



Stories of change from the HPAF grantees

Engaging in health policy processes in Kenya

“Coordination of civil society is paramount: one message should be communicated by all.” HERAF

Organization: Health Rights Advocacy Forum (HERAF)

A Health Policy Action Fund (HPAF) grant in 2012 supported HERAF to empower civil society organizations (CSOs) and citizens to understand proposed health legislations and engage with the government and development partners on health policy issues. It supported advocacy for the development and implementation of health sector legislation, policies and guidelines towards the realization of a devolved health system in Kenya.

The HPAF grant supported HERAF to:

- Identify and analyze proposed draft legislation, policies, standards and guidelines and identify issues for advocacy
- Organize and facilitate discussion forums
- Make presentations in forums, meetings and workshops, and communicate through the HERAF website
- Provide leadership and coordinate CSOs in advocacy.



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Highlights of the grant's outcomes

HERAF reports that:

- More CSOs are able to participate in health policy discussions, with informed views about health-related aspects in the Kenyan Constitution, health policy frameworks and the new Health Bill. Specifically, HERAF coordinated over 30 CSOs and health stakeholders to participate in the development of the draft Kenya Health Policy 2014–2030; the Health Bill, 2014; and the Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Bill, 2014.
- The government, including the Ministry of Health, is more open in sharing information and calling for inputs from civil society. For example, in April 2014, HERAF received a request from the Ministry of Health to provide comments and inputs into the final draft of the health bill. The Ministry of Health formally recognized HERAF as one of the key stakeholders to input into the bill.
- Improved partnerships and collaboration now exist between government, CSOs and other development partners to develop health policies. Joint forums and pooling of resources are more common. For example, advocacy forums with CSOs, government and development partners now encourage multi-stakeholder discussion.
- There are more proactive enquiries and requests by CSO members who are interested in participating in the ongoing processes on the Kenya Health Policy 2014–2030, the Health Bill, 2014; and the Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Bill, 2014. The enquiries are made through emails, face-to face meetings, public forums, and the media.

HERAF's lessons learnt

- Partnership with government is the foundation for success as policy development and enactment is one of their core mandates. There is a need to work closely with key government bodies that are tasked to oversee the implementation of the Constitution.
- Coordinated input to the proposed policies is essential. Policy makers and, more specifically, the government institutions take issues raised by CSOs seriously when they speak with a common voice. It is therefore necessary for health CSOs to unite so they are able to effectively and efficiently engage in advocacy to influence the development and implementation of health policies and regulations.
- Meaningful participation or engagement with government depends on approaches put in place by civil society. CSOs should be focused, vigilant and committed to working together to engage with the government in developing policies. The engagement should be continuous until such processes are complete to avoid losing momentum and gains made.
- Donor support to policy advocacy initiatives should not be one-stop or rigid, as the process may take longer than planned and flexibility may be required to engage effectively with the emerging advocacy needs and opportunities.

HERAF and health policy dialogue

The pronouncement of Kenya's Constitution marked a significant milestone in the nation's history. For the first time, social and economic rights including the right to health were provided for and guaranteed in the Constitution. In order to ensure a framework for the implementation of the Constitution in the health sector, the Ministry of Health began to develop the Kenya Health Policy Framework and the Health Bill to guide the implantation of health functions both at national and county levels. The two policy and legal documents are crucial for the transition to a devolved health system in Kenya and need the buy-in of all stakeholders including CSOs. They formed the basis for HERAF's policy dialogue initiatives.

In addition to policy dialogue, HERAF, through the support of the HPAF grant, has continued to empower CSOs to better understand health-related provisions of the Constitution, the contents of the Kenya Health Policy Framework and the Health Bill, including their implications on the health sector. This was achieved by creating platforms such as dialogue forums and workshops to disseminate and discuss the Constitution, proposed health policy and legislative bills. Social media including the website, Facebook and Twitter were useful in complementing physical forums as they proved easy to communicate in a simple and easy-to-understand way to other CSOs. All this has enabled CSOs to engage health sector stakeholders including the county and national governments, development partners, the Constitution Implementation Commission and other stakeholders by critiquing draft health policy and bills, making inputs, proposals and recommendations.

About HERAF

HERAF is a non-governmental organization that works through strategic partners to advocate for health as a fundamental human right in Kenya. HERAF aims to empower Kenyans to enjoy the right to health through increased human rights awareness, evidence-based policy advocacy, strengthening citizens' participation in health sector governance, and budgeting processes.

About the Health Policy Action Fund (HPAF)

HPAF provides grants to southern CSOs, networks and coalitions in IHP+ partner countries to help them become more effectively engaged in national health policy processes. Twenty-three grants were issued through two rounds of funding in 2010 and 2012. IHP+ is an initiative to improve development cooperation in health. Governments and development partners sign a compact and make commitments to change the way they work together, in order to achieve better health outcomes.

IHP+ is a group of development partners, governments and civil society organizations committed to improving the health of citizens in developing countries by improving development cooperation in health.