

Policy Support for Strengthening Family Planning and HIV/AIDS Linkages

Family Planning

HIV/AIDS

Key Points

- International policy statements and supportive policies from donors and national governments can help provide the justification for establishing or strengthening the linkages between family planning and HIV/AIDS.
- An increasing array of guidance documents and tools are available to help translate policy support into practice.
- Normative bodies and international agencies should continue to endorse linkages between FP and HIV/AIDS while countries bolster efforts on the ground through policy support, dissemination, and implementation.

International Policy Support

Current policy support for linkages between family planning and HIV/AIDS is substantial and continues to grow. At least seven international agencies have issued statements calling for stronger linkages between the two fields. Global statements like these help provide the justification for establishing or strengthening the linkages between family planning and HIV/AIDS policies, funding mechanisms, programs, and service delivery systems (see Table 1, next page).

National Policy Support

Ministries of health often have separate departments for reproductive health (or family planning) and HIV/AIDS, primarily as a result of separate funding streams. Many governments struggle to reconcile the parallel nature of these departments with the increasing calls for stronger linkages between the two, which requires the

collaboration and coordination of many people, resources, and programs across the health system. Kenya and Nigeria are among the countries that have established national coordinating bodies charged with developing new policies to guide these harmonization efforts (see Box 1).

Donor Policies

The call for stronger linkages between family planning and HIV programming is also having an effect on donor policies. At country level, an increasing number of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) bilaterals are combining funding for HIV/AIDS with family planning to form a single health program and encourage integration. Global HIV/AIDS funding mechanisms are also increasing the possibility of family planning integration.

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), for

Box 1. Supportive National Policies

In January 2008, Nigeria issued a policy guiding the integration of reproductive health and HIV/AIDS services. The goal of the policy is to “increase access to quality RH [reproductive health]/HIV services in order that missed opportunities are reduced.” In the policy, the government of Nigeria recognizes that “currently, prevention, counseling, family planning and other SRHS [sexual and reproductive health] services are not routinely offered as part of VCT [voluntary counseling and testing] services or HIV treatment services” and that “HIV-positive people’s rights to informed fertility choices are routinely ignored.” The policy identified specific objectives to be met by 2010 and proposed indicators to monitor progress toward achieving those targets.¹

In 2007, Kenya developed a “Strategy for the Integration of Family Planning and HIV Voluntary Counseling and Services.” In 2009, the government went further by collaborating with key partners to develop a national “Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS Integration Strategy” (to be announced in 2010). The Kenyan government has also included supportive statements for strengthening the linkages between family planning and HIV in at least four of its key reproductive health and HIV/AIDS policies.

Table 1. International Statements Supporting Family Planning and HIV/AIDS Linkages

Report or policy	Statement
<p><i>International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action</i> (UN, 1994) http://www.un.org/popin/icpd2.htm</p>	<p>Names prevention and treatment of HIV an essential component of comprehensive reproductive health care.</p>
<p><i>Glion Consultation on Strengthening the Linkages between Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS: Family Planning and HIV/AIDS in Women and Children</i> (WHO, UNFPA, 2004) http://www.who.int/reproductive-health/stis/docs/glion_consultationsummary.pdf</p>	<p>Recommends a course of action for governments, United Nations agencies, donors, nongovernmental organizations, and others to strengthen linkages between family planning and prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT) policies and programs.</p>
<p><i>Reproductive Health Strategy to Accelerate Progress towards the Attainment of International Development Goals and Targets</i> (WHO, 2004) http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/general/RHR_04_8/en/index.html</p>	<p>Cites combating HIV as one of five priority aspects of sexual and reproductive health.</p>
<p><i>New York Call to Commitment: Linking HIV/AIDS and Sexual and Reproductive Health</i> (UNFPA, UNAIDS, FCI, 2004) http://www.unfpa.org/upload/lib_pub_file/321_filename_New%20York%20Call%20to%20Commitment.pdf</p>	<p>Calls for an urgent effort to strengthen links between corresponding sexual and reproductive health and HIV policies, programs, and services.</p>
<p><i>2005 G8 Gleneagles Commitment</i> (UNAIDS, 2005) http://data.unaids.org/Topics/UniversalAccess/PostG8_Gleneagles_Africa_en.pdf</p>	<p>Describes integration with sexual and reproductive health as important in achieving the G8 commitment to reach universal access to HIV prevention, care, and treatment.</p>
<p><i>Intensifying HIV Prevention</i> (UNAIDS, 2005) http://data.unaids.org/publications/irc-pub06/jc1165-intensif_hiv-newstyle_en.pdf</p>	<p>Names integration an essential policy action for HIV prevention.</p>
<p><i>Declaration of Commitment to HIV/AIDS</i> (UNGASS, 2006) http://data.unaids.org/publications/irc-pub03/aidsdeclaration_en.pdf</p>	<p>Challenges the global health community to forge closer linkages between sexual and reproductive health and HIV through better policy and program coordination.²</p>
<p><i>Maputo Plan of Action for the Operationalization of the Continental Policy Framework for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: 2007–2010</i> (African Union, 2006) http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/Conferences/Past/2006/September/SA/Maputo/doc/en/Working_en/SRHR_%20Plan_of_Action_2007_Final.pdf</p>	<p>Recommends integration of HIV/AIDS services into sexual and reproductive health services so that African countries can achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive health by 2015.</p>
<p><i>Guidance on Global Scale-Up of the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV</i> (IATT on PMTCT, 2007) http://www.who.int/hiv/mtct/PMTCT_enWEBNov26.pdf</p>	<p>States linkages between PMTCT and sexual and reproductive health services are a key strategic approach to realizing comprehensive PMTCT services.</p>

Adapted from and updated: Wilcher R, Petruney T, Reynolds HW, Cates W Jr. From effectiveness to impact: contraception as an HIV prevention intervention. *Sex Transm Infect.* 2008;84(Suppl2):ii54-60.

example, has recently funded sexual and reproductive health activities as part of HIV grants in several countries. In addition, in 2008 the GFATM issued a “Strategy for Ensuring Gender Equality” to reinforce its commitment to supporting proposals that address synergies between family planning and HIV/AIDS.³ The GFATM will even fund procurement of contraceptive commodities.

