



**Partners in Population and Development (PPD)
Africa Regional Office**

**An Inter-Governmental Organization
Promoting South-South Cooperation**

PPD ARO Annual report for the year 2020.

Introduction

This report presents a description of the activities that PPD ARO was able to implement during the year 2020. The first two quarters of the year were months of inaction, occasioned by total lockdown in many countries of ARO's focus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has tested PPD ARO's resolve to adapt to the new normal of conducting business with virtual meetings replacing physical meetings. During the year, the Office made significant contributions to improved RH/FP policy and funding environment in Africa. We continued to design and implement activities anchored around three strategic interventions of 1) advocacy and policy development; 2) Institutional capacity building for SSC and 3) building partnerships and relationships. The activities aimed at positioning reproductive health and family planning (RH/FP) as high priorities on national development agendas; enhancing greater accountability for the implementation of RH/FP commitments that countries signed onto; and advocating for increased domestic and international funding for RH/FP as well as the wider RMNCAH and commitments to UHC. A description of the activities implemented, and outcomes thereof, is presented below:

The 10th Eastern Africa Reproductive Health Network (EARHN)

Coordination meeting.

EARHN is a south-south regional advocacy network that was formed with the aim of advocating for improved reproductive health/family planning (RH/FP), population and development outcomes within the Eastern Africa region. Membership of EARHN currently includes 7 countries of Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia and South Sudan. The work of EARHN is guided by the EARHN 2017 – 2021 Strategic Plan whose development was supported by ARO.

Since 2008 and on an annual basis, PPD ARO has been organizing EARHN coordination meetings, with participants drawn from EARHN focal persons, technical people from the Ministries of Health and Planning, civil society representatives and other stakeholders involved in MCH, RH/FP advocacy programmes. The meetings are organized to broker south-south sharing and learning of good practices among the countries in the region, highlighting some good practices and lessons that can potentially be adapted and replicated by other countries to improve their RH/FP outcomes. The 2020 meeting was organized virtually on Wednesday, August 12, 2020. It was the 10th in a series, to be organized by PPD ARO and partners. The meeting registered 100% attendance with

all the EARHN member countries attending. The meeting shared experiences on sustaining the momentum for managing and implementing RH/FP, maternal and child health programmes amidst the COVID 19 pandemic; discussed and shared countries' progress and experiences in implementation of the EARHN Strategic Plan (2017 – 2021); and discussed and agreed on practical solutions for effective implementation of the EARHN Strategic Plan 2017 – 2021 during the COVID-19 crisis. Strong emphasis was placed on documentation and learning as well as continuous organization of virtual meetings and forums for sharing.

The Network of African Parliamentary Committees of Health (NEAPACOH) meeting.

Every year, PPD ARO, in conjunction with NEAPACOH and partners, organizes meetings of the NEAPACOH. The meeting participants are drawn from Parliamentarians who chair or are members of the parliamentary committees of health and their Committee Clerks, Development Partners, Civil Society Organizations, and other stakeholders involved in Family Planning, Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) programmes. The 2020 NEAPACOH meeting was hybrid, with Ugandan participants attending physically and other country participants attending virtually on October 28 and October 29, 2020. The theme of the meeting was “Improving Universal Access to RH and FP Services for achieving the ICPD PoA and the SDGs amidst the COVID 19 Pandemic”, with Prof. Francis Omaswa, the Executive Director of the African Centre for Global Health and Social Transformation (ACHEST) providing a key note address.



*Uganda Parliamentarians and other Participants at the NEAPACOH-2020_Meeting
Sheraton Hotel in Kampala*

The meeting was honored with the attendance of the Uganda Minister of State for Housing, Hon Dr Chris Baryomunsi, who officially opened the meeting and the Executive Director of PPD, who intervened at the meeting by making statements at the opening and closing sessions of the meeting. During the meeting, countries shared achievements and lessons learned in implementation of the October 2019 NEAPACOH commitments and The Kampala Call to Action. The members were able to share challenges they faced which was this year predominantly the novel Corona virus pandemic that has retarded implementation. Over 100 participants drawn from 11 countries attended the meeting.



Family photo of Uganda Parliamentarians and other Participants at the NEAPACOH-2020_Meeting Sheraton Hotel in Kampala

Follow up meeting on NEAPACOH commitments implementation with Ugandan Members of Parliament

During the NEAPACOH meeting that was held in October 2019, Ugandan Parliamentarians committed to deliver on four areas namely to push for the enactment of the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill 2019 into law by January 2020; to engage Ministry of Education and Sports / Cabinet Secretariat for the passing of the National School Health policy; to advocate and popularize the implementation of the Demographic Dividend roadmap; to increase the health budget from 6.4 % to 15%; and to ring fence the 16bn Ushs allocated to family planning to procure FP commodities.

On June 29, 2020, PPD ARO, with the support of UNFPA and APHRC, organized a follow up meeting with the Ugandan Parliamentarians to receive progress on the status of implementation of the 2019 NEAPACOH Commitments, and to discuss and agree on actions/way forward to achieve the commitments.

The meeting was also used to orient MPs on the Framework for Monitoring and Accountability for RMNCAH Commitments. On the NHI Bill, consultations have been going on with a number of stakeholders in Uganda including a benchmarking study tour to Kenya. A number of recommendations have been received, and lessons learned integrated in the report which is ready for presentation to parliament for the second reading, debate and passing the NHI Bill into law. Regarding the School Health policy, a draft report on the National School Health Policy is in place, and the leadership of the Health committee of Parliament was oriented on the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) of the National School Health Policy.

