

# First Lady asks men to join family planning

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**First Lady waves to the participants after addressing them on family planning**

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THE First Lady, Janet Museveni, has urged men to support their wives in family planning and prevention of maternal and child mortality.

"Men remain aloof and unsupportive of their wives yet they have a role to play, not just at conception, but through pregnancy and delivery. For women to survive, it is important for a couple to sit and agree," said Mrs. Museveni, who is also the Minister of State for Karamoja.

She was opening a three-day international conference on family planning at Speke Resort Munyonyo on Sunday.

The conference is organised by John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Makerere University and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The conference, which has over 1,300 participants including researchers and policy-makers, will share knowledge on how to attain the Millennium Development Goals relating to maternal and child health.

Mrs. Museveni also said midwives often mistreat the expectant mothers. "They ignore mothers in labour to the extent of death, which could have been prevented," she added.

She said globally, \$15b is lost annually due to maternal morbidity and mortality. In Uganda, the maternal mortality rate is at 435 deaths per 100,000 live births, an indication of the poor health sector, Mrs. Museveni added.

More than 500 million couples in the developing world use family planning methods while 200 million do not. The United Nations estimates that by 2050, the demand for contraceptives will grow by 40% as more young people enter the prime reproductive ages.

Mrs. Museveni said family planning is one of the most effective and low-cost technologies to reduce maternal mortality in Uganda.

She said family planning prevents high-risk, early, late and unplanned pregnancies.

"But the family planning concept has been misunderstood and maligned in our developing countries. We need to correctly package it to make it more acceptable and understood," she said.

The First Lady said there was need to improve maternal and child health by using the multi-sector strategy similar to what Uganda used to reduce HIV/AIDS prevalence in the 1980s.

"In Uganda, we would not have progressed if we had not involved everybody in the fight against HIV. Let the solutions be simple enough to include everybody," she said.

The Minister of Health, Dr. Stephen Malinga, said many developing countries continue to register poor family planning.

He said poor timing of pregnancies contributes about 6,000 maternal deaths in Uganda annually.

This article can be found on-line at: <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/13/701372>

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