In 2009, the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Fiscal Year 2010 Country Operation Plan loosened previous restrictions on using PEPFAR funds to support family planning activities. The revised guidance stated, “PEPFAR is a strong supporter of linkages between HIV/AIDS and voluntary family planning and reproductive health programs. The need for family planning for HIV-positive women who desire to space or limit births is an important component of the preventive care package of services for people living with HIV/AIDS and for women accessing PMTCT services.” This new guidance, which is also reflected in PEPFAR’s five-year strategy, encourages PEPFAR programs to support activities that will improve integrated family planning and HIV/AIDS service provision.⁴

Challenges to Developing and Implementing Effective Policies

The level of support for family planning and HIV/AIDS linkages varies within international and national policies, ranging from simplified statements that encourage stronger linkages to recommendations of specific actions to be taken. The degree to which supportive policies are operationalized, however, ultimately determines how well programs and services are integrated. Clear operational guidelines, service delivery protocols, and tools are needed to help program planners and service providers translate policy endorsements into changes in health systems and practices. The parallel nature of many service delivery settings makes it difficult to implement integration policy recommendations without guidance documents in place. To this end, an increasing array of tools are being developed to help translate integration policy into practice (see Box 2).

Box 2. Key Tools and Resources

Making the Case for Interventions Linking Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV in Proposals to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (World Health Organization)

http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/linkages/rhr_10_02/en/index.html

A Practical Guide to Integrating Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS into Grant Proposals to the Global Fund (Population Action International)

http://www.populationaction.org/Issues/RH-HIV_Integration/Integration_0918_v4.shtml

Rapid Assessment Tool for Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV Linkages: A Generic Guide (UNFPA, WHO, IPPF, UNAIDS, GNP+, ICW, Young Positives)

http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2009/91825_eng.pdf

Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS: A Framework for Priority Linkages (WHO, UNFPA, IPPF, UNAIDS)

http://www.unfpa.org/upload/lib_pub_file/501_filename_framework_priority_linkages.pdf

Strategic Considerations for Strengthening the Linkages between Family Planning and HIV/AIDS Policies, Programs, and Services (World Health Organization, U.S. Agency for International Development, Family Health International)

http://www.fhi.org/en/RH/Pubs/booksReports/FP-HIV_Strategic_Considerations.htm

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Recommendations for Strengthening Policy Support

Substantial progress has been made in creating a favorable policy environment for family planning and HIV/AIDS linkages, yet additional policy support would bolster integration efforts on the ground.

International

- Normative bodies and key international agencies should continue to issue endorsements for key linkages between family planning and HIV/AIDS policies, programs, and services.
- Sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS reside in two separate United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): #5 Improve Maternal Health and #6 Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and Other Diseases, respectively. United Nations agencies should reinforce the synergies between the two in future decisions and guidance related to achieving the MDGs.
- Donors and other decision makers need to ensure their funding and guidance are in accord with recommendations for strengthening key linkages between family planning and HIV/AIDS in current international and national policy statements.
- Donors should harmonize reproductive health and HIV/AIDS funding, mobilize resources to support integrated efforts, encourage recipients to develop programs that leverage this support, and require that recipients report on integration-related indicators and targets.

National⁵

Ministries of Health (MOHs) and implementing partners should:

- Form a joint task force between MOH family planning and HIV departments to coordinate integration efforts and foster government commitment to integration.
- Involve target audiences, including district-level health managers, service providers, people living with HIV, clients (including men and youth), policymakers, donors, multilaterals, and advocacy organizations for groups at higher risk of HIV exposure, in policy and program design.
- Develop an advocacy strategy to mobilize support for integrated services among policymakers, program managers, service providers, clients, people living with HIV, and other key stakeholders.
- Revise national HIV policies to include family planning services for healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies and prevention of unintended pregnancies as part of the standard of care for HIV services. Revise family planning policies to include HIV services as part of the standard of care for FP services.

References

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- 3 Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM). The Global Fund's strategy for ensuring gender equality in the response to HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. Geneva: GFATM; n.d. Available from: http://www.theglobalfund.org/documents/strategy/TheGenderEqualityStrategy_en.pdf.
- 4 Population Action International. Washington memo: new PEPFAR guidance calls for greater coordination with family planning and reproductive health. Washington (DC): Population Action International; 2009. Available from: http://www.populationaction.org/Issues/U.S._Policies_and_Funding/Washington_Memo/Index.shtml.
- 5 World Health Organization (WHO), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Family Health International (FHI). Strategic considerations for strengthening the linkages between family planning and HIV/AIDS policies, programs, and services. Research Triangle Park (NC): FHI; 2009. Available from: http://www.fhi.org/en/RH/Pubs/booksReports/FP-HIV_Strategic_Considerations.htm.



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FP/HIV-10-02E

Family Health International
P.O. Box 13950
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709 USA
Tel: 1.919.544.7040
E-mail: publications@fhi.org
www.fhi.org