



DESIP | Implemented by  Options

Improving national ownership and sustainability of family planning in Kenya

Background

The Delivering Equitable and Sustainable Increases in Family Planning (DESIP) project is funded by UK Aid aiming to improve access and uptake of family planning (FP) services in Kenya while reducing inequalities in regard to access by ensuring availability of and demand for family planning commodities through the sustainable involvement of the private and public sectors.

DESIP is implemented by a consortium led by Population Services Kenya and includes African Medical and Research Foundation, Health Right Kenya, Faith2Action, Population Services International, Voluntary Service Overseas Kenya and Options Consultancy Services Limited.

Options is leading on increasing national ownership and sustainability of family planning by strengthening government stewardship and ensuring that commitments are delivered at both national and county level.

Introduction

Kenya has made tremendous progress in uptake of modern contraceptive with the prevalence rate (mCPR) increasing from 39.4% in 2008 to 53.2% in 2014 (KNBS, 2014) and further to 57% in 2019 (Performance Monitoring for Action, 2022). But this is not uniformly distributed across the country with 19 counties having an mCPR below 45% (Owino et al., 2017). This disparity is further witnessed in unmet need for family planning among women of reproductive age with the national average being at 17.5% while regions such as North-Eastern and Nyanza provinces having 29.9% and 23.2% respectively from which majority of the 19 counties with low mCPR are located.

The rebasing of Kenya's economy in 2014, which lifted the country to lower middle-income economic status, effectively locked it out from accessing most concessional financing available to low-income economic countries. This affected financing for family planning which was heavily dependent on donor funding especially for procurement of contraceptives. The result was sporadic stock out of FP methods and stagnation of contraceptive uptake.

DESIP was designed as a 5-year project to be implemented in the forementioned 19 counties which include Wajir, Garissa, Mandera, Samburu, Isiolo, Marsabit, Kilifi, Lamu, Kwale, Tana River, Mombasa, Baringo, Narok, Kajiado, West Pokot, Elgeyo Marakwet, Turkana, Migori and Homa Bay while also providing technical assistance at policy level through needs-based support to the Division of Reproductive and Maternal Health (DRMH) of the national Ministry of Health.

Approach

Options' approach to providing the technical assistance was framed as pathways of change consisting of 4 pillars outlined below:

- **Policy and planning** by ensuring relevant policies and legislative frameworks are in place and that national and county Costed Implementation Plans for family planning are developed, implemented and monitored.
- **Financing** for family planning, including building capacity for programme-based budgeting and budget tracking, implementing strategies for a total market approach and advocating for allocation of more resources towards family planning.
- Family planning **commodity security**, including improving public sector commodity management by enhancing national and county level capacity for family planning commodity quantification, forecasting, supply planning and pipeline monitoring.
- **Evidence and accountability**, supporting use of evidence to hold government accountable for family planning and reproductive health commitments, and to strengthen advocacy effectiveness among civil society networks.

Results

Policy and planning

Options working in collaboration with other stakeholders supported the DRMH to develop the following policies and accompanying briefs:

	Options contributed to the development of The National Reproductive Health Policy 2022-2032 following the lapse of the 2007 RH policy and the need to address emerging issues such as alignment with the constitution 2010, implementation of universal health coverage, need for increased domestic financing for RH and the desire to serve adolescent and aging population RH needs. The RH Policy act as the main reference document on matters concerning Reproductive Health in Kenya.
	With impending end of the FPCIP 2017-2020, Options supported DRMH to conduct an end term evaluation, thus informing the development of the FPCIP 2021-2024 which guides the implementation of FP in Kenya.
	Kenya has been trying to implement Total Market approach for FP since 2016 and in 2020, with Options support, developed a strategy that will ensure that by 2024 Kenya's total FP market is more sustainable, efficient and equitable for its people.
	The reproductive health commodity security strategy 2020-25 was a revision of the National commodities strategy 2013-17 with Options input to guide planning, implementation, coordination, supervision, monitoring and evaluation of RH commodity management in Kenya.
	To ensure provision of standard quality FP services across all facilities in Kenya, FP standards were revised to incorporate latest WHO medical eligibility criteria while aligning to KQMH-2018 with support from Options.

