



Photo 1: The provider and owner of a pharmacy invites a young client to scan the QR code to give feedback. Photo credit: Pramin Manandhar for FHI 360

■ Learning Brief

ENHANCING QUALITY OF CARE AND CLIENT EXPERIENCE THROUGH CLIENT FEEDBACK

Lessons from implementing a digital client feedback mechanism in private healthcare facilities providing family planning services to adolescents and young people in Nepal.

THIS LEARNING BRIEF DESCRIBES MOMENTUM NEPAL'S CLIENT FEEDBACK MECHANISM, a novel approach in Nepal to help providers enhance quality of care and client-centered services to improve business value. The audience for this learning brief includes private sector providers and implementing partners supporting private sector health programs.

BACKGROUND

MOMENTUM Private Healthcare Delivery Nepal is part of a suite of innovative awards funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to harness the potential of the private sector to expand access to and use of high-quality, evidence-based maternal, newborn, and child health services, voluntary family planning, and reproductive health care. **MOMENTUM Nepal** works with private sector service delivery points (SDPs), such as pharmacies, clinics and hospitals, across six provinces to expand the access to high quality, person-centered family planning services **for young people, aged 15–29 years**, by strengthening the technical capacity and business acumen of private sector owners and providers.

Quality of care (QoC) is fundamental to effective and client-centered family planning (FP) and reproductive health programs. Historically, quality was defined at a clinical level as technically competent, effective, and safe care that contributed to the client’s well-being¹. Since the introduction of Bruce and Jain’s six-part framework to QoC in FP in 1990, the definition of quality has been expanded to place the client at the center, including client perspectives on method choice and availability, respectful and friendly treatment, privacy and confidentiality, service providers’ professional competence, information and counseling, convenient hours and acceptable waiting times, and affordability². Respectful and supportive client-provider interactions are at the heart of QoC for FP programs, because they play a critical role in ensuring uptake, continued use, and sustained delivery of FP services^{3,4,5,6}. MOMENTUM Nepal builds the technical capacity of private sector owners and providers to deliver adolescent-responsive FP services, including the [Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health \(ASRH\) training](#) to counsel on full comprehensive method choice, side effects, and referrals for long acting and reversible contraception; Values Clarification and Attitudes Transformation (VCAT) to examine biases and provide an enabling environment for youth to take up FP services; monthly coaching on FP Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement (QA/QI); and technical guidance and logistical support to strengthen the business acumen of these private service delivery points.

CLIENT FEEDBACK MECHANISM

WHY COLLECT CLIENT FEEDBACK:

Client feedback mechanisms are systems to monitor clients’ opinions on the accessibility, satisfaction, experiences, and standard of care received with the aim of helping health institutions and providers to learn how to enhance client experiences of the services received. Effective client feedback mechanisms can help administrators and providers understand what clients need and how they experience care to foster trust in the therapeutic relationship and ultimately increase healthcare seeking and active engagement in healthcare decision-making, continuity, and satisfaction^{7,8,9}.

MOMENTUM Nepal’s health facility assessment of 151 private health facilities, which included 98 pharmacies, 13 clinics, 25 polyclinics, and 15 hospitals, in 2021 found that most private SDPs lacked a structured system to capture and respond to client feedback. To address this and ensure that FP services offered to adolescents and youth are of high quality and client-centered, MOMENTUM Nepal developed a digital client feedback mechanism for its supported health facilities to collect and address client feedback. MOMENTUM Nepal designed the client feedback mechanism to i) ensure that quality improvements are aligned with client perspectives, ii) focus on the importance of informed choice counselling; and iii) give providers insight into client experiences. MOMENTUM Nepal oriented private SDP owners and providers on the importance of contraception method choice in enabling client satisfaction to enhance FP uptake and continuation, and understanding how quality services impacts client loyalty and method continuation.

