

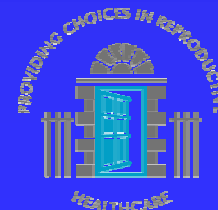
RHRC Conference

Increasing Access to Reproductive Health Care in Post-Conflict Afghanistan

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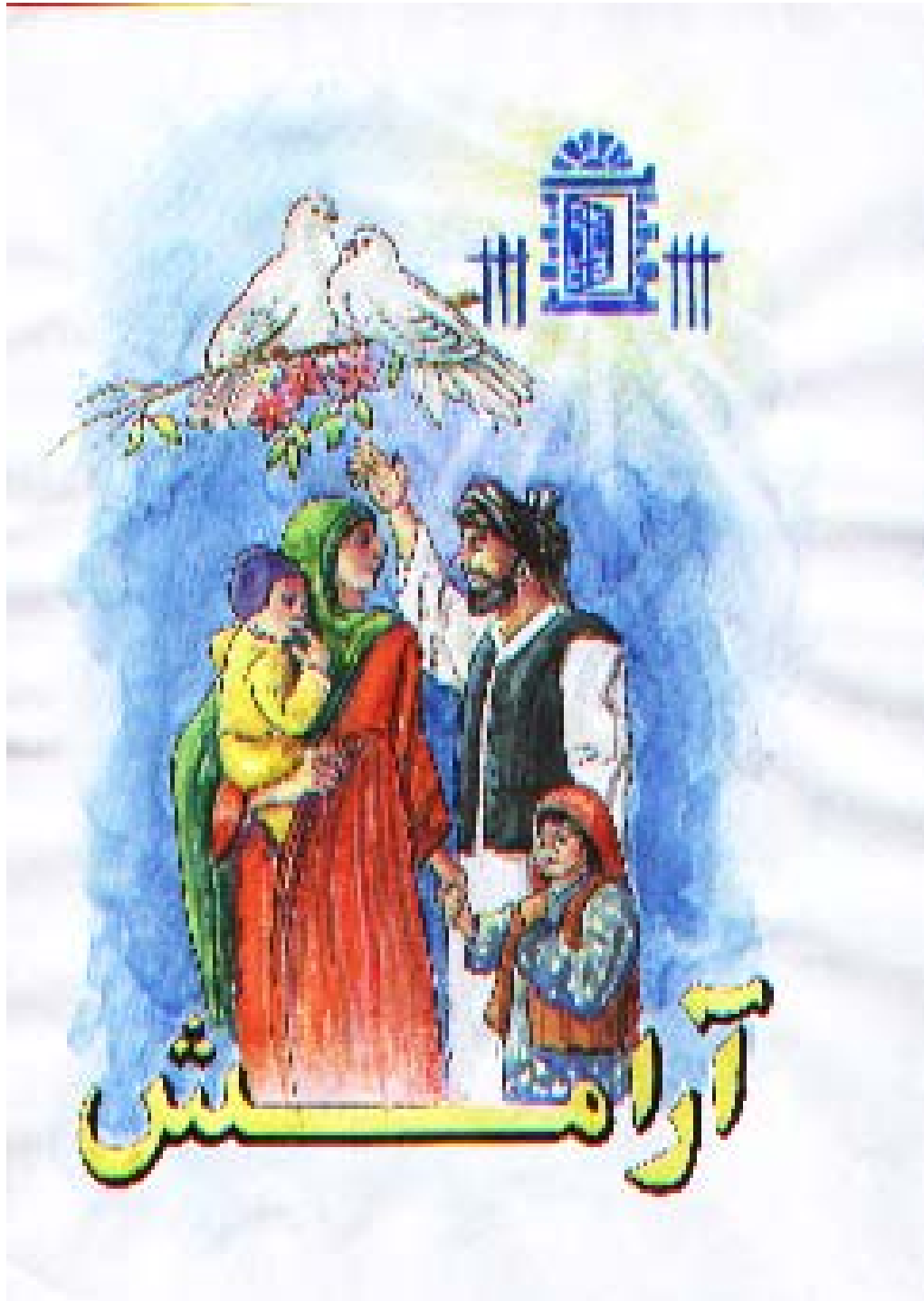
**MARIE STOPES
INTERNATIONAL**