What awaits is for the Ministry of Health to approve the policy. In terms of increasing the health budget, the health sector budget increased by 5.4% from Ushs.2595.38 billion, in FY 2019/20 to Ushs. 2735.96 billion in 2020/21. However, the share of the health sector to the total national budget decreased from 6.4% to 6.2%. The parliamentarians will continue engaging the appropriate organs of the executive of government to make sure that the 16bn Ushs allocated to family planning is ring fenced to procure FP commodities.

Multi-Sectoral Dialogue on ICPD@25 Uganda: Following the Commitments made at the 2019 Nairobi Summit

The Programme Manager attended and actively participated in a meeting to receive progress on implementation of the Uganda commitments that were made at the 2019 Nairobi Summit. The meeting which was supported by PPD and organized by the National Population Council was held on October 8, 2020. The Programme Manager intervened at the meeting by making a presentation on “Looking beyond ‘business as usual’ and tapping into opportunities to realize the commitments”

Harmonized Family Planning resources tracking methodology for Uganda.

With support from UNFPA, PPD ARO has been conducting meetings aimed at developing a harmonized Family Planning resources tracking methodology for Uganda. Two such meetings were held in September and December 2020. The background to developing a standardized methodology is that although several FP stakeholders have been tracking FP resources in Uganda, there is currently no common, agreed-upon approach and guidelines/tools to track FP resources in Uganda.

This has led to some challenges such as resources being spent for tracking even in instances where the duplication could have been avoided; low response rate and high respondent fatigue; and some results reported by and among different partners being inconsistent, contradicting and unreliable. The outcome of the meetings is the draft tracking report which is available and awaiting Ministry of Health endorsement.



Experts at the harmonized FP resources tracking methodology retreat in Entebbe Dec. 2020

During the same period, PPD ARO, together with Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU), continued to implement the Advance Family Planning (AFP) initiative that is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation through the Gates institute of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. The goal of the initiative is to achieve the FP2020 targets through increasing funding for FP, reducing the policy barriers to FP uptake and raising the visibility of FP. During the period, PPD ARO continued to organize advocacy meetings with Uganda Districts' political and technical leaderships aimed at strengthening the functionality of Family Planning advocacy committees as well as increasing uptake of family planning services and information among the adolescents. The meetings were organized in five districts of Kamwenge, Lamwo, Bududa, Budaka and Rukungiri. All the four districts were supported to establish functional FP advocacy working groups that are leading and sustaining the advocacy momentum that PPD ARO created around ensuring that FP programmes are adequately resourced, barriers that constrain FP uptake are addressed and the visibility of FP is raised at all levels.



Family photo of Lamwo district Family Planning Advocacy Working Group



FP District Advocacy Working Group Meetings organized in the districts of Kamwenge, Lamwo, Bududa, Budaka and Rukungiri.

Hosting of the AFP Partners Meeting, March 2 – 6, 2020 at Speke Resort Munyonyo, Uganda

The Advance Family Planning (AFP) initiative supported by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation organizes annual AFP Partners meetings in rotation among partner countries. The 2020 Partners Meeting was hosted by PPD ARO and a sister AFP implementing partner in Uganda, Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU). The meeting, held from March 2 – 6, 2020 at Speke Resort Munyonyo, Uganda, brought together over 100 participants from the different AFP countries including FP advocates and development partners. During the meeting, the sharing of progress on implementation of country plans and “Quick Wins” accomplished as well as emerging issues around the landscape for FP at country and global levels was done.



A cross section of participants at the FP Partners Meeting in Kampala 2-6 March 2020

The Partners meeting created greater synergy among AFP partners and collaborators in sustaining effective advocacy and political and financial support needed to achieve the Family Planning 2020 (FP2020) vision. At the meeting, ARO shared AFP priorities for Year 9 of implementation which will run from the period October 2020 – October 2021 with a focus on accountability, advocacy capacity strengthening and greater local ownership of the FP agenda.



Family Photo of participants at the FP Partners Meeting in Kampala 2-6 March 2020

Innovating for Maternal and Child Health in Africa Learning Workshop

PPD ARO is an implementing partner of the Innovating for Maternal and Child Health in Africa (IMCHA) supported by IDRC. IMCHA seeks to improve maternal, newborn and child health outcomes in targeted countries through enhanced production, analyses and syntheses of health systems implementation research as well as enhanced partnering and collaboration between decision makers and researchers on health systems strengthening. In January 2020, in Kigali, Rwanda, the Programme manager participated in a IMCHA organized workshop attended by key members of the research projects and Health Policy and Research Organizations. The event focused, and facilitated the sharing of experiences and lessons learned, in preparation for IMCHA legacy as the initiative that was supposed to end in December 2020 but now extended for another period and to terminate in October 2021.

Canadian Conference on Global Health

The Programme Manager participated in a virtual Canadian Conference on Global Health Which was held on 19 – 22 October 2020. He made a presentation on perspectives on the value-added of a structure such as the Health Policy and Research Organizations (HPRO) in getting research evidence into policy

69th ECSA-HC Health Ministers' conference

The Programme Manager participated in the 69th East, Central and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA -HC) Health Ministers' conference that was held in Lusaka, Zambia from 19th to 21st February, 2020. The conference was themed on “Innovation and Accountability in Health towards achieving Universal Health Coverage”. Key themes that were covered during the conference include efforts to improve adolescent and young people’s health; and tackling emerging and re-emerging health threats with emphasis on a “Regional One Health Approach” to managing recurrent outbreaks in the region.