

Charter

The Consortium for Research on Unsafe Abortion in Africa

Introduction

In the past decade, a growing number of scholars, practitioners, and stakeholders have turned their attention to research on unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion in Africa. The work to date has helped to increase knowledge on the two issues and has facilitated changes in policies and programs. Despite these advances, it has also highlighted major knowledge gaps and policy needs.

In September 2006, the Consortium for Research on Unsafe Abortion in Africa, hereafter referred to as the Consortium, was formally launched to address these needs. The following organizations adopted a Memorandum of Understanding at that time: the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), Ethiopian Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ESOG), Guttmacher Institute, Ipas, Reproductive Health Research Unit (RHRU) at the University of Witwatersrand, and Women's Health and Action Research Centre (WHARC). RHRU withdrew active participation in October 2008 due to workload demands. Therefore, there are now five Founding Members: APHRC, ESOG, Guttmacher Institute, Ipas, and WHARC.

Purpose

The Consortium will focus on research on the African continent.

The overarching goals of the Consortium are to: 1. improve understanding of the prevalence, causes and consequences of unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion; 2. provide evidence to support actions to reduce unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion; and 3. increase women's access to high quality, comprehensive, safe abortion care, within the limits of the law, and post-abortion care. The Consortium will foster high-quality policy and program-relevant research on unwanted pregnancy and abortion in selected countries, disseminate scientific findings broadly, support capacity building, and build a network of researchers to facilitate sharing of skills and information.

Effective dates

5 December 2008 - 5 December 2013

Applicability

Signatories agree that this Charter is valid to 5 December 2013. This Charter provides guidance, principles and operating procedures for the Consortium and represents a good faith effort among signatories. Organizations will participate in the Consortium in accordance with their broader programs of work, within the limitations of donor agreements and funding available (to both individual members and the Consortium as a whole), and in keeping with the policies of the individual organizations.

Mission

- Through partnerships involving two or more Members, to jointly develop and implement a broad program of original and innovative research in multiple countries representing a range of socioeconomic and legal conditions relative to unwanted pregnancy and abortion and to support a program of secondary analysis in multiple countries where data are available.
- To communicate existing and new research findings for policy and program impact at local, national, and international levels by involving key stakeholders and disseminating study results through varied publications and forums.
- To foster technical exchange and build capacity for high quality research and effective communications among a network of researchers by integrating capacity-building into each research activity, and by sharing findings, bibliographies, study protocols and instruments, and ongoing work on a Consortium website and at periodic meetings involving the broader network of researchers working on abortion issues.

Membership

Founding Members are:

- African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), based in Kenya
- Ethiopian Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ESOG), based in Ethiopia
- Guttmacher Institute, based in US
- Ipas, based in US with 5 African offices
- Women's Health and Action Research Centre (WHARC), based in Nigeria

Founding Members are entitled to representation on the Steering Committee and submission of research proposals for funding by the Consortium.

Associate Members consist of other national or international research organizations working in Africa and directly involved in funded Consortium research activities. Founding Members may propose potential Associate Members to the Consortium, specifying their

role. New associate membership is subject to approval by the Steering Committee. Associate Members are entitled to recognition in Consortium publications and materials, and may qualify for funding for participation at select Consortium events.

Organization and management

The Consortium will be organized into three levels: Founding Members, Associate Members, and the broader research network. The broader research network includes organizations and individuals that are not either Founding or Associate Members. The Founding Members agree to consider appointing an informal advisory group in the future, consisting of individuals or institutions that are in a position to support Consortium activities in various ways.

The Steering committee is comprised of one representative from each Founding Member and will vote on Consortium documents and processes. Steering committee members each receive one vote. Each Founding Member will choose their own representative to the Steering Committee, and each Founding Member reserves the right to change their Steering Committee member at any time.

Ipas will undertake the management of the Consortium.

Functions and responsibilities

The Consortium as a whole is responsible for conducting high-quality research on unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion in Africa.

- Research projects implemented with Consortium funding are decided upon by the Steering Committee (through phone and email communications or at the annual meeting). Projects will be undertaken with significant involvement of at least two organizations, either two Founding Members or one Founding and one Associate Member. At least one organization must be Africa-based.
- All research is to have a well-defined policy or program focus.
- The priority themes of Consortium research include the following:
 - Measurement of the magnitude of unsafe abortion and morbidity and mortality arising from unsafe abortion
 - Analysis of the financial and other costs of unsafe abortion to health systems and to women and their families
 - Assessment of the cost and feasibility of medical abortion methods for safe, early abortions, as allowed by law
 - Measurement and examination of women's experiences with unwanted pregnancy
 - Examination of linkages between unwanted pregnancy and abortion, especially among HIV-positive women

- Examination of knowledge, attitudes, and practices of influential stakeholders toward unwanted pregnancy and abortion
- Operations research to improve availability and access of abortion care
- An adequate portion of the Consortium's funding is to be reserved for communicating research findings to inform policy, program and practice. External communication will be conducted in collaboration with local, regional, and international colleagues and organizations.
- Consortium grants may be awarded to any Member (who would then have financial responsibilities for managing and reporting on the grant), including any subcontracts to one or more additional partners who may or may not be Consortium Members.

The following decisions need to be approved by the entire Steering Committee:

- Charter adoption
- Charter amendments
- Additional Steering Committee members

The following decisions need to be approved by at least three Steering Committee members:

- Associate Memberships, in accordance with the fundamental principle that the majority of Consortium Associate Members should be based on the African continent
- Review and approval of:
 - annual work plan
 - Consortium research projects based on submitted concept papers
 - external communications (excluding the Consortium website)
 - the use of Consortium name on documents and presentations

Founding Members are responsible for the following:

- Participation at annual meeting
- Responding to requests for comments and feedback from other members, as feasible
- Actively fundraising for Consortium research projects and other activities, either as individual organizations, or in conjunction with other Founding and/or Associate Members. Members will support each other in identifying potential donors, visiting donors, and preparing and reviewing proposals, as requested.
- Founding Members receiving funding for the Consortium are responsible for management and donor reporting of that funding.
- All members in the Consortium may independently apply for funds to do work on abortion in Africa. However, members agree to notify each other at an early stage if they will be submitting a research proposal on this topic not under the Consortium's funding. Other Consortium members may provide technical input as requested.

- Preparing and submitted quarterly updates and an annual report on their Consortium activities to Ipas.

Ipas is responsible for the following:

- Oversight of Consortium communication and administrative functions, including:
 - Coordination of annual meeting, ideally coinciding with other regional or international research meetings. The annual meeting can be in person or virtual.
 - Draft annual work plan for revision and approval by the Steering Committee at annual meeting
- Donor reporting and grant management for DFID grant and other funding obtained by Ipas
 - Responsible for contractual obligations and fiscal management of the DFID grant funds, including subcontracts with Consortium Members and other organizations
 - Coordination of communication with current and future donors for Consortium work funding to Ipas
 - Underwriting certain joint Consortium activities, such as the Consortium website
- Facilitating proposal development and study plans by Consortium members
- Distribution of a quarterly Consortium update to Founding and Associate members

Signatories:

African Population and Health Research Center
Steering Committee Member: Chimaroake Izugbara

Ethiopian Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
President:
Steering Committee Member: Ahmed

Guttmacher Institute
Steering Committee Member: Susheela Singh

Ipas
Steering Committee Member: Brooke Levandowski

Women's Health and Action Research Centre
Steering Committee Member: Friday Okonofua