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**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**

Engaging the Poor in Family Planning as a Poverty-Reduction Strategy

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The EQUITY Approach to FP/RH Access

Engaging and empowering the poor

Quantifying the level of inequality in healthcare use and health status

Understanding the barriers to access

Integrating equity goals and approaches in policies, plans, & agendas

Targeting resources and efforts to the poor

Yielding public-private partnerships for equity

Why the EQUITY Approach?

Despite poverty-reduction initiatives in many developing countries, poverty remains high and inequalities are growing.

**Two
Underlying
Reasons**



Failure to Engage
the Poor

Lack of Consideration
of Population Factors

Why Engage the Poor?

- Poverty is a multi-dimensional concept, includes not only meager income and low health status, but also voicelessness.
- Policy, program, and implementation decisions affecting the poor should be made *with* the poor, not *for* the poor.
- Engagement is empowering.
- Engagement fosters transparency and feedback among parties involved in the dialogue, helping to overcome barriers.
- Ownership can lead to more effective and sustainable development efforts.

Why Consider Population Growth in Poverty-Reduction Efforts?

The poorest tend to have

- Large families
- Early pregnancy
- Short birth interval
- High unmet need for family planning



Health impacts: Mothers and children at higher risk for illness or death

Education impacts: Children from large families and pregnant young girls more likely to have low educational attainment

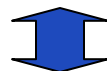
Economic well-being: More likely to live and stay in poverty

Engaging the Poor in Policy Formulation and Implementation

Problem Identification

- Understand the Problem
- Determine Underlying Factors

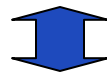
Conduct FGDs
Conduct Exit Interviews
Identify Barriers to Access



Policy Formulation

- Design Policy Options
- Develop Action Plan
- Prepare Financial Plan

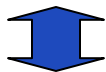
Conduct FGDs
Involve in Planning Committees
Organize Community-level Forums
Advocate for Policy Approval



Policy Implementation

- Allocate Resources
- Remove Operational Barriers
- Mobilize Action

Appoint
Community-based Mobilizers
Involve NGOs representing
the poor as implementers



