

Power of Regional Solidarity to Foster South-South Cooperation

KENYA'S PARTICIPATION IN THE 15TH EAST AFRICA REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH NETWORK (EARHN) MEETING

Kenya participated in the 15th East Africa Reproductive Health Network (EARHN) Coordination Meeting held in Kigali, Rwanda, alongside six other Eastern Africa countries—Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. This high-level forum which took place at Park Inn by Radisson, Kigali, Rwanda from 24-25 June, 2025 brought together over 50 stakeholders, including senior government officials, civil society leaders, technical experts, and development partners, united by a common goal: to accelerate the unfinished agenda of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and attain Universal Health Coverage (UHC) through South-South collaboration.

Kenya's delegation comprised representatives from government institutions, technical officers, and civil society organizations committed to advancing family planning and reproductive health (FP/RH) as a cornerstone of national development. The team included; Dr. Rose Oronje (AFIDEP), Mr. Elijah Kinari (State Department for Economic Planning), Dr. Edward Serem (MOH, RH), Irene Muhunzu (NCPD), Dr. Margret Lubaale (HENNET), Halima Yusuf (MOH, Health Financing), Salome Njiri (Jhpiego). They shared impactful experiences, innovative initiatives, and lessons learned while gaining insights from regional peers to strengthen policy and program implementation back home.

Key Highlights and Strategic Insights

1. **Population as a Strategic Asset:** Participants reaffirmed the demographic dividend potential in Eastern Africa. Consensus was built on the need to harness the youth potential through education, skills development, economic empowerment and governance to realize the demographic dividend.
2. **Advancing UHC Through FP/RH:** Countries reported expanded access to SRH services in the past two years, reaffirming FP/RH as a gateway to Universal Health Coverage.
3. **Responding to Declining Donor Funding:** The meeting underscored the urgent need for data-driven decision-making and increased domestic budget allocations to sustain and scale FP/RH programs. Evidence-based advocacy emerged as a powerful tool to influence policy and financing decisions at both national and regional levels.
4. **Efficiency and Innovation in Health Financing:** AFIDEP's Advance Domestic Health Financing (ADHF) project revealed alarming inefficiencies, with 20-40% of health resources lost due to wastage. The project proposed adoption of digital innovations—including AI, telemedicine, drones, and automated procurement systems—and

establishment of Health Innovation Funds to enhance service delivery and resource efficiency.

5. Diversifying Financing Mechanisms: Delegates explored bold ideas to attract private sector investment in health. Proposals included partnerships with telecommunications, transportation companies (such as airlines) and corporations to contribute their airtime, airfare and incentives to the health sector.

6. Strengthening EARHN's Strategic Role: EARHN was urged to position FP/RH financing as part of broader development efforts such as poverty reduction and gender equity. Member states committed to revitalizing EARHN country chapters to mobilize cross-sectoral support and accountability.

7. Review of 2024 Action Plans: Member states presented progress made since the 14th EARHN meeting in Dar es Salaam.

Notable achievements included:

- 1) Enhanced financial management systems
- 2) Increased domestic financing via insurance schemes and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)
- 3) Improved stakeholder coordination and stronger advocacy frameworks
- 4) Expansion of digital solutions in FP/RH programming

Persistent challenges included:

- 1) Over-reliance on donor support
- 2) Weak governance and accountability structures
- 3) Deep-rooted socio-cultural barriers to FP/RH service uptake

5. Way Forward: Country-Specific Action Plans

Participants developed national action plans tailored to their national priorities to be implemented over the next 12 months. These plans will focus on improving access to FP/RH services, especially for adolescents and youth, using innovative, cost-effective, and inclusive strategies.

6. Emerging Opportunity: AUDA-NEPAD/PPD ARO Call for Proposals

AUDA-NEPAD, in partnership with Partners in Population and Development (PPD) ARO, announced an upcoming call for proposals in September 2025 aimed at harnessing the demographic dividend by scaling up access to adolescent and youth SRH services. Kenya and other member states were encouraged to prepare competitive submissions to attract regional funding and technical support.

7. EARHN Secretariat will send out announcement for countries to express interest in Chairing the EARHN and hosting the next 16th EARHN meeting.

8. Kenya reaffirmed its leadership and commitment to regional collaboration, and advancing FP/RH as a development accelerator. The strategic lessons, partnerships, and action plans developed will serve as a springboard for sustained progress in aligning national priorities with continental and global population and health agendas



