

Evaluation of Advocacy Projects of UNFPA's Fifth Country Programme: Summary Report

Abdullahel Hadi
Ehsan Matin
M. Showkat Gani
Amina Mahbub

February 2003

Research and Evaluation Division, BRAC
75 Mohakhali, Dhaka, Bangladesh
E-mail: hadi.a@brac.net

gender issues, and community members identified as vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups. Public discussions had been very scarce in the media about reaching the goals set in the ICPD (International Conference on Population Development) in Cairo. Therefore, it was necessary to foster a deeper interest and generate yielding discussions in civil society that would lead to strong, community-led efforts to improve the conditions under which women are raised, educated, married, give birth, obtain health care at home and in their workplaces. It was expected that efforts in advocacy projects would initiate a process of community dialogue and actions to reduce and prevent violence against women, advocate against early marriage and risky sexual behaviours, and promote access to better care during pregnancy and delivery.

The programmes were designed to reach a number of target audiences. The underlying idea was that if a critical mass of influential people could act as pressure groups to promote improved reproductive health services for the community, then achieving the ICPD goals would be much easier. These influential groups include men who are usually policy makers, religious and political leaders, police and security forces, vulnerable and hard-to-reach community groups including women in the industrial sectors, and youths and adolescents. The Advocacy component projects were designed to target the above-mentioned influential groups, each component focussing on a particular group of people. This component project consisted of providing advocacy activities through the IEM Unit of the Directorate of Family Planning

Though the projects were designed in the hope of achieving the above-mentioned purposes, the mere fact of making information available or providing special programs does not necessarily guarantee change in people's attitudes and behavior. Thus, this end of project evaluation was called for.

The evaluation of the four projects was conducted separately for each project component assessing these focusing on project efficiencies, proximate outcome assessment and the effectiveness of the project components. The specific objectives of this evaluation were to:

- assess the knowledge of reproductive health and gender inequality in the participants,
- understand the behavioral changes in the participants, if any,
- assess utilization of reproductive health services by target audience and
- examine the effectiveness of advocacy project components in reaching the goal.

2. Evaluation methodology

A cross-sectional study with intervention and non-intervention groups for comparison was conducted. A combination of several methods such as reviewing relevant documents of the project, sample survey and in-depth interviews were used.

Since there was no baseline information on most of the target groups, it would have been difficult to determine any changes after the interventions had taken place in the project. Though a retrospective study may have been useful for determining any changes, it was not done to avoid recall bias. A survey to compare the knowledge of reproductive health and gender, behavioral changes, and health service utilization patterns was carried out for most of the target population.

The sample was designed to be representative of UNFPA supported advocacy projects. Different sampling procedures were carried out for the various groups. Since there are a large number of locations where the interventions took place, the areas for selection of some of the target groups were randomly selected. Data were collected in December 2002.

The lists of the eligible persons provided by the relevant department were used as sampling frame for the survey and in-depth interviews. The research and evaluation division of BRAC has conducted the evaluation of this project.

3. Key findings and implications

3.1 Project efficiencies

3.1.1 Problems in targeting for advocates

The targeting the potential advocates was poorly conceptualized and designed. It is not known why garment workers was considered appropriate target of advocacy efforts. While BGMEA has been playing a crucial role, it is argued that the garment factory owners and management staff be targeted to be under the advocacy sub-projects of reproductive health education for garment workers.

3.1.2 Project design issues should be revisited

One major limitations of the design of the projects is the lack of provision for collecting benchmark information except for the garments sector. Thus, it is very difficult to assess the performance of the project components.

3.1.3 Searching alternative approach to reach the advocates

The project correctly identified the parliament members as advocates since the promotion or change in policy or legislation would require their support. This goal was not materialized. The project, however, should identify alternative and appropriate approaches to reach the parliament members and other policy makers.

3.1.4 Accountability and governance issues

In many instances, the selection of advocates was not appropriate and fair. The provision of per diem and honorarium played a role in the selection process. It was found difficult to go into details. The outcome of some project activities was not assessed for obvious reasons. These include the effects of the series of study tours to understand the role of similar or relevant projects in other countries. The use funds and remaining balance were not assessed.

3.1.5 The efficiency of the project could have been better

The curriculum used in most of the training and workshop sessions and IEC materials were quite good and appropriate. However, the projects had difficulties in selecting appropriate trainers and facilitators. In many instances, they were not capable or not well prepared to conduct such sessions. The organizers should be more innovating in selecting the venues and facilities, and careful in maintaining the schedules.

3.2 Outcome assessment and effectiveness

3.2.1 Advocacy through IEM

- *The project has produced positive results*

The project goal has been to change in policy and programme through sensitizing the influential members of the community. The participants included the union parishad chairmen and members, opinion leaders, journalists, businessmen and local government officials. A series of training workshop and orientation meetings were conducted to address the reproductive health and gender issues. Overall, the project has produced desired outcome.

- *Selection of participants should be done more carefully*

The participants were not truly representative of the influential groups in the community. They were mostly older men with good education. The proportion of women was negligible in the meetings. Teachers, politicians and officials of the non-government organization could have been participants in such meetings.

- *The need of reproductive health knowledge has improved but no indication of advocating new insights in the community*

Although the awareness level has remained poor among the participants, the advocacy played a role in raising the need of reproductive health services. The influential communities had limited opportunity to promote these issues and strengthened the services further.

- *The community has begun to understand gender inequality and the need of change*

The importance of female education was regarded as the lasting solution to promote gender equity than any other interventions. Other suggestions like raising women's voice and decision-making were also appreciated. Acceptance of gender equity as discussion topics in formal meetings should be considered as significant development for change.

- *Management and implementation of the project should be more professional*

Average workshop duration was very short to adequately cover most of the topics planned. Only 16.3% expressed their satisfaction about the performance of the workshops. About 47% expressed their dissatisfaction that the session could not begin on time and did not follow the workshop schedule. The organizers should take note from this observation.

- *Identify priority issues to be included in future advocacy programme*

Although advocacy had a positive role in raising the level of awareness, several issues such as transmission and prevention of STD and AIDS should be more focused in future BCC and advocacy activities for the opinion leaders in the communities.

3.2.2 *Involvement of religious leaders*