



## success story

# Unique Approach Brings Contraceptive Security in Central and West Africa

### The Need

Sustaining a consistent demand for and supply of contraceptives remains a major challenge in Central and West Africa. One of the key success factors for increasing the use and quality of family planning services in the region is ensuring that a variety of contraceptive methods are readily available. While international donors such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) have joined forces to provide valuable assistance in the procurement of contraceptive commodities, limited resources, growing demand, and competing health priorities have undercut these efforts, leading to contraceptive shortages.

Faced with the twin challenges of promoting family planning while ensuring consistent availability of contraceptives, Action for West Africa Region–Reproductive Health (AWARE-RH), a project funded by USAID, has developed a



simple and successful approach to enable national governments to effectively forecast and plan their family planning needs. The Strategic Pathway to Reproductive Health Commodity Security approach, or SPARCHS, provides Ministries of Health with an easy-to-use framework to guide them through a process of assessment, projection, implementation, and partnership development for their national family planning strategies.

“The SPARCHS concept of contraceptive commodities management is holistic,” explains Simplice Takoubo, Commodity Security Advisor for AWARE-RH. “By employing the SPARCHS approach, managers and planners of family planning strategies are equipped with the skills to ensure that the public can choose, obtain, and use contraceptives where and when they need to.”

**“SPARCHS helped us to convince partners to take responsibility for procurement of adequate contraceptives in the country, including the government, who added contraceptives onto the essential drugs list and created a budget line for family planning drugs in 2007.”**

*—Jargo Bakary, Deputy Director,  
Reproductive and Child Health Department,  
The Gambia*

### The AWARE Approach

AWARE-RH uses a comprehensive approach to assist governments in developing their national family planning strategies. With its commitment to stakeholder engagement, AWARE-RH first convenes a meeting of representatives from government offices, family planning associations, social marketing agencies, media outlets, and key technical assistance agencies, such as USAID and UNFPA. The representatives are then encouraged

to discuss and agree upon the same guiding principles of contraceptive security.

Following this initial stakeholders' meeting, the country's contraceptive security committee applies the SPARCHS approach to the planning and implementation of the national family planning strategy. The SPARCHS approach includes the following steps:

1. Assessment by technical experts;
2. Projection and prioritization of needs;
3. Implementation of action plans; and
4. Multipartner strategy development.

Through these steps, national committees are able to refine and finalize their strategic plans for family planning. Equipped with these plans, the committees can more effectively solicit government and donor funds, while raising national and regional awareness of family planning needs. Through SPARCHS, each Ministry of Health becomes empowered to create a nationwide strategic plan that promotes coordination, advocacy, fundraising, and stakeholder engagement.

## Results

With support from AWARE-RH, nine Central and West African countries have employed the SPARCHS approach. For example, in 2005, Burkina Faso's contraceptive security committee was able to leverage its strategic plan, which was developed through the SPARCHS approach, as an advocacy tool to secure \$250,000 from UNFPA and an additional \$800,000 from the national government. Boosted by these achievements, the committee is now using its strong strategic plan to attract other donor support. Most recently, the committee received nearly \$4,000,000 for the country's 2007–2010 social marketing program from KFW, the German development bank.

## Regional Impact

In addition to its popularity with national governments, SPARCHS has also received considerable attention on the regional level. Two

regional health training institutions, CESAG (African Center for Higher Management Studies) and IRSP (Regional Institute for Public Health), are now employing the SPARCHS approach in their workshops to teach logistics management for drugs and contraceptives.

## Lessons Learned

At a workshop hosted by AWARE-RH and USAID's DELIVER Project in January 2007 in Accra, Ghana, representatives from seven countries and several local organizations shared their experiences with the SPARCHS approach. Key lessons learned included:

- Securing consistent supplies of family planning materials is especially successful when national governments mobilize funds from their national budgets and/or revolving funds to buy contraceptives or implement strategic plans.
- To achieve maximum effectiveness, implementation of family planning strategies must include logistics training.
- Coordination and information-sharing among partners and stakeholders is critical to successfully leveraging funds for program implementation.

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*AWARE-RH (Action for West Africa Region - Reproductive Health) is a five-year, USAID-sponsored health improvement project designed to improve access to health care and quality of services in 21 West African countries. Guided by a vision of strong, relevant, and sustainable regional health institutions and networks, AWARE-RH proactively assists national and cross-border health programs in developing quality services that meet the needs of their people. To learn more about AWARE-RH, please visit [www.aware-rh.org](http://www.aware-rh.org).*