Financing

Kenya entered a memorandum of understanding with development partners which articulated a graduated mechanism of financing for FP. In the arrangement, donor contribution would be reducing while government funding would increase sequentially until all FP funding in Kenya is provided for by the government. Options tracked progress in implementing the commitments while advocating for allocations as part of the National FP advocacy group. In a bid to also have counties increase their allocations towards FP, Options supported the development of FP investment cases for five counties which highlight the benefit of investing in FP

Commodity security

Options has been part of the national FP logistics technical working group (TWG) which monitors the commodity situation in the country and comes up with strategies to avert stock outs. This TWG coordinates monthly review of stock level of FP commodities and quantification and forecasting of needs for the purpose of informing procurement decisions. The efforts of this TWG has helped to achieve FP commodity security.

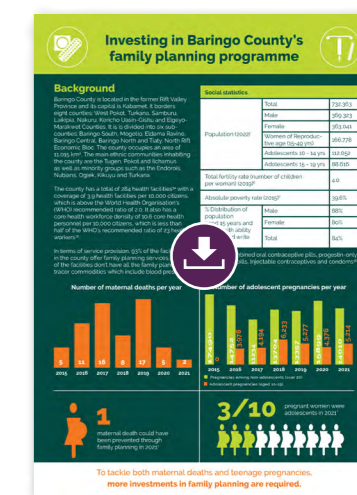
National and 5 FP commodity forecasting and supply plans developed	120 service providers trained on F&Q	41 service provides trained on commodity management
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At county level, Options trained 120 service providers in forecasting and quantification (F&Q) while 41 were trained in commodity management. This was done to enable quantification at the county level and subsequent aggregation at the national while ensuring proper use, storage, transfer, and distribution of commodities limiting wastage. The counties of Homa Bay, Narok, Kilifi, Baringo and Isiolo were supported to develop their forecasting and quantification plans.

Evidence and accountability

Options supported the use of evidence in FP program implementation and advocacy. This was achieved through the following:

1. Development of annual FP fact sheets for all the 19 DESIP counties for use in advocacy to influence the allocation of more resources towards FP particularly when engaging the political leaders. The fact sheets highlight the FP scenario in the specific county and provide a quick reference check for non-technocrats on a county's current situation regarding maternal and adolescent health. The fact sheets have been very instrumental during donor visits where they are shared with the visiting team to have a sense of the FP issues and needs of the county being visited.
2. Trained 67 health care worker on the RH/FP dashboard, an online performance management tool developed by CHAI. The tool uses routine FP data (from Kenya Health Information System) to generate easy-to-interpret, automated, practical analyses for use in planning FP interventions.



67 HCWs trained on FP Dashboard

3. Trained 25 civil society coalitions in budget advocacy and as a result, coalitions are actively advocating for an increase in resource allocation towards family planning during the budget making process.

25 CSOs trained on budget advocacy

Challenges

- Implementation of the DESIP project faced significant challenges as a result of the **cut in FCDO funding**. This led to substantial scale down in the scope of project interventions.
- **Covid-19 pandemic** also slowed down project implementation in 2020 and 2021.

Lessons and recommendations

1. Policy development is a participatory process and therefore resource intensive, thus requires consistency, resilience and determination to achieve consensus on a given agenda.
2. The counties still have significant capacity gaps, therefore require technical support based at the counties to sustain implementation of programmes.
3. If the gains made in family planning are to be maintained, counties must continue to allocate resources towards FP service provision and commodities to complement National government efforts.
4. Collaborative approach to project implementation is essential particularly with the national and county governments if objectives are to be met easily.

References

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