



PROJECT SNAPSHOT

Fertility Awareness for Community Transformation (FACT) Project

GOAL

To increase use of family planning by improving *fertility awareness* and expanding access to *fertility awareness-based methods* (FAM)

DONOR

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Five Year Cooperative Agreement (2013 -2018)

PRIME

Georgetown University's Institute for Reproductive Health (IRH)

COLLABORATING PARTNERS

International Center for Research on Women
Population Media Center
Save the Children

FACT Approach

FACT is a research, intervention, and technical assistance project focused on answering significant questions related to fertility awareness and FAM. FACT is testing two primary hypotheses:

1. Increased *fertility awareness* improves family planning use.
2. Expanded access to *fertility awareness-based methods* (FAM) increases uptake of family planning and reduces unintended pregnancies.

The FACT team employs a systematic approach to testing these hypotheses through developing and investigating innovative solutions to improve fertility awareness and expand availability of FAM. The approach is guided by the [Solution Development Cycle](#), an iterative process for the discovery, design, and development of solutions using formative research, participatory design, and intervention testing.

DID YOU KNOW?

1 Among women who wish to avoid pregnancy, **38%** in developing countries are not using a modern method. **Nearly half** of these women want to delay a first birth or space their pregnancies.

2 **44%** of women state they do not use a modern method because of fear of side effects & health concerns. **40%** cite reasons that suggest lack of understanding of their actual pregnancy risk (infrequent sex, postpartum amenorrhea, perceived infertility).

3 **10%** of adolescent girls in developing countries give birth each year, compared to **<2%** in developed countries.

AS A RESULT, women and couples need actionable information about pregnancy risk and family planning. They also need better access to a full range of family planning services that meet their needs – including FAM.

The aim of this process is to translate scientific data into simple, practical, and scalable solutions which can be integrated into existing platforms both within and beyond the health system such as community-based nutrition groups, agriculture co-ops, savings and loans clubs, and pregnant women's groups. Key target populations for this project are youth (both married and unmarried), postpartum women, and couples who want to delay or space births in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

To test the first hypothesis, FACT is developing and testing solutions based on state-of-the-art social and behavior change communication (SBCC) theory and practice to assess their effect at the individual, couple, family, and community levels.

To test the second hypothesis, FACT is introducing and scaling up [CycleTel™](#), a proven mobile phone service to facilitate the use of SDM, to assess the impact of a direct-

to-consumer product on family planning method use. Other direct-to-consumer solutions, such as group teaching of SDM, TwoDay Method®, and LAM, also are being tested for their effect on access to and use of family planning.

JOIN US

FACT has the capacity to provide technical assistance (TA) to USAID cooperating agencies, bilateral projects and NGOs. TA is available through the project to incorporate fertility awareness into a wide variety of programs focusing on key groups including youth, postpartum women, and young couples, as well as for the introduction of SDM, TwoDay Method, and LAM through routine service delivery channels. The project can accept field support from partner countries for research and the provision of TA.

For more information, email irhinfo@georgetown.edu

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. Specifically, 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. Fertility awareness also can include information on how specific family planning methods work, how they affect fertility, and how to use them; and it can create the basis for understanding communication about and correctly using family planning.

Fertility Awareness-Based Methods (FAM)

[Standard Days Method® \(SDM\)](#) identifies a fixed fertile window in the menstrual cycle when pregnancy is most likely and is typically used with CycleBeads®, a visual tool that helps women track their cycle to know when they are fertile. Results of an efficacy trial showed SDM to be more than 95% effective with correct use and 88% effective with typical use, well within range of other user dependent methods.

[TwoDay Method®](#) relies on cervical secretions as the fertility indicator. Results of the efficacy trial, published in 2004, showed it to be 96% effective with correct use and 86% effective with typical use.

[Lactational Amenorrhea Method \(LAM\)](#) is based on post-partum infecundity and is highly effective if three specific criteria are met: breastfeeding only, no menses, and the baby is less than six months. LAM is more than 99% effective with correct use and 98% effective with typical use.

About the FACT team

[IRH](#) is managing FACT, building on nearly three decades of experience in designing and implementing evidence-based programs that address critical needs in sexual and reproductive health. IRH has successfully developed evidence-based strategies to empower men and women through fertility awareness information and the introduction of SDM, TwoDay Method, and LAM into programs around the world. As an applied research organization, IRH provides the information needed to make data-driven decisions, facilitating an iterative approach that supports successful interventions.

The [International Center for Research on Women](#) provides critical inputs from a gender perspective on design and testing of solutions to improve fertility awareness and use of FAM. ICRW ensures that research illuminates gender-related barriers and other social determinants of unmet need and contributes to the development of gender-transformative solutions.

[Population Media Center](#) (PMC) supports the development and diffusion of fertility awareness information through integration into serial radio dramas and trans-media elements. PMC specializes in developing behavior change communication programs that address social and health issues through serial dramas in a way that honors the system of values of each particular community.

[Save the Children](#) provides a link to grassroots groups through which solutions can be tested and expanded for maximum impact. With its strong foundation of programming in health, education, and livelihoods, Save the Children brings technical expertise and extensive networks of postpartum women and youth worldwide and serves as a platform for achieving project goals.