

Recommendations for Implementing Postpartum Family Planning Programming

Maternal Health Initiative (MHI) ran two pilots of postpartum family planning work in northern Ghana in 2023. MHI chose to shut down due to significant concerns about the impact of postpartum programming.

- Consider durations of postpartum abstinence and amenorrhea (available via [StatCompiler](#)) when selecting geographic locations for postpartum programming. Women who are insusceptible to pregnancy will gain little short-term benefit from contraceptive uptake.
 - *The mean duration of postpartum abstinence across 44 African countries was 8.2 months, but this varied from 2.9 months in Egypt to 19.7 months in Guinea ([DHS](#))*
- When evaluating programming, track changes to rates of unintended pregnancies, rather than merely changes to contraceptive uptake, in order to accurately evaluate endline impact. Some previous PPFP programs (e.g. [Rohr et al. 2024](#), [Coulibaly et al. 2021](#)) have found strong increases to contraceptive uptake that led to no change in rates of pregnancy
- Take strong steps to promote implementation at facilities, including robust monitoring and taking steps to secure buy-in from participating providers. Prior studies - including MHI's work - have encountered significant difficulties ensuring counselling occurs consistently as designed (e.g. [Vance et al. 2014](#))
- Take strong steps to reduce the likelihood of provider coercion, particularly as relates to long-acting reversible contraception (LARCs) ([Senderowicz, 2019](#))
 - Train providers to centre client concerns and preferences in counselling sessions
 - Consider using counselling materials such as [MHI's toolkit](#) that promote the discussion of multiple methods
 - Refrain from 'LARC-first' programming ([Gomez et al. 2014](#)), such as immediate postpartum IUD (PPIUD) programs.
 - Programs offering LARCs should:
 - Counsel all mothers and obtain consent at antenatal care appointments rather than during or immediately following delivery
 - Ensure that women can remove IUDs or implants at any time if they so choose
 - Track rates of discontinuation and client satisfaction on a longer-term basis