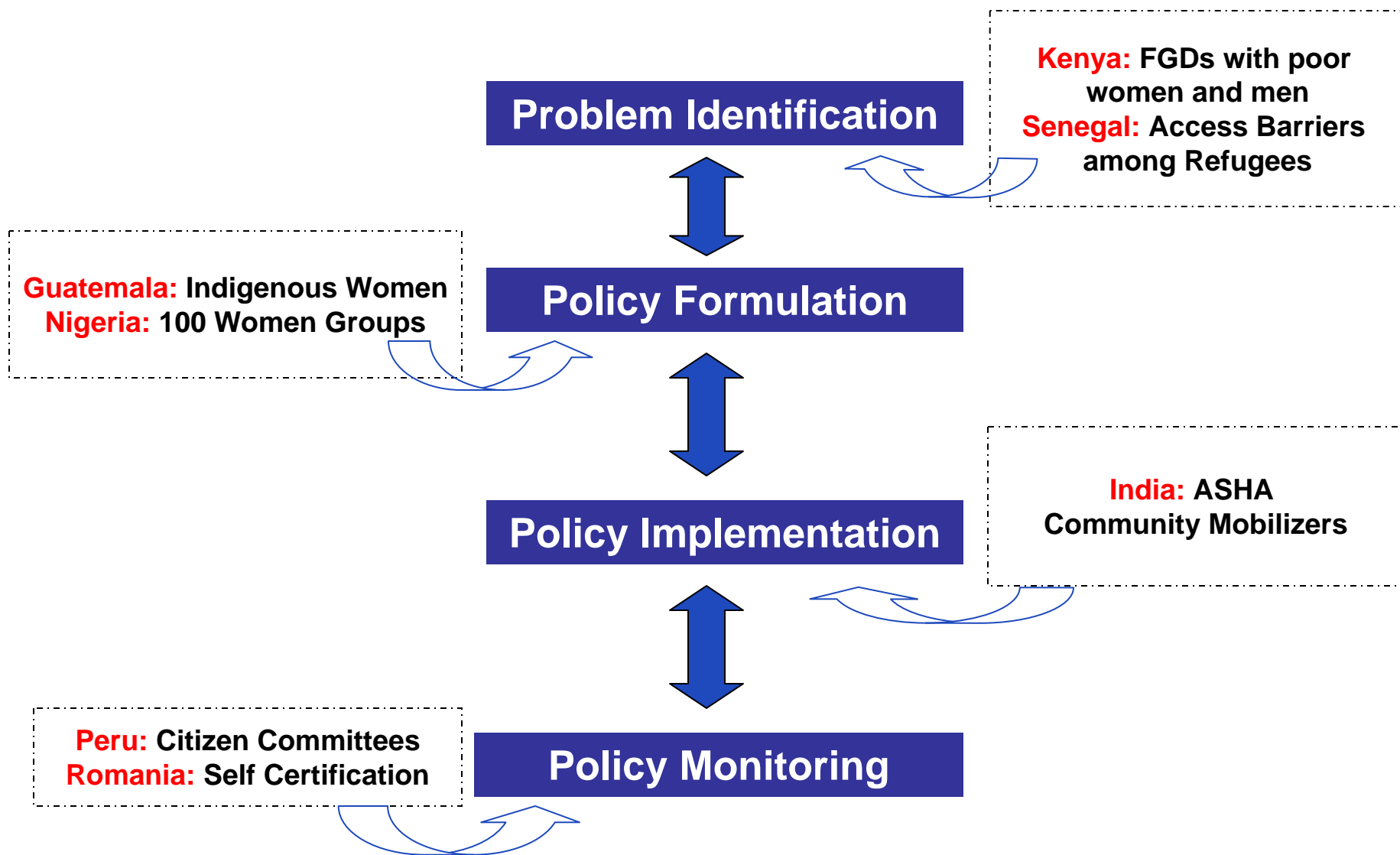
Policy Monitoring

- Design Monitoring/Evaluation System
- Establish Accountability
- Measure impact

Watchdog role
Conduct Exit Interviews



Engaging the Poor in Policy Formulation and Implementation: Country Case Studies





1. Problem Identification: Kenya

- **Issue:** High level of inequality in use of family planning services and CPR
- **Engagement:** Organized FGDs with poor women and men to identify barriers, followed by dialogue between the poor and policymakers
- **Outcome:** National RH Strategy includes specific interventions to improve access among the poor and reduce inequalities

2. Policy Formulation: Guatemala



- **Issue:** High TFR (6.1) and unmet FP need (39%) among indigenous, Mayan women
- **Engagement:** NGOs representing indigenous women identified problems/barriers to access, helped design solutions, and advocated for policy change
- **Outcome:** National – Informed development of the National FP Strategic Plan and MOH operational guidelines; Local – districts implement reforms

3. Policy Implementation: India



- **Issue:** Lack of access to and uptake of reproductive and child health services in rural areas
- **Engagement:** Rural women from poor communities to serve as ASHAs (accredited social health activists)
 - ASHA Plus in Uttarakhand (adapted national program, greater flexibility, additional performance incentives)
- **Outcome:** Significant increases in institutional delivery, ANC visits, etc.; ASHA Plus to be scaled up statewide

“Earlier we were only housewives and non-existent. This work provides us with freedom and opportunity to move out of the house and be heard respectfully by others.”

4. Policy Monitoring: Peru



- **Issue:** Allegations of violation of patients' rights, especially in rural and remote areas
- **Engagement:** Under the National Network for Promotion of Women, grassroots organizations—rural women, low-income, indigenous groups—formed citizen surveillance committees
- **Outcome:** Several results at the local level, expansion of the approach to different regions

Conclusion

- Efforts to engage the poor pay off
- Policies and programs that combine poverty-reduction and family planning initiatives, as well as engage the poor, can increase the effects of both initiatives
- Poor need to be regarded as experts in their own right
- Policies that involve the poor are better-suited to their needs, have greater ownership, and are more likely to be sustainable



It can be done...

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Thank you!

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