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Democratic Republic of the Congo Commits to Family Planning through the Global FP2020 Partnership

CASE STUDY

The government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) committed to support family planning on November 15, 2013 at the 3rd International Conference on Family Planning (ICFP) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. On behalf of the government, Mr. Dieudonné Kwete Shamantshey, Health Advisor to the Prime Minister, delivered the pledge to revitalize family planning services by implementing and financially supporting the DRC’s recently-developed national strategic plan for family planning, reforming laws that pose barriers to planned births, and empowering women. This commitment sealed the DRC’s inclusion in the global Family Planning 2020 (FP2020) partnership to increase the number of girls and women using contraceptives by 120 million by 2020.

The FP2020 announcement was a definitive step forward after several years of growing momentum in the DRC. Joining the FP2020 partnership brought visibility to monetary investments the government had already made to family planning and encouraged further strategic investment from the Ministers of Health, Planning, and Finance.

Together with government officials and other

stakeholders, Tulane University, Advance Family Planning’s partner in the DRC, facilitated the development strategy to draft the FP2020 commitment. More than 50 members of both the family planning community and the DRC’s government leaders united to produce a strong commitment for the ICFP.

Unprecedented support at top levels in government and across ministries bodes well for a united effort to improve access to family planning across the DRC. Mr. Kwete reflected positively on the collaboration during an interview following the commitment speech: “We have to return in partnership to go further, that is, to go beyond this commitment and move towards concrete action in the implementation of the strategic plan and all that was included in the commitment.”¹



The Health Advisor to the Prime Minister commits to family planning on behalf of the government. For the first time, DRC created a budget line for family planning and reproductive health.

Seeking National Investment

Arsène Binanga, Country Director for Tulane University, described the road to DRC's family planning commitment as "a long process." Despite government support for family planning in the early 1970s, progress had stalled over the following decades. As a result, maternal mortality rates in the DRC were among the highest in the world.²

Many religious, civil society, and public health leaders, as well as Prime Minister Augustin Matata Ponyo Mapon and other government officials, recognized the need for family planning. In December 2009, the

National Conference to Reposition Family Planning, presided by First Lady Marie-Olive Lemba Kabila Kabange,³ stressed the need for a family planning commitment from the government. The DRC's population had reached 69 million, making it Africa's fourth most populous country, with a meager modern contraceptive prevalence rate (mCPR) of 7.8%.⁴

The 2009 conference engaged ministers and later gave way to the creation of the family planning taskforce known as Comité Technique Multisectoriel Permanent pour la Planification Familiale (CTMP). These milestones were important early steps. However, the government did not allocate family



WHAT DID THE DRC COMMIT TO?

OBJECTIVES

- Increase the contraceptive prevalence rate from 5.4% in 2010 to 19% in 2020
- Increase the number of users of modern methods from 700,000 in 2010 to 2.1 million in 2020

POLICY & POLITICAL COMMITMENTS

The government of the DRC commits to reforming laws that pose barriers to responsible parenthood and planned births.

FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

The government recently made family planning and reproductive health a budget line item and, for the first time, allocated USD \$1 million for the purchase of contraceptives in 2013. This financial contribution will gradually increase to align with the implementation of the national strategic plan for family planning, particularly for the purchase of contraceptives.

PROGRAM & SERVICE DELIVERY COMMITMENTS

The DRC commits to executing their recently-developed national strategic plan for family planning for 2014-2020. The government also commits to protecting adolescent girls from early marriage through education, awareness raising, social integration, and women's empowerment programs.

SOURCES:

"Democratic Republic of Congo Commitment." *Family Planning 2020*. Family Planning 2020, n.d. Web. <<http://www.familyplanning2020.org/countries/all-countries/democratic-republic-of-the-congo#commitment>>

"The DRC's Commitment to Family Planning 2020." YouTube. FP2020, 30 Jan. 2014. Web. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3kmJDGxwfY>>

planning funds or reform reproductive health laws. Erratic donor support for family planning was not enough to make a significant impact.

The 2012 London Summit on Family Planning reignited the spark in the global family planning community and revived family planning advocacy in the DRC. In late 2013, the Prime Minister sent letters to the Ministers of Health, Finance, and Planning, explaining the stakes and challenges of demographic growth in the DRC. The new level of understanding among ministries resulted in the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, and Prime Minister producing the national budget for family planning.

SMART Strategy

Building on the momentum, Advance Family Planning (AFP) and Tulane University first partnered in the DRC to provide advocacy guidance to assist the government's intention of making a formal FP2020 commitment and support the development of the National Strategic Plan for Family Planning, *Planification Familiale: Plan stratégique national à vision multisectorielle: 2014-2020*. Tulane University communicated to stakeholders the value of publicly committing to family planning at ICFP 2013.

AFP and Tulane University partners facilitated a workshop with approximately 25 family planning stakeholders in July 2013 using AFP's SMART advocacy approach to develop an evidence-based advocacy strategy. Participants included representatives of the CTMP; United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); United States Agency for International Development (USAID); faith-based organizations and other non-governmental organizations; the National Program on Reproductive Health (PNSR); and Ministries of Public Health, Gender, and Planning.

Malonga Miatudila, Tulane University consultant, noted, "The SMART tool galvanized everyone and made them speak the same language." Together, the group identified President Joseph Kabila Kabange as the key decisionmaker for launching the DRC's family planning aims. In order to justify the content of the

commitment, the stakeholders referred to President Kabila's 2011 re-election pledge to make the DRC an emerging country by 2030,⁵ translating it in terms of family planning needs. Drawing from demographic research, the stakeholders recommended a realistic goal in line with President Kabila's vision—to increase the country's CPR to at least 19% by 2020.

