

ACCESO IN ACTION: A YEAR IN REVIEW



INTRODUCTION

In 2018, PAI launched the Acceso Initiative, a multicountry project in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), to address gaps in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Although the region has made important strides, high levels of inequality undermine universal access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH). Given the recent decline in overseas development assistance for health in LAC and the critical disparities in reproductive health outcomes across the region, there is a pressing need to address access to and the sustainability of SRH programs for the most vulnerable groups.



Through high-impact advocacy for health sector reform, PAI’s local partners engage governments, regional networks and community leaders to improve access to quality services and strengthen contraceptive security for youth, indigenous women and girls as well as low-income populations. Acceso builds pathways to sustainability by leveraging a robust civil society presence and national government commitments for an integrated approach to SRHR in the region.

In March 2019, PAI convened Acceso partners in Washington D.C. to review progress to date, tailor strategic thinking around the impact of impending political shifts, finalize a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework and examine emerging opportunities to advance sexual and reproductive rights in the region. This meeting built on PAI’s first regional convening hosted in Bogotá in September 2018 to continue facilitating South-to-South learning, foster greater collaboration among countries and strengthen the capacities of partner organizations in SRHR advocacy. This report highlights results from the first year of Acceso.

LOCAL EXPERTISE AND SUSTAINABILITY

PAI supports partners in the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Mexico, whose local expertise and ongoing engagement with their respective Ministries of Health are vital to expanding access to a range of SRH services. Their strong rapport with Ministry leadership in each of their countries secured key stakeholder buy-in from the early stages in 2018 and continues to guide leadership through the development and implementation of policies and protocols to address health disparities. Collaboration between civil society and Ministries of Health not only drives short-term success, but also lays the groundwork for long-term sustainability of advocacy achievements.

Institutionalizing advances through formal Ministry of Health appropriation and building local capacity for program continuity are necessary to withstand political shifts in LAC’s super-cycle of elections between 2018 and 2020. In the Dominican Republic, partner INSALUD provided a clear example of successful institutionalization of

LEAD IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

- Fundación Maquilishuatl (FUMA), El Salvador
- Instituto Nacional de Salud (INSALUD), Dominican Republic
- Observatorio de Mortalidad Materna (OMM), Mexico

KEY REGIONAL PARTNERS

- Gestion e Innovacion en Salud Grupo Consultor (GIS)
- Anonymous Strategic Communications Organization
- TecSalud

advocacy advances through the recent Ministry adoption of contraceptive supply chain management protocols, developed in conjunction with INSALUD and the National Contraceptive Security Committee. By October 2018, these protocols directly translated into 401 public health facilities throughout the country providing 100 percent availability for six contraceptive methods (including emergency contraception) for women and girls who visited those facilities. Previously, the facilities reported stockouts in certain methods due to supply chain bottlenecks. Similarly, partners FUMA in El Salvador and OMM in Mexico have empowered community members to hold their Ministries of Health accountable at the local and subregional levels through timely citizen monitoring of SRH services. In El Salvador, where communities confront pervasive violence, citizen monitoring has successfully enabled access to services among marginalized women and girls—a strategy the outgoing Ministry of Health sought to scale. Citizen monitoring as part of a broader social accountability strategy is an important tool in ensuring services are accessible, equitable, high quality and responsive to local needs, especially where public health services are decentralized.

In addition to its local partners, PAI strategically partnered with three regional organizations to bolster its advocacy approach in LAC by drawing on their expertise in monitoring and evaluation, institutional strengthening and health systems.

SOUTH-TO-SOUTH LEARNING

A key outcome from the 2018 Bogotá Convening was the commitment from PAI and partners to strengthen the LAC community and leading regional networks. This would be achieved by disseminating lessons learned, exploring opportunities to collaborate across contexts, positioning regional priorities in international development agendas and engaging grassroots actors in shaping policies and programs that affect their communities. The convening was a moment to foster South-to-South learning and adopt best practices across countries. For example, as the government of the Dominican Republic moves to strengthen its transparency and accountability laws, partner INSALUD recognized the utility of citizen monitoring in Mexico and El Salvador in improving access to SRH services. Following the regional convening, PAI worked to create a digital repository to support ongoing South-to-South dialogue and to disseminate research, advocacy lessons and implementation tools. In 2019, with the launch of the Acceso digital repository, the Washington D.C. partners convening and the International Women's Day panel "Reproductive Rights and Social Violence: Pathways Forward in Latin America and the Caribbean," PAI and partners continue to underscore intersections in their approaches as well as prospects for greater collaboration and investments in the region.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION FOR ADVOCACY

Although measuring the impact of advocacy can be difficult, quantifying successes and remaining challenges supports—and in some cases, expedites—partner advocacy with Ministries of Health. In the Dominican Republic, INSALUD utilized monitoring and evaluation to support the Ministry of Health in improving contraceptive security in five regions. Through Acceso, five regional storage facilities increased the median availability of contraceptive methods to a 3.5-month supply and 401 public health facilities registered 100 percent contraceptive stock. In Mexico, OMM employed a similar monitoring and evaluation approach to gauge contraceptive availability in high-need indigenous regions in Chiapas. Their monthly youth-led monitoring of Ministry of Health and Social Security facilities identified critical supply chain bottlenecks which will inform a comprehensive baseline evaluation to

be implemented in 2019. Given the challenges and opportunities that monitoring and evaluation of advocacy presents, PAI is working with GIS to strengthen its regional framework and develop a responsive monitoring and evaluation system, attuned to partner and target country priorities.

INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

PAI partners are leading pressing SRH advocacy that brings a deep understanding of local dynamics to the forefront of national policymaking and implementation. However, few articulate this important work in a way that supports their institutional development needs and reinforces their long-term programmatic goals. Cognizant of opportunities for growth, PAI worked with a preeminent LAC-based strategic communications organization to provide capacity building on institutional development. The anonymous organization's process enables partners to understand how to better represent themselves, their work and their successes to build institutional self-esteem, attract new funding opportunities and position themselves as leaders in the SRH field.

2019 AND BEYOND

As PAI and partners move to the second year of Acceso implementation, three key priorities have emerged:

- 1 Translating monitoring and evaluation into greater investments in the region:** Despite a smaller donor landscape for LAC, sustained investments are needed to close gaps in access to SRH services. Monitoring and evaluation should be used as a tool to identify these gaps and highlight cost-effective strategies for reducing the disparities in the short term.
- 2 Building an expanded regional partnership with the strategic communications organization:** As partners look to expand their work beyond contraceptive supply chain and access to quality services, ongoing technical assistance from the strategic communications organization will be critical to ensure partners' visibility, ability to articulate the national and subregional policy and health system needs as well as the implementation of mass communications campaigns that lead to changes in public opinion around sexual and reproductive rights.
- 3 Expand interactions with the broader regional and international community:** Given PAI's small but growing investment in the region, Acceso has focused on efforts within its target countries. However, as partners move to ensure the sustainability of SRH services, PAI will strengthen collaboration across international organizations and networks working in the region to complement existing efforts.