

Uganda to host family planning conference



Health& Living

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Over 1500 health professionals and policy makers from all over the world are expected in Kampala for a four day International Conference on Family Planning starting November 15 to November 18, at Speke Resort Munyonyo.

The conference organised by the Gates Institute at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and Makerere University's School of Public Health alongside Partners in Population and Development (PPD) Africa Regional Office, will provide platform to different players to share their best research and practices, which will be transformed into action to expand access to family planning services, an explicit target of the Millennium Development Goal 5 (Improve Maternal Health).

"We believe this conference will provide a lot of social capital for the advocacy of family planning, safe motherhood, child survival as well as increasing government commitment and funding to activities that will bring about the changes that we desire to see in policy and programmes," said Dr. Jotham Musinguzi, the Director PPD.

Musinguzi told journalists at a one day briefing session at the Population Secretariat (PopSec) on Statistics House that the conference in Kampala is a follow up on 1994 International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD PoA) in Cairo, Egypt where 179 nations committed themselves to among others to reduce maternal mortality and to ensure universal access to reproductive health care including family planning, assisted childbirth and prevention of sexually transmitted infections by the year 2015.

All these goals were later included in the targets and indicators of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), mainly MDG 5, which is to improve maternal health. It is 15 years since the ICPD programme action was developed, which will subsequently be followed by the 10th anniversary of the MDGs in 2010.

Approximately 204 million women worldwide have an unmet need for family planning services, contraceptive prevalence rates are low in many developing countries and access to male and even more so to female condoms is difficult and often unaffordable.

In Uganda for example, the unmet need for family planning has over the years grown from 34% to 41%. This has had great impact on the country's population growth, which is now ranked third among the world's highest growing populations -with a growth rate of 3.2%.

According to statistics by Population Secretariat, Uganda's population as of June 2009 is estimated to be 31 million people, 6.6 million people higher than 24.4 million people that the country had in 2002.

Much of this population growth is in the rural areas where over 80% of the population lives with 68% engaged in subsistence farming and some times producing what is not enough for consumption.

"We have a population of poor people. People who cannot afford Shs 1,000 everyday," said Hannington Burunde, the Head of Communication and Information at PopSec.

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[< Prev](#)

[Next >](#)