

STRENGTHENING RESEARCH AND DATA MANAGEMENT: NEW EFFORTS AT THE KENYA DIVISION OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

KEY POINTS

Making health-related decisions requires a coordinated research agenda and data management system

FHI and partners providing assistance to develop institutional capacity at the DRH

DRH Resource Center established

Annotated bibliography of RH research in Kenya (2000-2005) developed

DRH Web site under construction and includes searchable RH research database, news, policy, guidelines, and program information

Data for Decision Making training and curriculum offered to MOH staff

Draft research guidelines developed

Research Management training conducted for DRH staff

SUMMARY

In response to barriers prohibiting the ability to know and easily access reproductive health research and data for the purpose of linking evidence-based information to the implementation of productive programs, the government of Kenya has moved quickly to develop and execute a strategy for strengthening reproductive health data management and utilization in the country. Family Health International is supporting these efforts through the *Kenya Division of Reproductive Health Capacity Building* project which focuses on developing tools, trainings, and systems for making data more readily available and utilized by policy makers, program managers, researchers, and individuals.

Kenya's public health officials and researchers are often faced with the complex reality of making health-related decisions in the absence of coordinated research agendas and functional data management systems. Effectively responding to public health problems requires the capacity to identify priority health issues, access and utilization of reproductive health (RH) data, and formulation of appropriate health policies and programs. To this end, the Ministry of Health Division of Reproductive Health (DRH) has made strengthening RH data management a priority and is collaborating with Family Health International (FHI), Measure Evaluation, the Department for International Development (DfID), and the World Health Organization (WHO) to enhance the country's health research capacities.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE RESOURCE CENTER AND AGENDA SETTING

Primary steps taken by the DRH and partners include establishing a resource center at the DRH with dedicated staff. A RH research agenda setting workshop was held in June 2003 for the purpose of soliciting views from a cross section of stakeholders so that government and independent agencies can define key problems, identify areas of research, and establish a national agenda. The report on RH priority research in Kenya is available.

RH ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

FHI provided technical assistance to develop and produce an annotated bibliography of RH research in Kenya from 2000 – 2005 which includes abstracts in the following themes: family planning, safe motherhood, STI/HIV/AIDS, gender issues and RH, adolescent RH, infertility, and RH cancers.

DRH WEB SITE

Another essential research management tool is the creation of the DRH Web site. The Web site is largely completed at the time of writing and includes a searchable database of Kenya RH research abstracts based on the annotated bibliography. The database can be searched by title, author, or subject. The Web site also includes DRH news, programs, policies and guidelines, and links to other global RH databases.

DATA FOR DECISION-MAKING TRAINING

A Data for Decision-Making (DforD) training module was developed and a TOT training was conducted with MOH staff. The purpose of the training module is to address the DRH's request to strengthen staff capacity to collect and utilize data more effectively for strategic planning, implementing, managing and evaluating reproductive health programmes in a decentralized environment.

RESEARCH GUIDELINES

Draft research guidelines have been developed to guide researchers on information required in order to ensure reproductive health research is co-ordinated in Kenya. A researcher will be required to deposit the proposal, an abstract and final report of the research findings to DRH. The abstract will be posted on the annotated bibliography page within the website, to continually build the database. The proposal and study report will be available at the resource center.

RESEARCH MANAGEMENT TRAINING

In order to build capacity for co-ordination of RH research, a research management module was developed to equip DRH staff with skills to: Identify key areas of reproductive health research; explain the Reproductive Health Guidelines and apply the guidelines to assess and categorize RH

research proposals. Training of DRH staff was undertaken and the module is undergoing review.

STILL TO COME...

Enhancement and roll-out of ongoing components is anticipated and will include:

- ❖ Finalization of RH research guidelines and facilitation of researchers to access the guidelines and submit abstracts online;
- ❖ Roll-out of the DforD training to District level;
- ❖ Web site updating on a regular basis given the dynamic nature of information generation;
- ❖ Upgrading of resource centre to enable the DRH to facilitate the role of information dissemination and storage



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