WHAT IS THE CLIENT FEEDBACK MECHANISM:

MOMENTUM Nepal selected a digital feedback mechanism because of many adolescents and youth who seek private sector health services in Nepal are already digital users. According to the 2019 Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 91 percent of men and 79 percent of women, aged 15–49 years, owned a mobile phone, and 51 percent of them had internet access¹⁰. MOMENTUM Nepal used SurveyMonkey® to enable systematic collection and archival of client feedback to provide efficient support to all the SDPs.

The client feedback questions were adapted from tools already in use in Nepal, including the four Method Information Index (MII) Plus questions¹¹ on informed choice counselling, a core indicator used in Family Planning 2030 (FP2030) (Text Box 1), and six questions on general client experience adapted from Nepal’s Meeting Targets and Maintaining Epidemic Control (EpiC) project (Text Box 2). MOMENTUM Nepal also adopted EpiC’s use of emojis, which adolescent and young adult clients reported as “engaging” in the pretest.

Text Box 1. Questions from Method Information Index Plus

- Were you informed about other methods of family planning?
- Were you informed about possible side effects or problems you might have with the method you selected?
- Were you told what to do if you experience any side effects or problems?
- Were you told about the possibility of switching to another method if the method you selected was not suitable?

Text Box 2. Illustrative Client Experience Questions and Emojis adapted from EpiC

- Would you recommend this pharmacy/clinic/hospital to a friend or family member?
- Nice to know you will recommend! What did you like about our service? (choose one)
 - 🏠 ✨ Setting and cleanliness 👍
 - 🏥 👤 I was treated with dignity and respect by provider/staff 👍
 - 👁️ 🗣️ Privacy/ confidentiality 👍
 - 🏥 👤 👤 Availability of service provider 👍
 - ⌚ ⌚ Wait time 👍
 - 💰 💰 Cost 👍
 - 🩹 🩺 Availability of the method/service/medication 👍
 - ⓘ ⓘ Information shared about the possible side effects of the method/service/medication received 👍
 - ➡️ ➡️ Suggested and referred other possible sites for service not available at facility 👍
 - Other
- How likely is it that you would return to this pharmacy/clinic/hospital?
 - 👍 😊 Likely 🤖 Not sure 🗣️ 😞 Not likely
- Do you have a complaint for the service received that you would want to submit?
- Which negative experience did you have?

HOW IS CLIENT FEEDBACK COLLECTED:

Each SDP invites clients to provide anonymous and voluntary feedback on the service they have received, regardless of whether they sought FP or non-FP services, or their age. Clients may access the feedback survey digitally using a Quick Response (QR) code posted on a wall or display stand (Photo 2), on printed cards or cloth shopping bags, or record survey responses on paper forms available in the health facility. MOMENTUM Nepal created different avenues for collecting client feedback over time to meet the varied needs and capacity of clients and expand inclusion to clients who are not comfortable with digital surveys and clients with limited literacy skills.



Photo 2: A young client gives feedback using his smart phone in Karnali Province, Nepal. Photo credit: Pramin Manandhar for MOMENTUM Nepal

Digital responses to the survey and open-ended questions are automatically stored in the SurveyMonkey® server. Paper form survey responses are entered into SurveyMonkey® by MOMENTUM Nepal program officers every month. No identifying information is collected on the clients providing feedback, so the SDP does not have a way to link feedback to a specific client.

- Literate clients can provide feedback onsite at the SDP by using his/her personal smart phone or the SDP provider's tablet which was provided by MOMENTUM Nepal, or offsite at a place and time of convenience to the client.
- Clients with limited literacy skills who wish to provide feedback can be aided by the SDP provider or another person who they ask (such as a family member) who reads aloud the survey questions and records the client responses onto his/her tablet provided by MOMENTUM Nepal. Note: MOMENTUM Nepal recognizes the potential limitations of social desirability bias by asking a provider to administer the client feedback mechanism survey. However, the program is committed to sustainably obtaining and addressing client feedback.

