



Advancing Policy Reform
MLI Reproductive Health Roundtable
Wednesday, 18 November, 2009
8:00am – 10:30am

Meeting Report

MLI hosted a session at the International Conference on Family Planning in Kampala, Uganda. The purpose of the session was to explore what the major factors were that contributed to Rwanda's advances in reproductive health and the increase in family planning prevalence and the current challenges facing MLI's focus countries. **Rosann Wisman**, the director of the Ministerial Leadership Initiative for Global Health (MLI), opened the Roundtable and introduced the participants. The session began with a discussion, moderated by **Sahlu Haile**, the Regional Advisor for Sub-Saharan Africa at the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, of the steps involved in improving reproductive health in Rwanda. **Jotham Musinguzi**, the regional director of Partners in Population and Development (PPD), Africa and **John May**, the lead population specialist for the Africa region at The World Bank both provided comments in which they attributed committed high level political leadership, including from President Paul Kagame, to Rwanda's success.

Another key component to success that Dr. Musinguzi highlighted was the Rwandan leaders' access to evidence and ability to link RH issues with education and gender issues, an effort he described as extremely important. **Laura Hoemeke**, the director of the Twubakane Decentralization and Health Program at IntraHealth International in Rwanda also stressed the importance of leadership, noting that Rwanda had "informed leadership that was willing to take risks." **Dr. Jean Gatsinga** who is a gynecologist and fertility specialist at the Carrefour Polyclinic in Rwanda then gave a presentation describing Rwanda's efforts to improve reproductive health, which Dr. Gatsinga described as focusing on six policy priorities: 1) decrease maternal mortality rate, 2) family planning, 3) prevention of STD and HIV/AIDS, 4) adolescent sexual health, 5) prevention of GBV, and 6) behavior change around women's decision making.

Peggy Clark the Executive Director of the Innovations in Global Health and Poverty program of Realizing Rights led the dialogue with the MLI RH Country representative focused on how the RH units in their ministries could be strengthened in order to advance policy and programs, and how innovative health financing approaches can help to advance those programs. **Dr. Binta Keita**, Director of Reproductive Health in the Ministry of Health in Mali, said that a challenge she faces is that the well defined policies

that exist at the country level need to be effectively spread, and implemented in communities which in her view requires investments in building the competency and capacity of the personnel on the ground, implementing programs. **Mrs. Safiatu Foday**, the coordinator for family planning and RH commodities security in the Ministry of Health and Sanitation in Sierra Leone, described the challenge the Ministry faces as the country emerges from a 10-year Civil War: “Reconstruction will take a long time, but the figures are improving. One of the challenges is balancing immediate needs while also addressing long-term programs.” **Dr. Bocar Daff**, Director of Reproductive Health in the Ministry of Health and Prevention in Senegal, drew on his own experiences to highlight the importance of the RH division in a ministry having strong institutional capacity and leadership so that administrative and management-related issues can be properly addresses to improve the functioning of the unit.

Francis Omaswa, a senior advisor to MLI and the executive director of the African Center for Global Health and Social Transformation (ACHEST), provided closing remarks and reflected on the messages from the roundtable on the importance of political leadership, innovative health financing, and strong RH technical programs at the national level in advancing RH, particularly family planning at the country level.