

Making History in Romania: Establishment of a Contraceptive Logistics System

When a woman visits her family doctor seeking oral contraceptive pills in Poieni, a rural village in the Transylvania region of Romania, she should expect to find them. Not only is her family doctor now trained and capable of giving contraception, her expectation is also being met thanks to the Logistics training that has taken place throughout the country on how to document contraceptive distribution, orders, storage, and dispensing protocols.

For the first time in Romania, the Ministry of Health has the capability of determining the need for Free of Charge contraceptives in all 42 districts in the country. This is a landmark step in contraceptive procurement and distribution, reaching the entire country. RFHI with SECS (Society for Education on Contraception and Sexuality), conducted trainings for Family Health and Family Planning Physicians. These physicians took part in a one-day training in Logistics, in which they learned the purpose and components of the Contraceptive Logistics System, their individual responsibility in the Logistics System, how to correctly complete monthly reports for distribution and orders, correct storage of contraceptives, and the MOH recipient categories for Free of Charge Contraceptives. To date, more than 900 doctors have been trained. Contraceptives-- including condoms, contraceptive pills and progesterone injections -- are available for free to students, the unemployed, persons receiving social assistance, women living in rural areas, women having requested an abortion, and other populations with low income.

The Contraceptive Logistics System is just one success story of the Romanian Family Health Initiative (RFHI), a bilateral USAID-funded project implemented by JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. The RFHI is designed to increase the availability and utilization of high quality client-oriented services at the primary health care level and to assure sustainability of reproductive health services in Romania, including family planning, safe motherhood, early detection of breast and cervical cancer, and HIV/AIDS and STIs prevention.



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Contraceptives have been available in Romania since 1990. Before 1990, contraception was forbidden and women relied upon abortion as the primary means of fertility regulation. Abortion often occurred in unsafe conditions, resulting in increased maternal mortality and morbidity rates. When contraceptives were introduced after 1990, the governmental system was organized to make contraceptives available only from Family Planning Clinics, which were not easily accessible or affordable for rural populations. In 2001, for the first time, the MOH allocated funds for

contraceptives to be distributed free to poor women. The MOH also receives contraceptive donations from UNFPA and USAID. The Logistics system provides evidence to donors and the MOHF so that cost-efficient decisions can be made based on contraceptive demand.

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This is an important feature considering the resource constraints of the MOH. The Logistics system also ensures that once procured, contraceptives are available at family health clinics and family planning clinics throughout the country. The management of the Logistics system takes place at the District Public Health Authority, supporting the decentralization of the Romanian health care system.