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Kenya Adopts First National Reproductive Health Policy

New RH Policy Aims to Reach Those in Greatest Need



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Dr. Mike Strong of USAID/Kenya and Dr. Kibaru, Head of the RH Division of Kenya’s MOH, participate in a workshop sharing a draft of the RH Policy with stakeholders from every region.

Development of the policy involved women with disabilities. A representative of the women stated:

“Most [policies] are not specific to the general health and RH needs of people with disabilities (PwDs)... This is a good opportunity to articulate PwDs’ RH issues and strategies to address the same.”

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NAIROBI | In October 2007, Kenya’s Ministry of Health (MOH) formally approved and adopted the country’s first ever National Reproductive Health Policy. With the theme “Enhancing the Reproductive Health Status for All Kenyans,” the policy provides a framework for equitable, efficient, and effective delivery of high-quality reproductive health (RH) services throughout the country, and emphasizes reaching those in greatest need and most vulnerable. It aims to guide planning, standardization, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of reproductive healthcare provided by various stakeholders.

Kenya has never before had a national RH policy to provide a framework for the implementation of a comprehensive RH program. The new policy will allow the government to incorporate and address key emerging issues such as RH commodities security, the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, emergency obstetric care, adolescent RH issues, gender-based violence, RH needs of persons with disabilities, and RH/HIV integration.

At the request of the MOH, the USAID | Health Policy Initiative, Task Order 1, (HPI) and its predecessor, the POLICY Project have helped the MOH leadership in the development of the National RH Policy since 2004. HPI supplied technical and financial assistance for the policy development process, facilitating several stakeholder consultations and assisting various institutions with drafting, reviewing, and finalizing the policy. The MOH approved the policy in October 2007.

The Chairman of the MOH committee that reviewed the final draft stated that the new RH policy “is a very good document in line with other international policy documents and the country’s National Health Sector Strategic Plan.”

The new policy’s focus on strengthening community midwifery practice and helping traditional birth attendants become advocates of safe motherhood will contribute to enhanced maternal health. Its integration of reproductive healthcare and HIV services will conserve vital resources while continuing to provide patients with comprehensive care.