HOW IS CLIENT FEEDBACK USED:

- **At the SDP level:** Client feedback data are automatically displayed in a SurveyMonkey® dashboard. Each SDP has real-time access to its client feedback data to support routine review and rapid response to any complaints. The SDP-specific data are reviewed by the MOMENTUM Nepal program staff during each onsite monthly QA/QI visit to assess whether SDP’s quality improvement initiatives are aligned to client expectations.
- **At the municipal level:** Client feedback data are also summarized and displayed by municipalities. These aggregated data are reviewed during meetings with provider clusters and municipal authorities to understand client priorities and perceptions.

RESULTS: UPTAKE OF CLIENT FEEDBACK MECHANISM BY SDP

Since MOMENTUM Nepal initiated the client feedback mechanism in November 2021, 100% of private SDPs in Karnali and Madhesh provinces have taken part in the initiative. There is no difference in uptake of the client feedback mechanism by type of SDP, which included 68 pharmacies, 24 clinics-polyclinics, and 12 hospitals.

A total of 22,132 entries have been logged from November 2021 to March 2023 (Figure 1), representing 5 percent of the total client visits. Most feedback was provided directly by clients (72%) and the others completed the digital survey with the support of a service provider (22%) or program officer (6%).

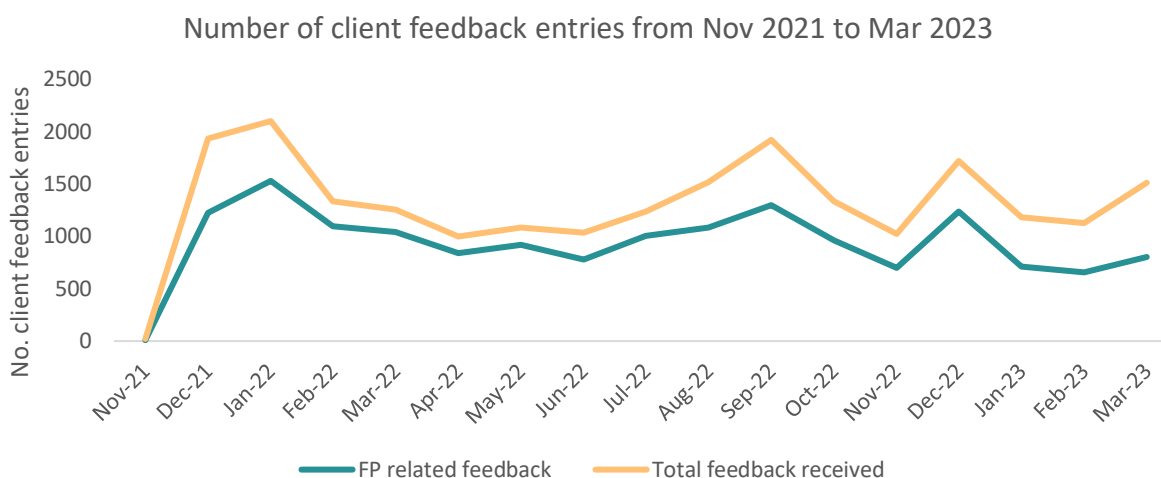


FIGURE 1 UPTAKE OF CLIENT FEEDBACK MECHANISM BY TYPE OF SERVICE RECEIVED

Most client feedback (71%, n=15,892) were related to FP services received. Among clients who provided feedback: 63 percent were between 15-24 years, 26 percent were 30 years and above, and 11 percent did not report an age; and 46 percent were female, 43 percent male, and 11 percent did not report sex.

RESULTS: CLIENT FEEDBACK

FP clients were asked about method choice. All clients were asked about respectful care, whether they would be willing to return to the private SDP for future services, and factors affecting satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

METHOD CHOICE AMONG FP CLIENTS

Nine out of ten FP clients (≥94%) received comprehensive FP counselling as measured by the Method Information Index Plus (MII+). The analysis was done by age and sex and there did not appear to be differences (data not shown).

RESPECTFUL CARE AMONG ALL CLIENTS

Nearly all clients (97%) felt their providers treated him/her with respect, regardless of sex and age. Among clients who felt they received respectful care (n=15,460), they reported that the provider addressed him/her kindly (76%), gave information in a respectful way (53%), and did not scold or ask questions about their contraceptive use (49%). These were the three reasons why clients felt respected, regardless of sex or age.

