

Research for Scalable Solutions (R4S)

BACKGROUND

Research for Scalable Solutions (R4S) is a new five-year implementation science project funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Led by FHI 360, the project is conducting implementation science research to improve the efficiency, cost effectiveness, and equity of family planning programs. The project will also generate evidence for improving country-level family planning policies in Africa and Asia.



Photo by Jessica Scranton.

FHI 360 has four partners in this project: Evidence for Sustainable Human Development Systems in Africa (EVIHDAF), Makerere University School of Public Health in Uganda (MakSPH), Population Services International (PSI), and Save the Children (STC). R4S partners will work together with a range of country research agencies to strengthen research capacity and support countries in their journey to self-reliance.

Despite recent progress, nearly 215 million women in developing countries have an unmet need for family planning. In many of these settings, health planners are challenged by suboptimal generation and use of data, and limited financial resources. Decision-makers require evidence to inform local adaptations of known effective family planning interventions to better meet the needs of women, men, and youth. R4S will join local partners to generate evidence to develop feasible, sustainable strategies

for implementing cost-effective family planning [High Impact Practices \(HIPs\)](#)¹ and [self-care interventions](#)² at scale and with equitable coverage.

R4S's APPROACH

R4S aims to achieve the following three main results.

1. **Expanded development, adoption, and implementation at scale of client-driven approaches**

There are still many unknowns about how countries can adopt and implement client-driven approaches at scale while maintaining quality standards and promoting equity. R4S will conduct research and research utilization activities to:

- Expand access to voluntary family planning using direct-to-consumer and self-care approaches
- Expand distribution of contraceptives and fertility awareness information through non-clinic-based channels, such as drug shops and pharmacies
- Develop metrics for measuring key self-care approaches and advocating for their inclusion in routine family planning program management

2. **Improved understanding of cost-effectiveness and efficiency of scaling proven and promising HIPs**

Knowledge gaps related to the cost effectiveness of different HIPs make it difficult for decision-makers to make smart investments with health care resources. R4S will:

- Build the evidence base on the incremental costs of scaling up HIPs
- Support governments and partners in conducting their own budget impact analyses to produce actionable data on which HIPs might be both cost-effective and affordable

3. **Increased understanding of how proven and promising HIPs enhance equitable access to high-quality voluntary family planning**

Questions remain about how HIPs can most equitably, effectively, and sustainably serve hard-to-reach populations. R4S will:

- Work with national stakeholders to improve measurement of equity
- Test approaches to increase delivery of HIPs to disadvantaged populations, such as adolescents and the rural poor
- Strengthen the capacity of local partners to monitor and evaluate the equity of service delivery programming
- Ensure that local partners are able to generate, synthesize, and apply evidence to make important programmatic decisions

R4S Core Partners and their Key Roles

FHI 360 provides strategic vision, technical leadership, oversight and financial management of the project.

EVIHDAF provides technical support to local partners and oversees select research studies in West and Central Africa.

MakSPH provides technical support to local partners and oversees select research studies in East and Southern Africa.

PSI provides technical leadership on private sector engagement and HIPs on drug shops, social franchising, mobile services, social marketing, and digital health.

STC provides technical leadership on community health strategies and HIPs on postpartum family planning, community health workers, educating girls, adolescent-friendly contraceptive services, and family planning integration.

R4S is designed to accept funding from USAID missions interested in conducting implementation research to inform the design and scale-up of current or future family planning programs.

CONTACT

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¹ <https://www.fphighimpactpractices.org/>

² <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/self-care-interventions/en/>

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