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| **Rwandan government family planning mobilization efforts impact national, community, and individual conversations and motivations to utilize family planning** |
| **Background/Objectives**Rwanda’s rate of modern contraceptive use has risen from 17% to 53% over the past decade. The maternal and infant mortality rate continue to drop, and more children are growing up with access to quality health care and education. Furthermore, the government has ensured that access to reproductive health care be equitable across rural and urban demographics. The purpose of this study is to uncover what has led to such great improvement, how other nations can learn from Rwanda, and where Rwanda could continue its progress in the field of reproductive care.**Methods**We used 8 focus group discussions with family planning providers and 32 in-depth interviews with female modern contraceptive users to learn about the family planning service and use environment in Rwanda in 2018. Their unique perspectives on Rwanda’s family planning program help to contextualize the strong impact that interpersonal, community, and national mobilization efforts have on Rwanda’s increase in demand for family planning services.**Results**Participants in our study highlighted that mobilization and educational efforts are a very important piece of the program’s achievements. Many noted that Rwanda’s far reaching, top-down support for family planning via government sponsored media campaigns is part of what has led to such broad demand. This, along with adequate funding and training for community-level engagement in even the smallest of villages, has allowed the impact of Rwanda’s family planning program to reach the farthest corners of the nation. Providers in our focus groups described community education events as a resource that helps shift Rwanda’s societal norms, so family planning is viewed as acceptable, responsible, and for the good of the nation. Along with these national and community level efforts, participants noted that individual women are often “mobilizing” each other to seek out family planning. They described scenarios where women give advice to their peers and share their own experiences with contraceptives.**Discussion**The results of this research call for a recognition of the impact that social norms have on the level of demand women have for contraceptive access. Rwanda’s government has taken this seriously and made pointed efforts to change the conversation so that family planning can be seen as socially acceptable. Other nations could learn from this program and implement similar strategies.**Keywords: Rwanda, family planning, mobilization** |