Among clients who did not feel they received respectful care (n=86), they reported the provider acted like s/he knew better than the client (31%), the provider made assumptions about his/her contraceptive use and treated him/her differently (28%), and the provider addressed him/her impolitely (21%). These were the three reasons why clients felt they did not receive respectful care across all ages and sex.

WILLINGNESS TO RETURN TO THE PRIVATE SDP

Most clients (≥96%) were willing to return for additional services at the private SDP, regardless of sex and age.

FACTORS SURROUNDING CLIENT SATISFACTION

Among clients willing to return for additional services (n=20,521), the top five reasons for positive client experiences were privacy (26%), respectful behavior from the service provider (23%), clean facility environment (21%), available medicine/ service/ instruments (11%), and service provider availability (7%). These reasons for positive experiences were the same across age groups and sex.

Among clients unsure (n=350) or unwilling (n=75) to return for additional services, the top five reasons for negative client experiences were an unclean facility environment (20%), lack of privacy (17%), disrespectful behavior from the service provider (16%), unavailable medicine/ service/ instruments (9%), and a long wait time (8%). An unclean environment, a lack of privacy, and disrespectful behavior from the service provider were the most cited reasons for negative experiences across all age groups and sex.

Text Box 3. Key factors determining positive or negative client experiences

<i>Satisfaction</i>	<i>Dissatisfaction</i>
Privacy	Unclean facility environment
Respectful provider behavior	Lack of privacy
Clean facility environment	Disrespectful service provider
Available medicines, services, instruments	Unavailable medicines, services, instruments
Service provider availability	Long wait time

CHANGES IN RESPONSE TO CLIENT FEEDBACK

Client feedback offered useful insights to reinforce MOMENTUM Nepal’s quality of care activities and guided private SDPs on how to improve its service delivery. Text box 4 highlights some examples of how SDPs have changed in response to client feedback to improve FP service delivery for adolescents and young people. Provider actions in response to client feedback were documented by MOMENTUM Nepal staff during the project’s monthly monitoring visits and during focus group discussions and key informant interviews that explored how private SDP owners and providers used the client feedback.

Text Box 4. Changes made to respond to client feedback

Client feedback	Change
Disrespectful service provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved providers’ communication style with greeting• Changed providers’ judgmental attitude towards unmarried female clients• Matched clients’ preference for provider sex (e.g. if a female client was more comfortable seeing a female provider) where possible
Unavailable medicines, services, instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Modified clinic hours to meet school-going adolescents’ and other clients’ needs• Improved FP counselling by ensuring MII+ information is shared• Rearranged condoms in the display to make it visible to the clients
Long wait time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Added additional seating in the waiting area so clients could be more comfortable

Notably, moderate positive correlations were observed between FP feedback and FP uptake among all ages ($r= 0.56$) and adolescent 15-24 years ($r=0.60$), respectively, indicating an increase in client feedback is correlated with an increase in FP uptake. While correlation should not be interpreted as causation, these findings are consistent with the underlying notion that enhanced responsiveness to client experiences through client feedback can increase FP uptake.

KEY IMPLEMENTATION LESSONS LEARNED

DESIGNED MECHANISM TO ADDRESS NON-UTILIZATION BARRIERS

MOMENTUM Nepal’s client feedback mechanism sought to address common barriers to utilization of a client feedback system, including a lack of awareness on how to provide feedback or express complaints/dissatisfaction, lack of paper and pen on hand to use the suggestion box, uncertainty on who reviews and acts on the complaints, and fear of provider retaliation on clients who give negative feedback.^{7,8,9} To ensure client awareness and maximize accessibility to the client feedback survey, MOMENTUM Nepal-supported SDPs prominently displayed the digital survey’s QR code in the service delivery area, and some providers handed out take-home cards with the QR code for clients to access the survey at home. The flyer/card displaying the QR code invited clients to offer feedback and indicated the feedback would be used to make service improvements: “How do you like our service? You can provide feedback on our service by scanning this QR code. If you have difficulty understanding or using this, let our

staff know and we will support you. Your feedback is important. We are collecting this feedback so we can make improvements.” MOMENTUM Nepal opted for a digital feedback system due to the relatively high rates of smart phone use in urban and peri-urban areas of Nepal and because it does not rely on the availability of paper-and-pen. The digital system also offered flexibility on where a client may complete the survey and greater anonymity so clients can freely share their feedback.