Marie Stopes International - Afghanistan

Quality Reproductive Health Services

Reaching Urban Poor

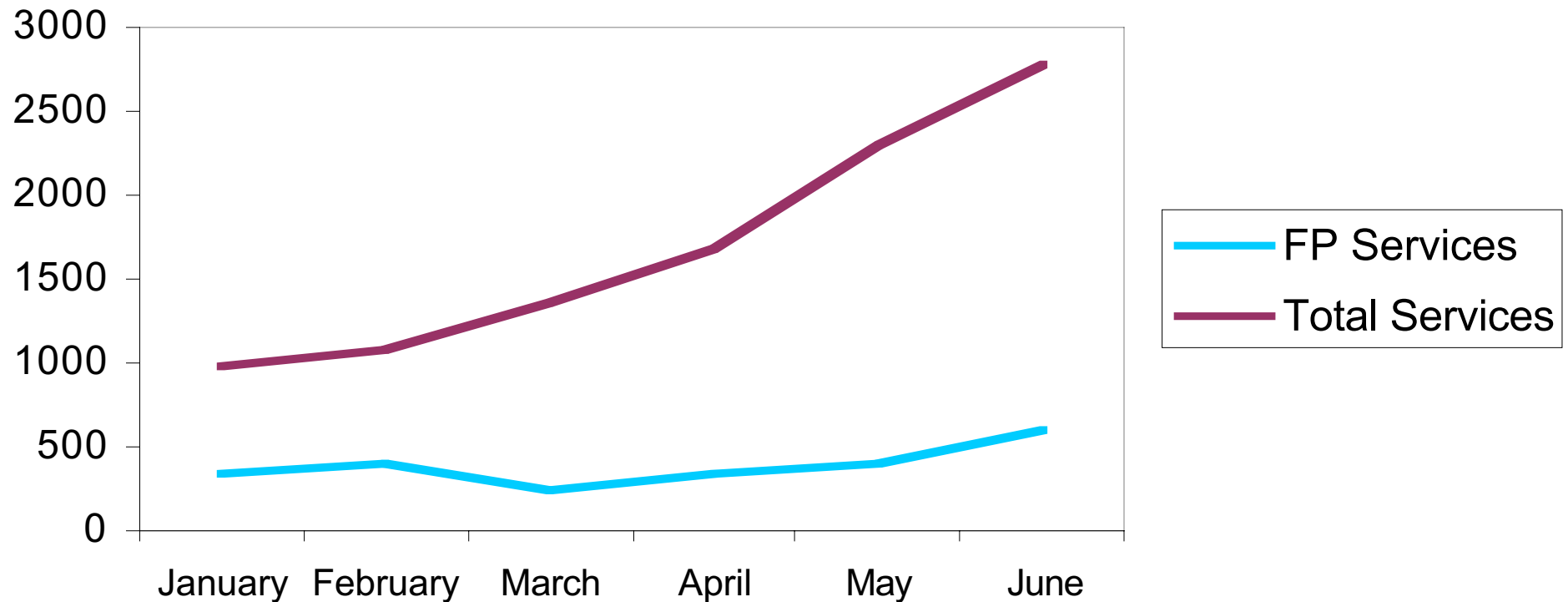
Expansion to Rural Areas



Condom Social Marketing Programme

Programme Statistics

**Number of Services per Month for
5 Marie Stopes International - Afghanistan Centres**



Study Purpose

To assess barriers to family planning so that the programme can help men and women exercise their right to reproductive health

Methodology – Focus Groups

- FP users
- Young community women
- Older community women
- Men
- Male community leaders

Research Locations



Research Topics

- Family size
- Approval of family planning
- Decision making
- Barriers to access services
- Effective messages

Results

Family Size

- Ideal family size is 4-5, 2-3 sons and 2 daughters
- Sons should outnumber daughters, women report this much more than men
- Minority prefer large families

“Now I have 2 daughters, I wish for 2 sons, then they would be enough for me”

Young community woman

Son Preference

- Sons are more important than daughters

“He [husband] says I must not use FP until having a son”

Community woman

Influence of Recent Conflict

- **Living in difficult times compared to past**
- **Poverty seen as reason to limit births**
- **War mentioned only occasionally - need for larger families to replace people lost**

Decision Making

- Husbands permission for women to go to clinic or use FP essential
- Women feel husband has most power
- Mother-in-law has some power
- Desire for joint decision making – with some exceptions

“I prefer that man should have this choice because a woman is always at home and a little brainless” Community men

Family Communication

- Consensus between spouses highly desirable
- Men feel wives should persuade husbands with good arguments and in-laws should not interfere

“A woman can motivate her husband to delay or stop the children because all problems such as feeding, cleaning and others belong to a mother and she faces all of them”

Community men

Approval of Family Planning

- Women and men generally approve of FP for economic and health reasons
- Approval may depend on number of sons born
- Those traditionally regarded as anti family planning approve - male community leaders, mothers-in-law

“After giving birth she should rest for 2-3 years until she gets a little energy and has ability for another child” Mother-in-law

Religion and Family Planning

- Religion is not a great barrier
- Attitudes are pragmatic

“Neither elders nor Koran says that using FP is a sin against God” Community men

“I don’t think that religion refuses FP, it belongs to people whether they want FP or not. Ignore people who say that religion rejects FP.” Community leader

Harmful Effects of Family Planning

- Widespread concern about harmful effects
- Most women can name a method and a harmful effect but have no other information
- Mental weakness, bleeding, infertility, eye disorders, death, IUD sticking to baby's head

“It is told that condom causes diseases for kidney”

FP user

Other Barriers

- Distance from clinics
- Male staff at clinics
- Waiting times at clinics
- Too many chores at home

Effective Messages

- Economic reasons
- Health dangers to women of frequent children

“If a woman brings up children continuously it makes her disabled and weak” Community man

- Doctors opinions carry particular weight

“My husband says the doctor saying is right”
FP User

Conclusion 1

Programme Implication

**More support for
smaller families and
FP than commonly
thought**

**Ideal time for more
proactive promotion at
all levels of community**

Conclusion 2

Programme Implication

**Womens
perceptions of
husbands attitudes
do not match
husbands own
attitudes**

**Activities encouraging
discussion between
husband and wife**

Conclusion 3

Programme Implication

Fear of harmful effects is significant barrier

Focussed community wide education needed to provide accurate information

Education backed up with high quality services with female providers

Helping Men and Women Remove Barriers to Accessing Family Planning Across Afghanistan