OPENING REMARKS

2. Setting the stage

Sarah Harbison, Chief, USAID/Global Health Bureau/Office of Population and Reproductive Health/Research, Technology and Utilization Division

Thank you Lynn and good morning everyone.

On behalf of USAID/W I am pleased to Co-Chair this Research Working Group with RESPOND and I very much hope that the insights and enthusiasm of today’s discussions will lead to more increased evidence based programming around LA/PMs in our field, and in fact to more use of contraception generally.

We all work in one way or another to support the reproductive health programs in developing countries.

It is these programs that make it possible for individuals and couples to have meaningful choices about childbearing.

- whether to use a method at all, and if contraception is used, to select of a method appropriate to fertility intentions.

When we speak of long-acting methods, we frequently think of IUDs and implants

- And of course these methods are ideal contraceptive options for many women who wish to delay, space, or limit their pregnancies. ..and

- For men and women who are sure they want no more children, male and female sterilization are also reliable options, although not the only options.

Unfortunately, while these LA/PMs are highly effective contraceptive methods, they remain the least accessible and least used contraceptives in many places.

In Sub-Saharan African countries, for example, fewer than 10 percent of women are using a long acting or permanent method even though more than twice that many report a desire to limit the number of children they have or to space the next pregnancy for two or more years.

So - What are the programmatic challenges for helping to better meet couples’ reproductive health intentions? And how can research help us?

- First, of course we need to be clear about what the current research can already tell us? Presentations today will take us a long way in that direction.

- And we need to consider what the gaps are in our knowledge  - what are the questions we really need answered in order to move forward?
- Many of these questions, I think, relate to the issues and barriers that couples face that are not being addressed by the service delivery programs or the methods that we currently have?

As Lynn stressed, the LA/PM Research Working Group has been established to address precisely these issues and to strengthen the links between LA/PM research and programs.

We realize that other groups have similar agendas, and we certainly do not want to duplicate effort, so

We have set aside some time at the end of the day for group discussions that will include a brainstorm about other groups that we can reach out to and with whom we can collaborate

To be a little more specific, we hope that this group will facilitate that “two-way street:

- Increase the program/implementer input into the development of LA/PM research agendas, here I include Social science, programmatic (OR) and biomedical/technology research
- And in the other direction -Encourage the use of existing LA/PM research among programmers and policymakers.

We hope that today’s technical session will be beneficial to you in a number of ways such as

- initiating discussions to inform future LA/PM research;
- exchanging preliminary research findings;
- developing action plans for research use; and
- establishing work planning linkages.

We will begin our technical session with a presentation from Emily Sonnenveldt who is a Senior Associate at the Futures Institute. Emily will set the stage for us by presenting findings from a current secondary analysis of key LA/PM variables from DHS data sets in USAID PRH priority countries.

The next two presentations will present results of current LA/PM research with a focus on applications for programming.

Dr. Saumya Ramarao, Senior Associate at the Population Council, discuss long-acting FP methods, and

And Dr. Maggwa, Project Director, PROGRESS Project/Family Health International will discuss permanent FP methods.

We have allocated time for discussion and I will wrap up the session with some overarching themes and implications from the USAID perspective. And with that, I turn it over to Emily Sonnenveldt.