

PROBLEM:

APHRC's mission is to promote the wellbeing of Africans through policy-relevant research. They identified the mass media as a target audience for their work because they have the power to inform and shape opinions, attitudes, and therefore reduce stigma and they have a wide reach with both the general public and policymakers. They worked to increase the quantity and quality of reporting on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

ACTION:

APHRC used three strategies: 1) building the media's capacity to use research and report on sexual and reproductive health in an informed manner; 2) working with them as intermediaries in communicating research; and 3) enhancing their interest in and motivation for reporting.

- **Incentivising engagement.** Awards of excellence - Sexuality journalism award of excellence and the 5th African Population Conference Journalists' Competition.
- **Building capacity.** Two-way process - building capacity of media representatives to use evidence and of researchers to simplify research evidence. Provide advice to the script writers of the TV drama Makutano Junction which has worked to address stigma associated with sexual and reproductive health related issues and provides information on services. Sensitization workshops for journalists on sexual and reproductive health issues, regular and informal. Training sessions run by media professionals from the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation radio and the *Daily Nation* newspaper for APHRC researchers on how to work effectively with journalists and media houses.
- **Networking.** Organising regular informal meetings and field visits for journalists. Working through already existing networks KUJ and MESHA. Building respect and trust between journalists and researchers.

RESULTS?

The strategy led to two-way learning and engagement which enhanced the capacity, confidence and motivation of researchers to engage with journalists and vice-versa. As a result there was increased coverage of APHRC's research and increased demand for APHRC's work by journalists. Their awards increased reporting and front page features. Whilst their work with journalists has been successful in raising awareness of SRHR issues, there remain instances where APHRC's research is misrepresented by journalists pointing to the need for continued capacity building of journalists on understanding and communicating research findings.

MAIN LEARNING:

- Working with professional networks was the most successful strategy as they bring together journalists who are really committed to science reporting.
- Journalists are not just the passive recipients of research. They need to be prepared to report on these issues and the information they receive needs to come at the right time, packaged appropriately.



'We didn't create hype, hype in terms of events...if I were to do something like that again first of all I would have a big launch with many media represented...sometimes people just want to be there with you and ask all these questions'