



PASSAGES PROJECT

CycleBeads on Paper

Helping Family Planning Programs Overcome Stock-Outs

Delivering and maintaining quality family planning services depends on the availability of commodities, which is a challenge for many programs, especially in rural settings. To address stockouts of CycleBeads®—the mnemonic device used for Standard Days Method® of family planning—the Institute for Reproductive Health (IRH) designed and tested a paper version of CycleBeads. Under the Passages Project, Action Familiale Rwandaise (AFR), implemented CycleBeads on Paper in family planning service delivery in three sites in Rwanda: Huye, Kigali, and Kabgayi.

The paper-based version of CycleBeads allows clients to track the days of their cycle on a card, rather moving the ring on the string of beads, to know when they are fertile. Family planning clients receive a card with an image that represents CycleBeads to mark daily and know if they are on a fertile or infertile day.

Project Implementation

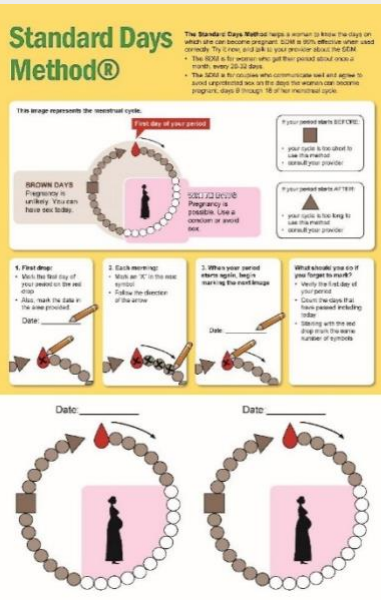
AFR/Rwanda trained community natural family planning teachers to offer CycleBeads on Paper, including screening and teaching the method, and demonstrating how to mark the paper version. After training, the teachers started offering the paper version to interested couples in their communities.

What is Standard Days Method® (SDM) with CycleBeads?

SDM is an effective natural method of child spacing. Based on reproductive physiology, SDM identifies a fixed set of days in each menstrual cycle when a woman can get pregnant if she has unprotected intercourse. Using SDM with CycleBeads®, a color-coded string of beads to help track the menstrual cycle, a user can know on which days pregnancy is likely, and avoid unprotected sex to prevent a pregnancy.

Why CycleBeads on Paper?

By introducing CycleBeads on Paper, providers will be able to continue offering their clients the Standard Days Method even when there are stockouts of CycleBeads. The paper version was tested successfully in several countries and introduced in Rwanda under the Passages Project to address persistent stockouts of the CycleBeads commodity.



CycleBeads on Paper Tool

Each paper card has 12 images representing the menstrual cycle, which users mark to track their cycle during one year while using the method. The user marks the red drop representing the first day of her period. Each day, she continues to mark the next symbol, always following the direction of the arrow. On brown days pregnancy is unlikely. White days are fertile days when pregnancy is likely, and the user avoids unprotected sex to prevent pregnancy. To use CycleBeads on Paper, a user’s period must come anytime between the dark brown square and the dark brown triangle. If her period comes outside this range, she should choose another method.

An assessment of provider skills, via a competency checklist, showed that providers were as competent offering the method using the CycleBeads on Paper as providers who offer the method with the string of CycleBeads. During observation of counseling, providers relying on the paper version scored above 80% on covering essential counseling points—such as method eligibility criteria and use and explaining how the method works—comparable to the scores of providers trained on providing CycleBeads.

Competency in key counseling points	CycleBeads on Paper Sample = 9	CycleBeads Sample = 32
	% answered correctly	% answered correctly
Provider correctly applies method eligibility criteria	89%	81%
Provider correctly explains how the method works	89%	100%
Provider correctly? explains how to monitor cycle length	87%	78%

Reported Advantages and Challenges

During supervision visits, a 10-question interview was conducted with nine providers trained using the CycleBeads on Paper to learn about their satisfaction offering the method with the paper-based version. 89% of those interviewed reported no difficulties in explaining to clients how the method works using the paper version. While most reported having to repeat the meaning of the symbols, 89% reported that clients had no difficulty understanding how to mark the paper card.

Further, there were advantages of using the paper version. For example, the paper card allows users to see their past cycles, making it easier to understand potential cycle fluctuations.

After a successful introduction, AFR plans to extend the innovation to all other diocesan services.

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<https://www.irh.org/standard-days-method-resource-repository>



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