IMPORTANCE OF CLIENT FEEDBACK MECHANISM TO ENHANCING QUALITY OF CARE

The process of routinely seeking and reviewing client feedback to improve services and quality of care was a new concept to many of these private sector providers in Nepal. Prior to MOMENTUM Nepal’s technical assistance, private providers outside of the government health system did not typically receive FP service-delivery training or routine support supervision, and as clinicians they did not receive business skills training. The spotlight on client experiences helped providers to appreciate their clients’ care experiences and understand how they are linked to perceived quality of care, and FP uptake and continuation. Providers reported extending positive practices, such as respectful care and quality counseling, to other service areas beyond FP (e.g., while selling antibiotics, treating adolescents with respect while providing any service, maintaining confidentiality for all health services). Peer-support through monthly cluster meetings and social media chat groups (e.g., Viber, Facebook Messenger) have encouraged the providers to use the feedback and engage in quality improvement activities. Client feedback has also helped MOMENTUM Nepal staff design relevant messages for Provider Behavior Change Communication initiatives.



Photo 3. Bal Kumari Rakhil Magar, a service provider and owner of Tripti Polyclinic in Karnali Province in Nepal started opening her clinic at 6 am in response to feedback received from clients. Photo credit: Pramin Manandhar for MOMENTUM Nepal

MII PLUS EFFECTIVE TOOL TO ASSESS FP COUNSELLING IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR CONTEXT

The brevity of the MII Plus (four questions only) helped assess FP counselling concisely. These questions also helped many clients understand the importance of receiving complete information and being aware of side effects of FP methods.

LINKING CLIENT FEEDBACK WITH BUSINESS VALUE ELEVATES ITS USEFULNESS

Private owners and providers responded well to the logic of positive client experiences for business value. Linking the client feedback mechanism to business promotion and a means to customer loyalty has enhanced ownership and sustainability of this intervention. Some owners were keen on setting up their own client feedback mechanism with tailored questions for improving their business. Clients also appreciate the SDP and are eager to share feedback when they understand the purpose of this activity.

A TAILORED APPROACH IS NEEDED TO ROLLOUT THE CLIENT FEEDBACK MECHANISM IN HEALTH FACILITIES AND PHARMACIES

Contrary to the assumption that client feedback mechanism would be easier to implement at health facilities, such as clinics, polyclinics, and hospitals, because they have management bodies and more staffing, it was easier to implement this at pharmacies because there were less administrative hurdles (e.g., permissions needed from the facility management/ in-charge). The uptake and ownership of the client feedback mechanism was easier in pharmacies as the owners attended technical capacity strengthening training and had the decision-making power to implement the intervention. This lesson is being applied as the project scales up to 811 new SDPs by conducting additional leadership engagement at clinics, polyclinics, and hospitals to address this issue.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The number of client feedback on FP services received was approximately five percent of the total FP client visits recorded. Most of the feedback on FP-related services were positive, and the vast majority reported willingness to return to the same SDP. It is possible that clients who were not satisfied with the services did not provide feedback, and that clients who gave feedback via the aid of a service provider or program officer did not feel comfortable sharing negative feedback. Despite these limitations, including low response rate by clients, there was high uptake of the client feedback mechanism among the private SDPs. Both providers and clients appreciated the feedback mechanism to improving overall quality of services and value proposition to customer loyalty. MOMENTUM Nepal will continue to implement the client feedback mechanism and scale it to 811 new SDPs in the next project phase.

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