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RESOLVE AWARD INNOVATION PROFILE

The Global Leaders Council for Reproductive Health
Presents the **2014 Resolve Award Special Mention for Policy
Development to:**

AFGHANISTAN



Photo by Farzana Wahidy, Marie Stopes International

Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health has prioritized reproductive, maternal and child health by increasing access to a range of family planning methods, introducing education on reproductive health issues in schools, and working with the religious community to counter stigma on family planning.

Challenges

The majority of the 5.7 million Afghan women of reproductive age do not have adequate access to reproductive services, information and supplies. Limited access is compounded by poor quality services facilities and few qualified female medical staff.

Policy Innovations

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has demonstrated leadership in advancing the issue of reproductive health for Afghanistan's women. The MoPH created a Reproductive Health Directorate within the Ministry, and developed the Reproductive Health Strategy and Policy (2012-2016), which was endorsed by the Afghan government. It has also supported the establishment a cross-party Reproductive Health Caucus in Afghanistan's Parliament, which is working to build understanding and commitment to reproductive health issues across government.

Collaboration among the MoPH and key allies has flourished under the leadership of Dr. Suraya Dalil, Minister of Health. Working alongside the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Drug Registration Board and parliamentarians, has yielded significant advancements:

- Reproductive health curricula in schools
- Fatwa stating that abortion should be allowed when a woman's life is at risk
- Improved range of family planning methods

Results

The Ministry of Public Health has cultivated support from parliamentarians for a robust policy framework that has advanced maternal and reproductive health goals while challenging negative assumptions about family planning:

- 41 percent increase in clients referred to Marie Stopes International (MSI) clinics since 2009
- Rise from 10 percent to 20 percent of married women using modern contraceptive methods
- 33 percent increase in delivery assisted by skilled birth attendants
- Development and implementation of groundbreaking post-abortion care guidelines for health care providers
- Training 1,500 mullahs since 2009 (undertaken by MSI) to serve as community-level champions for reproductive health



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