A pregnant woman whose health status is being checked by a doctor.

By James Addy

Realising Rights Consortium holds meeting

REALISING Rights Consortium, a group of international non-governmental organisations involved in improving sexual and reproductive health in poor and vulnerable populations has held its annual meeting in Accra.

The meeting hosted by a member, INDEPTH Network, a Health, Demographic research and surveillance NGO with headquarters in Accra was attended by about 25 institutional representatives from organisations such as the School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London, Institute of Reproductive Studies, Braac School of Public Health, African Population and Health Research Centre in Nairobi, Kenya and Engender Health.

The meeting explored ways of building national capacities to put sexual and reproductive health rights onto policy agenda and to contribute to the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals.

Others were the need to engage with policy makers, civil servants and national advocacy groups and also to monitor and track the impact of the consortium work.

The rest were developing health systems and new drugs and vaccines for disease that affect the poor, reducing maternal and child deaths and malnutrition as well as ensuring that research into sexual and reproductive health family planning and unsafe abortion is not held back by lack of international funding.

Dr Ayaga Bawah, Deputy Executive Director of INDEPTH Network said there is the urgent need for policy makers to focus attention on sexual and reproductive health needs of their people.

He said there is very little knowledge especially in developing countries about reproductive health for people to demand service.

Dr Bawah said not only the uninformed has that challenge but also service providers.

He said for instance that many people still do not think that when a woman's health is threatened reproductive services could be offered.

Dr Bawah said the Realising Rights Consortium meeting examined reproductive health laws in various parts of the world and also international conventions.

He said the Consortium helped in providing research data to assist in drafting the paper on the Domestic Violence Bill to Ghana's parliament before the passage.

Dr Bawah said a lot of work was done on maternal mortality analysis by providing empirical evidence for policy-making.

The Consortium, Dr Bawah said have been working in countries such as Ghana, Bangladeshi, Kenya and Uganda.

Ms Kate Hawkins, a communication officer with the forum said there was the need for news about research and policy briefings to be presented in accessible formats.

She said there should also be more intensive and predictable relationships with international agencies such as WHO and UNFPA.

Ms Hawkins said the Consortium should explore the possibility of linking more with civil society and civil servants.

She said internal communications should be improved and more funds raised for communications.

Nana Oye Lithur, an Advisor to the Consortium said the management of women's sexual and reproductive health poses a great challenge to humanity and governments should set aside adequate fund for studies that would inform policy-making.

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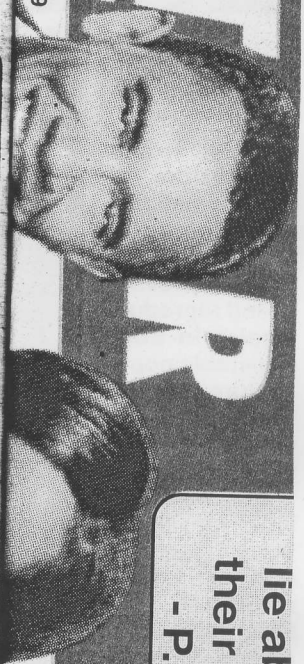

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