



Women's day Celebrations

Theme: Better the balance, Better the world

Access to Family Planning Will Fuel Uganda's Demographic Window of Opportunity

As we join the rest of the world to celebrate women, we want to emphasize that Good Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being in all matters relating to reproduction for both women and men, including adolescents.

Maintaining good SRH means people need access to accurate information and to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable contraception methods of their choice. They must be informed and empowered to protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections and, when necessary, receive timely and affordable treatment, when they decide to have children. Women must have access to services that ensure they have a healthy pregnancy, safe delivery and healthy baby. Every individual has the right to make their own choices about their SRH and family planning.

Through the **Health Systems Advocacy Partnership Project (HSAP)** with funding from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, **Amref Health Africa**, **Coalition for Health Promotion and Social Development (HEPs)** and **The African Center for Global Health and Social Transformation (ACHEST)** are implementing activities with a goal to enable communities realise their rights to achieve the highest attainable sexual and reproductive health critical for equitable and sustainable economic development.



A nursing officer uses a partograph which is used to monitor and manage the labour process

As we celebrate women today, the partnership continues to work at different fronts to ensure the theme "**Better the balance, Better the world**" is a reality for all women.

At the community level in Uganda, Amref Health Africa continues to work with the most vulnerable rural women to ensure their voices are heard at the highest discussion platforms like the district councils and the Parliament of Uganda, where policies, budgets and discussions that affect their wellbeing are passed.

Through citizen hearings using the Citizen report card methodology, issues affecting women in accessing quality SRH services have been brought to the forefront. We have witnessed increased access to family planning services that is among the components that help women balance their lives by spacing child birth. This has improved their quality of life both in health and economic development since the women have more time to improve their lives and that of their families without fear of unplanned pregnancies. As we get the unheard voice of women to be heard we are continually holding Intergenerational dialogues that bring together women, policy makers, community leaders and their partners.



A teen mother in Serere HC IV receiving Health Care

At the national and African region level, **ACHEST** has worked with government leaders to strengthen governance and leadership functions in health to realize a positive impact on achieving Sexual and Reproductive Health. This has been done by building capacity of indigenous national CSOs under the umbrella of the coalition on Reproductive, Maternal Neonatal Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH) in health policy lobby and advocacy as well as in Global Health Diplomacy. The CSOs have been able to advocate for increased budget for human resources for health in the financial year 2018/2019, but there is still need for the health budget to be increased from the current 7.4% to at least 10% as we strive to attain the middle income status by 2020.

Working closely with Members of Parliamentary Forum on Quality of Health Services Delivery through supporting members in providing support supervision in health centers across the country, decision making has been strengthened and this has improved quality of health services delivery at those facilities.

National level dialogues on Universal Health Coverage as a means to achieving health related Sustainable Development Goals were also organized for Members of Parliamentary Committee on Health which has widened the knowledge of the Members of Parliament on UHC to engage in discussions on National Health Insurance.

The Partnership therefore believes that for quality Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services and commodities to be attained, a multi-pronged approach is required; Good leadership and Governance, a motivated and supported Health Workforce and equitable financing of the health sector is paramount. Whereas **HEP- Uganda** continues to lobby for Affordable SRH commodities. The Family Planning situation in Uganda presents a mixed picture. Despite rising age at first birth and progress in contraceptive prevalence, there are persistent low uptake of long-acting FP methods and high levels of teenage pregnancy, unmet need for Family Planning and unintended pregnancy.

Market disparities based on a woman's age, residence, wealth status, and literacy status also characterize access to, and use of FP services. Additionally, high contraceptive discontinuation rates and poor knowledge of conception and fertile period persists among many women. In view of the above it is critical that acceleration of Family planning services as one of the methods to "Better the balance, better the nation" and control population overflow to improve quality of life is an option that will benefit all Ugandans and more so women. Most importantly, Family Planning allows women and their families the option to choose their desired family size by planning the timing of pregnancies. As a result, the risk of women dying from unintended pregnancy complications and unsafe abortions decreases and women are more likely to complete their education.

Vision 2040 discusses how meeting the contraceptive needs of women and girls can fuel the nation's economic growth—lower fertility can shift the age structure of the country to a larger share of working age Ugandans per dependents.

Our call to Action to all our Duty bearers is that the world expects a real and true balance in life for all women in every aspect. As Uganda celebrates the milestones achieved towards empowering women, more needs to be done. As a partnership we join Ugandans and the rest of the world to reinforce and amplify Sexual Reproductive Health and rights for women to better the balance and better the nation.

The future for women is exciting.

Let us build a gender balanced world, everyone has a part to play, all the time and everywhere.



A nursing officer listens to the heart beat of a baby in the womb