

# Rapid assessment of COVID-19 impact on family planning in Nepal and Africa

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted health care around the world as a result of overburdened facilities, curfews, lockdowns, physical distancing, supply chain interruptions, travel restrictions, and people’s fear of becoming infected while accessing care. In response, many countries are taking measures to ensure that family planning remains [an accessible “essential service”](#) in recognition of how critical it is that women and couples are able continue meeting their family planning needs. In fact, [a recent report](#) by the Guttmacher Institute estimated that a 10% proportional decline in use of short- and long-acting reversible contraceptive methods in low- and middle-income countries would result in an additional 49 million women with an unmet need for modern contraceptives and an additional 15 million unintended pregnancies over the course of a year.

To better understand the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on family planning access and use, the USAID-funded [Research for Scalable Solutions \(R4S\)](#) project led by FHI 360 is partnering with Viamo on a study in Nepal, Malawi, Niger, and Uganda. R4S conducts research to improve the efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and equity of family planning programs in Africa and Asia.

R4S will conduct a prospective, longitudinal study during the pandemic and recovery process with women ages 18 to 49 who opt into the study after calling the Viamo 3-2-1 service. Available in 18 countries, Viamo 3-2-1 is a mass communication information service through which mobile phone users can access information on demand by dialing a toll-free short code and navigating a menu of topics.



Vertical text: Jessica Scranton for FHI 360

The study will:

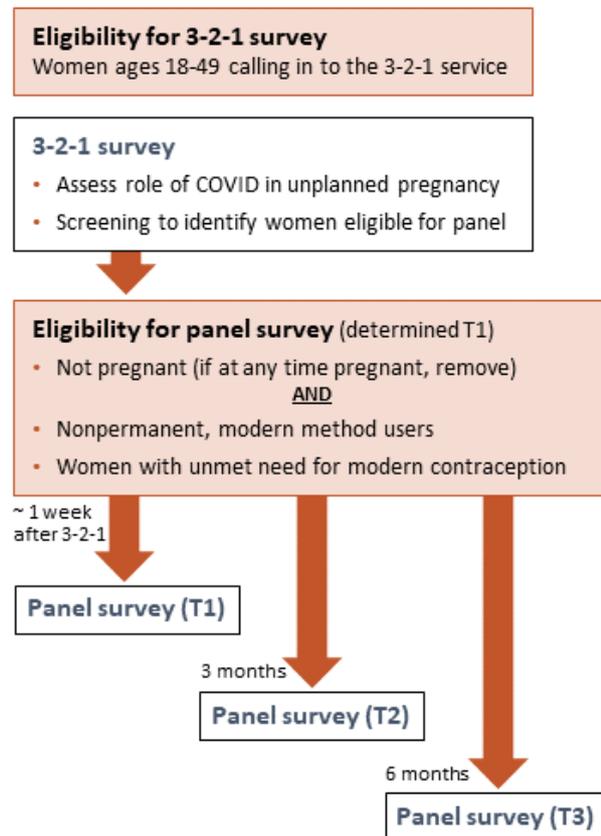
- Document the proportion of women whose demand for family planning is satisfied by modern methods during the pandemic and recovery process
- Measure the proportion of current modern contraceptive users who initiated or resupplied their method during the pandemic and obtained their preferred method
- Describe barriers in accessing family planning care during the pandemic

Viamo will use interactive voice response to collect feedback from women on their experiences through:

- A short, one-time survey with women calling in to the Viamo 3-2-1 service
- A panel survey with a subset of women identified through the short survey who were (1) using a modern contraceptive method (other than sterilization) or (2) had an unmet need for modern contraception

The panel survey will be repeated every three months through the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery process with a minimum of three rounds. Approximately 18,380 women are expected to participate in the one-time survey across the four countries, with 5,732 continuing on to the panel survey. Findings will be rapidly synthesized and shared after each data collection round through a Power BI dashboard that will be made publicly available online.

The evidence generated by this study will help policymakers and program managers in Nepal, Malawi, Niger, and Uganda—and possibly other countries—make adjustments to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 on family planning programs and discover areas to strengthen in preparation for possible future pandemics.



*Research for Scalable Solutions (R4S) is a five-year implementation science project funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and led and implemented by FHI 360 along with core partners Evidence for Sustainable Human Development Systems in Africa (EVIHDAF), Makerere University School of Public Health in Uganda (MakSPH), Population Services International (PSI), and Save the Children (STC). More information is available from <https://www.fhi360.org/projects/research-scalable-solutions-r4s>. The contents of this brief are the sole responsibility of FHI 360 and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.*

September 2020