

Côte D'Ivoire: Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

September 2021

Introduction

Since the end of a decade-long civil war in 2012, Côte d'Ivoire has made great strides to increase access to quality health services for its population. However, insufficient health system resources and lingering effects of the conflict have closed clinics and left people without the services they need. Although 93% of women in Côte d'Ivoire know at least one modern method of contraception, the modern contraceptive prevalence rate remains low—only about 20% of reproductive-age women are using modern methods.¹ Unmet contraceptive needs contribute to unintended pregnancies, and unsafe abortions are widely practiced in the country. In 2016, Pathfinder began supporting the Ministry of Health to change this.

In July 2016, with funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Pathfinder began operations in Côte d'Ivoire. Over the past four years, Pathfinder has worked in the Agnèby-Tiassa-Mé health region to train providers in contraceptive service provision, including postpartum and post-abortion family planning (PPFP and PAFP), and youth-friendly services (YFS). Pathfinder, working through the public health system, has introduced a long-acting contraceptive method (the long-inserted IUD), increased the uptake of PPFP, and provided important consultation on the national adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health policy, among other contributions.

Through several projects in Côte d'Ivoire, Pathfinder has established itself as a key partner for the Ivorian Ministry of Health, providing guidance through thought leadership and technical assistance. Pathfinder continues to work alongside communities, partners, and government stakeholders to achieve its vision of a Côte d'Ivoire where all people of child bearing age, adolescents, and young people realize their aspirations and rights, make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive lives, and exercise their right to comprehensive quality sexual and reproductive care.

Pathfinder International, in collaboration with the government of Côte d'Ivoire and its partners, works within the communities we serve to build an environment conducive to sexual and reproductive health and rights where everyone, without discrimination, fully exercises their right to a healthy sexual and reproductive life.

RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF THE PRESENT IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Population: 26+ Million¹

Nearly 86% of married women ages 14-49 do not use an effective method of contraception²

33% of women give birth before age 18³

Maternal mortality rate: 614/100,000 live births, or 5,400 maternal deaths annually⁴

¹ Population Reference Bureau 2020

^{2,3} DHS 2012

⁴ DHS 2012 and WHO 2018



PHOTO: Courtney Boudreau

¹ Côte d'Ivoire DHS (2012) & [PMA, Round 2, \(2018\)](#)

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Pathfinder Projects in Côte D'Ivoire

Pathfinder has led national, regional, and global projects in Côte d'Ivoire.

With funding from Population Action International (PAI) and the Hewlett Foundation, Pathfinder led the development of a pilot plan to scale up free family planning services in public facilities and address barriers to sexual and reproductive health.

Current Projects

EXPANDING ACCESS TO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH - HEWLETT (2020-2022)

With funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, from 2020-22, Pathfinder has continued to focus on improving the sexual and reproductive health of women and adolescents. Now in the third phase of the project, Pathfinder seeks to improve the quality and scale of PFPF and PAFP in target health zones. The project has fostered community engagement; addressed important issues of supply, health provider capacity, and economic barriers to uptake of contraception; increased access to comprehensive reproductive health services; improved the quality of clinical services offered in targeted public health establishments; and, expanded community knowledge and support for reproductive health services in Agnèby-Tiassa Mé health region.

Some key aspects of the program include:

- Increasing access to postpartum contraception to improve maternal and child health outcomes.
- Strengthening demand for sexual and reproductive health services among adolescents by addressing social norms and behaviors that prevent them from seeking services and increasing access to YFS at the community and facility levels.
- Enhancing provider capacity to deliver quality services and address barriers that prevent women from seeking family planning services.
- Training health providers in PAFP and providing post-abortion equipment, thereby improving the quality of post-abortion care.

AMPLIFY-FP - USAID (2018-2023)

Since 2018, Amplify-FP has built relationships with ministries of health and health facilities across four countries—Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, and Togo—providing family planning services and strengthening service delivery, with a focus on poor and underserved urban populations.

Two key approaches of the project are:

- Collaborating and coordinating with other USAID West Africa family planning/reproductive health partners working on commodity security, demand creation, policy, learning, and related health systems.
- Strengthening and institutionalizing a system for adapting and replicating high-impact practices, such as task-shifting, integration, PAFP, and PFPF.



PHOTO: Tagaza Djibo

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Past Projects

RESONANCE PROJECT - FUNDED BY AMPLIFYCHANGE (2018-2021)

The multi-country RESONance Project created coalitions for safe abortion advocacy in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The coalitions influenced national policy and advocated for the further legalization and expansion of safe abortion services regionally and globally. RESONance contributed to reducing the consequences of unsafe abortion and promoted women's sexual and reproductive health rights..

Some key outcomes of the program include:

- In Côte d'Ivoire, the coalition Action contre les Grossesses non Désirées et à Risque (AGnDR) led advocacy work on preventing unintended pregnancies. The coalition carried out advocacy activities with traditional and religious leaders, alongside political authorities, that influenced the revision of Côte d'Ivoire's sexual reproductive health policy to include safe, legal abortion services.
- Pathfinder built the capacity of civil society members of AGnDR in Côte d'Ivoire to manage and grow their organizational and technical capacity.
- Pathfinder developed a tool entitled "Abortion Policy Scan for Advocacy" to map and track legislation and practices related to abortion across the three countries.

EVIDENCE TO ACTION (E2A) - USAID (2011-2021)

E2A was USAID's global flagship project for strengthening family planning and reproductive health service delivery across 17 countries, including Côte d'Ivoire. The project, led by Pathfinder, advanced quality services that have improved reproductive health and contributed to reductions in unintended pregnancies and gender disparities. Pathfinder's technical contributions included: capacity building, service delivery, and health system strengthening at the community level, adolescent and youth sexual reproductive health, and grants management.

In Cote d'Ivoire, E2A, through Pathfinder:

- Initiated the "Immediate Postpartum Family Planning" intervention in the Agneby-Tiassa-Mé health region, aligning the government's vision to extend family planning services to women during the immediate postpartum period and developing a regional scale-up plan for PPF and PAFP.
- Trained providers in YFS.

POPULATION ACTION INTERNATIONAL (PAI) (2019- 2020)

With funding from PAI, Pathfinder, in collaboration with the Civil Society for Family Planning (CS4FP), advocated for free contraception during the immediate postpartum and post-abortion periods in public maternity hospitals across three health districts. In 2020, thanks to those advocacy activities, Côte d'Ivoire's Ministry of Health approved free family planning for all women and young girls, men and young boys, in the Agneby-Tiassa-Mé region, marking a major change in reproductive health policy. Pathfinder and CS4PF, with other partners, supported the Ivorian government to implement and scale up the free family planning policy throughout the region and the entire country.

Pathfinder International is driven by the conviction that all people, regardless of where they live, have the right to decide whether and when to have children, to exist free from fear and stigma, and to lead the lives they choose. As a global health organization with locally led, community-driven programs, we support women to make their own reproductive health decisions. We work with local partners to advance contraceptive services, comprehensive abortion care, and young people's sexual and reproductive rights in communities around the world—including those affected by poverty, conflict, climate change, and natural disasters. Taken together, our programs enable millions of people to choose their own paths forward.

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