STATE OF MEDICAL ABORTION SERVICES IN KENYA: VIEWS OF POLICY MAKERS

H. Birungi¹, W. Liambila ¹, F. Obare¹, J. Olielo¹, W. Onyango-Ouma²

¹. Population Council, Nairobi, Kenya
². University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya

Background: In 2010, Kenya adopted a new constitution, which provides a window for strengthening the provision of abortion services including medical abortion. However, little is known about the progress made to date regarding the nature of policies, programmes and strategic plans that have since been put in place by various organizations to improve the provision of medical abortion services. This paper documents the views of various policy makers and also highlights the progress to date and the next steps.

Methods: A total 19 Key informant interviews (KII) were conducted between April and June 2013. The discussion guide for KII covered areas such as the abortion environment, policies, progress made and opportunities for addressing unsafe abortions in Kenya, challenges, interventions, quality of care, sensitivity around abortion; media coverage and availability of drugs.

Findings: The 2010 new constitution has provided a new legal framework which has permitted abortion under certain circumstances. Safe abortion services are now more available than before. Peoples’ perceptions, attitudes and beliefs regarding abortion are changing. However, negative attitudes and beliefs still persist among health providers, police; judiciary as well as members of the public. There is still some apprehension to provide medical abortion services in the public sector facilities.

Implications: While a lot of progress has been made in addressing unsafe abortion in Kenya, challenges such as stigma, inadequate number of trained health providers, and inadequate supply of commodities still remain. Future interventions should target these gaps.