

# Health Action International's Role in the Health Systems Advocacy Partnership

Health Action International (HAI) is a member of the Health Systems Advocacy (HSA) Partnership with Amref Health Africa, the African Centre for Global Health and Social Transformation, Wemos and the Dutch Ministry for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation. The goal of the Partnership's five-year programme, launched in 2016, is to support civil society organisations in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia to advocate for sound government policies that strengthen health systems and improve the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) of citizens.



## HAI's Work in the HSA Partnership

### *Building the Evidence Base on Sexual & Reproductive Health Commodities*

HAI is using its research expertise to build an evidence base on access to SRH commodities in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia. With help from our in-country partners<sup>1</sup>—and using a modified version of our gold-standard methodology—HAI is measuring the price, availability and affordability of more than 30 SRH commodities, as well as perceived barriers to accessing them. The SRH commodities under study consist of a selection of medicines and devices recommended for use by the World Health Organization and United Nations.

Following extensive training sessions led by HAI, in-country data collectors are visiting private, public and mission healthcare facilities across Uganda, Kenya, Zambia and Tanzania to collect this data. During their visits, data collectors are also interviewing facility representatives to determine what they believe are the key challenges to providing SRH commodities to patients, as well as ways to improve access. In addition, facility representatives are being asked if clients are reluctant to access SRH commodities and, if so, how the taboo can be tackled.

HAI and its in-country teams of data collectors will repeat the surveys annually to monitor improvements to access over time.

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<sup>1</sup> Our in-country partners are the Medicines Transparency Alliance (MeTA) Uganda (hosted by HEPS Uganda – [www.heps.or.ug](http://www.heps.or.ug)); MeTA Kenya ([www.facebook.com/MeTAKenya](http://www.facebook.com/MeTAKenya)); and MeTA Zambia ([www.metazambia.org](http://www.metazambia.org)). Partner selection in Tanzania is currently underway.

***Putting Our Research to Use: Improving Health Systems Policies & Practices***

Our research results are critical for understanding the scope and causes of access barriers for SRH commodities. Our in-country partners are using the data and conclusions. Each partner has established a multi-stakeholder platform, which consists of a civil society secretariat and a number of representatives from the public, private and civil society sectors. By discussing the research evidence and sector-specific challenges about the medicines supply chain, joint policy solutions are being developed. This process helps ensure that policies and practices across the medicines supply chain are in the best interest of improving access to, and the rational use of, SRH commodities.

***Building Civil Society Capacity in Advocacy***

They key to success for the HSA Partnership is developing leadership from within—equipping our in-country partners with the knowledge and tools they need to hold duty bearers to account. While conducting our research, HAI is therefore simultaneously strengthening the capacity of our in-country partners to advocate for improved access to SRH commodities. In addition to training data collectors as part of our research, we hold regular workshops and meetings to share our expertise in advocacy planning, implementation and evaluation. This enhances partners' abilities to drive awareness about the need for improved access to SRH commodities in health systems, and garner support for policies and practices that improve access at national, regional and international levels.

Our partners will go on to provide other civil society organisations in their countries with similar training and expertise. This will result in enhanced leadership and managerial capacity of health stewards at all levels.

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