Quality of Life”

LOCATION

Five districts in Nepal: Bajura, Pyuthan, Rupandehi, Nuwakot, Siraha

PARTNERS

Institute for Reproductive Health at Georgetown University, Save the Children

DONOR

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the Fertility Awareness for Community Transformation (FACT) Project (2013-2018)

FOCUS POPULATIONS

- Married and unmarried adolescent women and men
- Hard-to-reach communities (Janijati, Dalit, Muslim, Chhetri)

What is Pragati?

The Approach: A Participatory Intervention

Working through existing social networks, the FACT Project's Pragati intervention uses a series of games to diffuse information about fertility awareness and family planning to individuals, catalyzing conversation with others. The games also facilitate discussion around social and gender norms—unspoken rules that govern behavior—in order to challenge those norms that negatively influence family planning use. Through the games, participants critically reflect on social barriers, the expectations of others that impact behaviors in their communities, and their personal values. Pragati defines 'critical reflection' as asking participants to look beyond commonly held beliefs and behaviors, to add depth to understanding, to speculate about the future, and to act.

Games and topics are introduced and facilitated by influential community partners who are well-positioned to share information and promote reflection among their own family members and peers. A detailed manual, including game materials, guides Pragati influencers in facilitating the games in the community. Pragati's partnership with health and community-level networks provides linkages to long-term support and care in the communities where they work.



Health Mothers Group Champions: Deliver and promote the *Pragati* games in the community



Male Champions: Engage existing men's groups, such as Ward Citizen's Forum, to catalyze reflective conversations around social and gender norms related to family planning using the games





Female Community Health Volunteers: Deliver and promote the *Pragati* games in the community alongside the Health Mothers Groups



Roving Auxiliary Nurse Midwife: In Rupandehi, these mobile service providers played the *Pragati* games with community members to increase their rapport and share accurate information about FP

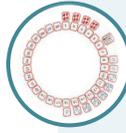
Project Implementation

The *Pragati* games were implemented in the five districts from January 2017 to March 2018. Sixty-six orientations were provided to promoters, health facility staff, and Health Facility Operations Management Committee members. Monthly coaching and review meetings supported community promoters in facilitating games. Other monitoring results include:

- 9,315 total game sessions were held across the 5 districts and 118,123 individual contact points were made through the games.
- 78,373 points of contact (66%) were individuals identified as hard-to-reach (HTR) in their district.
- The Menstrual Cycle and Son or Daughter Determination games were the most frequently played games.
- As anticipated, women comprised 75% of contacts.
- Male Champions contributed meaningfully, leading 329 games and achieving 5,737 points of contact.
- The games were popular with a diverse audience and were played in various community groups, including adolescent, women's and men's, agricultural, and school groups.

Fertility Awareness is actionable information about fertility throughout the life course and the ability to apply this knowledge to one's own circumstances and needs. It includes basic information about the menstrual cycle, when and how pregnancy occurs, the likelihood of pregnancy from unprotected intercourse at different times during the cycle and at different life stages, and the role of male fertility.

COMPONENTS: GAMES



Menstrual Cycle Game

This game provides concrete information around fertility and the menstrual cycle. It challenges existing social norms limiting open communication about menstruation, fertility, and reproductive health. In small groups, this game visualizes the menstrual cycle: 'bleeding days,' 'fertile days,' and 'safe days.'



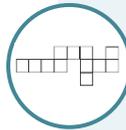
Son or Daughter Determination Game

Using different colored beads to represent male and female, this game demonstrates how the sex of a baby is randomly determined by the composition of men's sperm.



Side Effects & Method Matching Game

Recognizing that managing side effects and fear of long-term consequences are significant barriers to family planning use for many women, this game raises awareness about normal side-effects and their management.



Life Cycle Hopscotch Game

By defining hopscotch squares as different age ranges, this game encourages discussion about reproductive health decisions at different stages of life.



Hot Potato Game

While social norms in Nepal dictate that women and men should not discuss fertility, reproduction, or family planning, this game challenges those norms by promoting open conversations about the benefits of family planning. Topics include fertility, delaying first birth, and couple communication.



Agree/Disagree Game

Using two cards with the words "Agree" and "Disagree," this game challenges participants to reflect on statements related to family planning, fertility, decision making, and what contributes to a happy family.



Method Match Memory Game

This matching game asks participants to connect family planning methods and how they should be used, their effectiveness and an illustration, allowing women and men to learn more about their reproductive health options.



Side Effect Puzzle

Participants assemble a picture of a Nepali family using 20 cards that include a common side effect or a myth related to family planning methods. Through the puzzle pieces, participants distinguish between actual side effects and myths.



Role Play Game

Conversations about family planning can be difficult. This game asks participants to act out conversations about family planning with key individuals in their identified on the playing cards.



“ I have very positive thoughts about these games. It has made it a lot easier for us health workers to bring forward these messages.... I’ve learned things that I hadn’t learnt in my 10 years as a FCHV, and that makes me very happy.”