Many stakeholders helped draft the DRC commitment and struck a balance between the call for services that were needed in the country (such as nationwide family planning coverage and vaccination programs) and what the government could realistically accomplish. Once key stakeholders approved the final draft of

EXCERPTS FROM MINISTERS' CORRESPONDENCE

The Prime Minister wrote on July 29, 2013:

"The adoption by the State of the Program to manage demographic growth, particularly its section on 'family planning and fertility,' is imperative. Indeed because it is based on voluntary use by families and not on a coercive approach."

Source:

Matata Ponyo Mapon, Prime Minister. "Stakes and Challenges of Demographic Growth in the DRC." Letter to Minister of Health. 29 July 2013. MS. DRC, n.p.

The Minister of Finance responded on August 21, 2013:

"I welcome your recommendation addressed to the Minister of Public Health, to integrate in his roadmap for 2012-2016 three essential strategies for family planning and management of fertility...I hereby assure you that we will allocate significant funding to these essential strategies within the framework of budgetary provisions for this administration and the 2014 budget."

Sources:

Minister of Finance, Daniel Mukoko Samba. "The Stakes and Challenges of Demographic Growth in the DRC – Notice of Receipt." Letter to Prime Minister. 21 Aug. 2013. MS. DRC, n.p.



the commitment, it required endorsement from the highest level of government.

The document first passed from PNSR to the Secretary General of the Ministry of Health, to the Minister of Health, then the Prime Minister, who sent it to the Office of the President. This extensive, formal process was paired with the family planning community's continued advocacy among its networks. Two hours before the formal declaration at ICFP 2013 in Addis Ababa, DRC government representatives were still in discussions with the office of the Prime Minister to ensure agreement on the key points. It culminated with a strong commitment to family planning delivered on behalf of the government by Mr. Dieudonné Kwete Shamantshiey, Health Advisor to the Prime Minister.

Lessons Learned

- **Involve all key stakeholders to be a part of the advocacy process from the beginning:** This type of effort cannot be the work of one organization. The process must be inclusive, taking each stakeholder's view into account. This encourages everyone's willingness to identify a solution to a problem and builds a sense of ownership. Exposing stakeholders to the same strategic thinking helps unify their outlook.
- **Explore alternate routes:** Between the July 2013 workshop and ICFP in November 2013, time was limited for presenting, negotiating, and approving the proposed statistics, language, and objectives for the commitment. During the approval process, AFP and Tulane University found it important to use both formal, bureaucratic processes and informal, personal networks. When a formal process encountered a roadblock—such as moving a document up the government chain, delays in obtaining authorities' feedback, or limited funding—they identified alternate connections or resources they could mobilize to advance the process.
- **Prepare for changes in the landscape:** ICFP 2013 was held at a time of political shifts in the DRC; it



was unclear as to which government leaders would be able to attend the conference or announce the commitment until the last minute. However, the July 2013 workshop had helped identify alternative plans. In the end, the stakeholders were pleased to have the high level support of Mr. Kwete.

Next Steps

Since the commitment, the government of the DRC launched its National Strategic Plan for Family Planning (2014-2020) in Kinshasa in February 2014. The plan lays out the government's intentions to budget for contraceptives and increase access to a range of modern methods for women. In the second year of their partnership, Tulane University and AFP continue to work closely with local partners to support the achievement of the ambitious goals set by the strategic plan and follow-through on the FP2020 commitment to allocate funds to contraceptive commodities.

References

¹ Interview with Dieudonné Kwete, Advisor to Prime Minister of the DRC (French W/ English Subtitles). YouTube. Bill & Melinda

Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health, 16 Oct. 2014. Web. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3kmJDGxwFY>>

² "Country Data." Family Planning in the DRC. Tulane University School of Public Health, n.d. Web. <<http://familyplanning-drc.net/country-data.php>>

³ "Family Planning History in the DRC." Family Planning in the DRC. Tulane University School of Public Health, n.d. Web. <<http://familyplanning-drc.net/family-planning-history-in-the-drc.php>>

⁴ Congo Democratic Republic: DHS, 2013-14 – Final Report. Rep. Ministère Du Plan Et Suivi De La Mise En Oeuvre De La Révolution De La Modernité, Ministère De La Santé Publique, Kinshasa, République Démocratique Du Congo, Et MEASURE DHS, ICF International, Rockville, Maryland, USA. Sept. 2014. <<http://dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-FR300-DHS-Final-Reports.cfm>>

⁵ "Kabila Makes Re-Election Pitch in Speech to the Nation." Congo Planet. ACP, 15 Sept. 2011. Web. <<http://www.congoplanet.com/news/1881/joseph-kabila-speech-reelection-pitch-dr-congo-november-election.jsp>>

⁶ "The DRC's Commitment to Family Planning 2020." YouTube. FP2020, 30 Jan. 2014. Web. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3kmJDGxwFY>>

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Advance Family Planning (AFP) aims to increase the financial investment and political commitment needed to ensure access to quality family planning through evidence-based advocacy. An initiative of the Bill & Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health with the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, AFP works to achieve the goals of the FP2020 initiative: to enable women and girls in some of the world's poorest countries to use contraceptive information, services and supplies, without coercion or discrimination.

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