

Media & Messaging Workshop for Family Planning Advocates and Researchers: Handbook

**Advance Family Planning Partners' Meeting
Baltimore, Maryland
March 18, 2015**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Developing Effective Messages	3
Keeping your audience in mind	3
Speak at a level the media and your audience will understand	3
Remember the ‘Rule of 3’	5
Managing different audiences	5
Using Data Effectively	5
Translating data into messages	6
Tips for talking about data	6
Polishing your Interview Skills	7
How to prepare for and execute an interview	7
Keys to being memorable	7
How to handle a tough interview	7
Broadcast and radio interview	8
General tips for working with in-country media	9
Conducting Outreach	10
Developing a media list	10
Ways to engage your media targets	11
Consider writing an op-ed	11
Direct communications to policymakers	12
Social Media	13
Overarching social media tips	13
Twitter	13
Facebook and other social media platforms	13
Images are key	14
Easy ways to stay involved	14
Appendix	15
Story pitch	15
Media advisory	15
Press release	16
Op-ed	18

This handbook is intended to serve as a reference guide for advocates interested in improving their ability to develop effective family planning messages and more clearly communicate them to media and key stakeholders. This guide provides a synthesized overview of material covered at the March 2015 media and messaging session at the Advance Family Planning Partners' Meeting. We hope you will consult this handbook regularly as you continue your work as an advocate.

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE MESSAGES

Before communicating with the media and key stakeholders, it is important to develop a core set of messages that are both compelling and easy to understand.

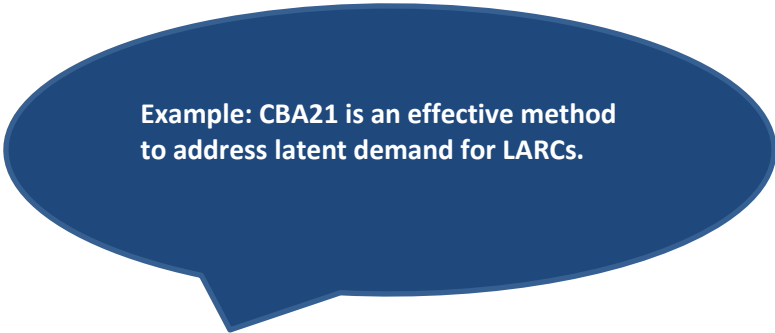
Keep your audience in mind

When delivering your message, it's important to keep your audience in mind. It's also important to remember that journalists and stakeholders whom you speak with may have limited knowledge about family planning. Therefore, your conversations are a key opportunity to inform, educate and inspire potential champions for the issue.

Speak at a level the media and your audience will understand

The following are a few important things to remember when communicating with the media or a wider audience:

Don't use jargon



Example: CBA21 is an effective method to address latent demand for LARCs.

Don't info dump

Example: Using an evidence-based approach to inform behavior change communications strategies, this program will employ a participatory and community-led methodology to inform women of various methods of contraceptives available to them. The program approach will be to generate contextually and culturally appropriate messaging that aims to reach women among the general population and youth in Kenya.

Don't use math problems

Example: With a CPR between 26 percent and 35 percent among rural women farther than 14 miles from the nearest health facility, we can avert more than 1.5 million DALYs by increasing contraceptive access by 50 percent.

Remember the 'Rule of 3'

People are more likely to remember things when they are grouped in threes. This strategy can easily be applied to developing a set of messages that are memorable and clearly convey your argument. To do so, try using the Message Triangle:

Part 1: Present the context/situation

Part 2: State the opportunity

**Key
Messages**

Part 3: Make a call to action

Organizing your messaging in this way will help your audiences better understand the problem and the solution, leaving them with a sense that their support will, in fact, make a difference.

Example

- Part 1- Context/Situation: 220 million women in developing countries want to delay or avoid pregnancy but aren't using a modern method of contraception.
- Part 2- Opportunity: Increasing access to family planning information and services can help reduce the number of unintended pregnancies as well as maternal and newborn deaths, leading to healthier families and communities.
- Part 3- Call to action: In our country, we must maintain strong political will and generate commitments to provide more women with access to the family planning services they want.