– Radha Thapa, FCHV

Research & Evaluation

A mixed-methods, quasi-experimental study was conducted to assess the impact of the intervention on uptake and intention to use family planning. Two community-level representative samples were recruited across the five districts (n=3,645; 2,430 women, 1,215 men) before and after study implementation. Complementary qualitative data was collected through 81 focus groups and in-depth interviews to describe how fertility awareness information was diffused through the community and to understand factors influencing family planning use.

- **15 months of Pragati game implementation**
(January, 2017 – March 2018)
- **Three arm research design in each district**
 - Pragati arm: *Service provider orientations and all nine FA/FP and social norms related games with continued FACT support & supervision*
 - Family planning games only arm: *Service provider orientations and three FP-related games only*
 - Control arm: *No additional intervention*
- **Ethical approval** received from the Nepali Health Research Committee and the IRB at Georgetown University's Medical Center

Note about the findings: One district was heavily impacted by earthquake recovery efforts. As a result, the evaluation results presented are limited to the other four districts.

Game Acceptability

100% of the study participants reported enjoying the Pragati games. 97.3% suggested that they would recommend the games to others.

Reaching HTR Communities

80% of women in the evaluation identified as part of HTR communities reported knowing about the Pragati games. 69.4% of women from hard-to-reach (HTR) communities played 2 or more games and 42.0% played four or more games. In the Pragati arm, women and men from HTR communities played an average of 4.5 and 3.0 games, respectively.

Increased Fertility Awareness

In the Pragati arm, women's and men's knowledge of general fertility and the fertile window increased significantly from baseline. More than 90% recalled the inclusion of fertility awareness messages in the games. Additionally, there was a positive association between the number of games played and increases in individual fertility awareness scores. Men/Women who played at least 4 Pragati games were 7.4 times** [CI: 4.3 – 12.6] more likely to have a high fertility awareness score[¥].

Improvements in Social Norms

Evaluation data reflected changes within community norms suggesting that the games helped to establish a supportive environment for family planning. Women in the Pragati study arm were[¥]:

- 1.9 times** [1.5 – 2.4] more likely to report positive attitudes toward FP in their community
- 1.6 times** [1.3 – 1.9] more likely to view communication between couples positively
- 1.4 times* [1.0 – 1.8] less likely to feel pressure to have a son

[¥]Controlling for district, ethnicity, religion, age, and marital status
*p < 0.05; **p < 0.001

Family Planning Results

In the Pragati arm, women's current family planning use was higher than in the other study arms, increasing from 31% at baseline to 35% at endline. Fertility awareness and acceptance of family planning norms were positively associated with increased current use of family planning. Analyses revealed that individuals with a high fertility awareness score were 1.7 times more likely to be using an FP method; women with a high acceptability of FP score were 2.1 times more likely to be using an FP method. Acceptance of family planning was also related to women's intention to use FP, as women with high acceptability of FP scores were 1.9 times more likely to report using an FP method in the next 3 months and 3.6 times more likely to use an FP method in the next 6 months.

Predictors of FP Use & Intention to Use FP Odds Ratio[‡] (95% CI)

Impact of high 'Acceptance of FP' score on:

Current FP use	2.1 (1.1 – 4.0)*
Intention to use at 3-months	1.9 (1.0 – 3.5)*
Intention to use at 6-months	3.6 (2.0 – 6.6)**

Impact of high 'Fertility Awareness' score on:

Current FP use	1.7 (1.0 – 2.6)*
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[‡]Controlling for pregnancy, pregnancy intention and husbands' migration.
*p < 0.05; **p < 0.001

CONCLUSIONS

The Pragati games reflect a community level approach that was underutilized in Nepal. Informed through an active community engagement approach, concentrating on key determinants of family planning use, such as fertility awareness, social norms and fear of side-effects tapped into relevant themes for the participants.

At the heart of the Pragati game content is Fertility Awareness. Game players increased their fertility awareness, which, in turn increased their likelihood to be using family planning. Finding new ways to build this foundational knowledge for reproductive health can shape future family planning counseling approaches and challenge negative social norms associated with menstruation.

Participants loved playing the games. They appreciated new approaches and challenging the taboos of discussing reproductive health. The games also provided opportunities to reach hard-to-reach communities. The positive feedback in hard-to-reach communities suggests that game-based SBCC interventions should be considered in other contexts when attempting to reach these isolated groups.

FCHVs and HMG champions implemented the games effectively. Yet, as more games rolled out in more communities the games spread beyond the initial facilitators to schools, women's groups, and agricultural groups indicating that the relevance of the games' content and format transcend the health sector.

Scale Up

During the implementation phase, partner organizations in Nepal expressed interest to use the Pragati games within their existing programming. As a result, the FACT project trained trainers, shared tools and materials, and gave technical assistance to the projects listed below. In addition, the online manual and associated implementation materials are available at www.irh.org/pragati-fertility-awareness-games.

- SIFPO – Training of trainers, implementing in 10 districts
- USAID-funded Suaahara project – Training of 57 trainers, implementing in games in 42 districts
- Save the Children's Sponsorship Program – Training of 13 trainers, implementing in 1 districts
- Contraceptive Retail Sales – Training of 5 trainers, implementing games through Community Change Agents in 1 district