

National Family Planning Policy and Advocacy. Best practices and lessons learnt from Parliament of Uganda

Hon. Kasamba Mathias

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We know the status quo

- Uganda's rate of population growth is at 3.2% the third highest in the world.
- Uganda's population grew from 16.7 million in 1991 to 24.7 million in 2002 and is projected to grow by 39 million by 2015.
- The age structure in Uganda is such that about 50% of Uganda's population are dependants i.e under the age of 15, this has two critical implications

We know the status quo

1. It creates a high child dependency ratio that places a heavy burden on the working age population
2. The young population also means that there is an inbuilt population momentum for future growth
 - On average a woman in Uganda has an average of 7 children in her lifetime; an average woman would want to have only 5 children in her lifetime.

We know the status quo

- Maternal mortality is at 435 per 100,000 births, one of the highest in the world. Majority of the births in Uganda are unintended, avoiding unintended pregnancies can prevent almost 25% of all maternal deaths.
- Infant mortality is at 1,000 births, one of the highest in the world. Spacing pregnancies at least two years apart would reduce infant mortality by over 50%.

We know the status quo

- That the unmet need for Family Planning is high and still at 41%
- That ensuring full access to Family planning reduces unwanted pregnancies
- That insisting on Family Planning reduces unsafe abortions
- Reduces maternal mortality
- Improves quality of life for all the people in the country
- Contributes to MDG on Poverty, Education, child health and maternal health

The role of Parliament

- Parliament is the highest legislative and policy making body in any country and best placed to champion population issues, more especially in legislation and creation of awareness on Reproductive Health as a catalyst to the attainment of the MDGs and ICPD Plan of Action
- Through our leadership and what we say provides guidance to the people that elect us to office.
- We influence government business, resources and provide oversight to successful implementation of all government development programmes.

The role of Parliaments

- We provide, by giving legislative sanctions to taxation and acquisition of loans, the means of carrying out the work of Government.
- We scrutinize Government policy and administration through the following:
 - pre-legislative scrutiny of bills referred to the Parliamentary committees by Parliament

Role of Parliament

- We scrutinize various objects of expenditure and the sums to be spent in each financial year.
- assure transparency and accountability in the application of public funds
- monitor the implementation of Government programmes and projects.
- debate matters of topical interest usually highlighted in the President's State of the Nation address.
- vet the appointment of persons nominated by the President under the Constitution or any other enactment

Best practices in Uganda

- Parliamentary efforts in promoting population issues began way back in 1996 during the 6th parliament of Uganda and as a result of ICPD 1994 PoA.
- In the current 9th Parliament, various fora on RH, Gender and Population issues have been established to advance ICPD agenda in Uganda and include UPFFSP&D, NAWMP-U, UWOPA, Parliamentary Forum on MDGs and UPFYA.

Best practices

- Members of these fora hail from all regions of the country and belong to different political parties.
- The foras enjoy the support of the Rt. Hon. Speaker and Deputy Speaker of Parliament who are giving un wavering support to FP/RH Advocacy slots both on the floor of parliament and in all parliamentary program activities..

Strategies used by Parliamentarians

- High level Advocacy through Policy and dialogue – influencing positions, initiating and passing bills, influencing budgeting.
- Community Mobilization – Constituency based activities to promote ICPD agenda
- Media advocacy and mobilization at National and district levels.
- Campaigns and events e.g. National and international days to promote ICPD agenda

Achievements

- Initiated motions and tabled before parliament various bills that recognize rights of women, young people and other vulnerable groups of population for equality. These include Bill on FGM, Domestic Violence Bill, Marriage and Divorce Bill these are at different stages of approval.
- MPs have lobbied for government commitment, action and accountability in regards to prioritizing RH through their oversight role. e.g. action not to approve WB \$100M funding to MoH if RH wasn't included in the request.

Achievements

- Have tasked the ministry of Health to provide to parliament disaggregated data of their budget showing how much is spent on reproductive health commodities per year.
- MPs have gone ahead to raise awareness and generate the commitment of local government leaders in over 84/112 districts to promote and support RH Issues. They now know the unmet need for FP, the MMR, the IMR and the Fertility rate.

Achievements

- There has been a slight increase in the funding of the health sector in the national budget from 8.9% in FY 2006/07 to 10.2% in FY 2008/09.

Achievements (Cont...)

- Some local governments have set by-laws attributed to the Forum that encourage male involvement in safe motherhood programs e.g. Mayuge, case of couples receiving first service for ANC.
- MPs have actively participated in the development and supported the approval of the National Roadmap to improving Maternal and Neo natal Health.

Limitations

- Government is yet to make FP a priority in the health Sector budget allocations.
- Parliamentary campaign has mainly been donor funded.
- The mortality rate of MPs who serve a five year term is excessively high. Change of offices makes a big loss on the side champions

Way Forward

- Need for continuous engagement for resource mobilisation and program implementation for Family Planning
- Continuous awareness to communities on Family Planning issues.
- Ensure active male participation in the Family Planning issues



Thank you!