Managing different audiences

At times, you may find yourself addressing an audience made up of individuals with diverse family planning backgrounds. Doing as much research and prep work as possible ahead of time will help you effectively manage situations like this.

- Know who you're talking to – Do they have a technical understanding? Does everyone in the group have the same level of knowledge?
- Shift your language not your messages – Adjust your examples, data points and level of detail to fit your audiences background and expertise
- Leave enough time for Q&A – Use this time to address specific questions to ensure everyone gets the information they need
- Be prepared to address broader family planning issues

Using Data Effectively

When integrated effectively, family planning data and statistics can be excellent tools to support messages and help move advocacy objectives forward. Data, facts and numbers can help:

- Illustrate that a problem exists – and why it exists
- Quantify the impact of a problem (e.g., mortality, morbidity)
- Demonstrate the potential impact of a solution/intervention
- Show progress toward a goal
- Back up your call to action

Tips for talking about data

- Cut the technical jargon – avoid overly technical terms and acronyms (e.g., CPR, TFR)
- Use familiar types of data – whole numbers and percentages work well across audiences
- Focus on people – Talk about key findings within the context of people
- Limit the number of statistics – use only a few data points to support your main point

Translating data into messages

On their own, statistics are not messages – they should be used primarily to support your overarching advocacy messages. When working with data, it is helpful to:

- Identify your core message or call to action
- Select a few statistics that illustrate your message

- Frame the numbers within a broader story

Example

- Frame the issue: Family planning and contraception are reaching more women and girls around the world, and saving and improving more lives.
- Supporting statistic: From 2007 to 2013 the total number of women using modern contraception methods increased from 14.1% to 19.3%.
- Call to action: Important progress is being made to overcome barriers and expand access to family planning, but more needs to be done to ensure all women and girls have the tools they need to plan their families.

POLISHING YOUR INTERVIEW SKILLS

Giving interviews can be difficult, and the better prepared you are, the more likely you are to deliver your messages in a way that sticks and generates impact. It's important to remember though that you can steer the direction of the interview just as much as the reporter can.

How to prepare for and execute an interview

- Get as much information as you can on the reporter and their media outlet
- Know the basics like when and where the interview is
- Ask for information, including:
 - Is the reporter looking for background or direct quotes?
 - What is the angle of the reporter's story?
 - What is the reporter's deadline?
 - Can you obtain a list of questions in advance?
- Know your messages so that you're able to steer the conversation
- Never assume you are speaking "off the record;" you should **always assume you are on the record, even if it is before or after the official interview**
- **Practice, practice, practice**

Keys to being memorable

- Speak simply and clearly
- Be engaging! Use stories, analogies or metaphors throughout
- When telling a story include details to help the reporter and audience visualize it
- Be prepared and know your messages

How to handle a tough interview

In the event a reporter asks a question that is difficult or hostile, it is important that you are prepared to pivot your answer and plug one of your key messages. There are a number of techniques you can employ to counter a tough interview.

Use the ABC approach

1. **A**cknowledge the question
2. **B**ridge to the important issues
3. **C**ommunicate key messages

Examples of effective bridging phrases

- The most important thing you should know is...
- The key issue here is...
- That speaks to a bigger point...
- What's important to remember...
- Just the opposite is true...

A few things to keep in mind:

- Don't get flustered, angry or agitated by a reporter's unique interviewing style

- Admit when you don't know the answer
 - Offer to get back in touch with the reporter
 - Don't get pulled into speculating
- Be brief – don't feel like you have to keep talking
- Pivot back to what you want to talk about

Eliminate negative language

Negative Responses	Neutral Responses
"That's not true..."	"It is more accurate to say..."
"I don't know..."	"What I do know is..."
"I don't agree with..."	"I would say..."
"Do not include..."	"Only include..."
"Are not associated with..."	"Are separate from..."

Identify and be prepared to respond to tough situations

Issue: Reporter asks your personal opinion on a controversial topic

How to Respond: Do not provide personal opinions – restate your organization's position

Issue: Reporter provides false information

How to Respond: Politely correct the reporter's mistake

Issue: Reporter asks for a comment on recent bad press

How to Respond: Acknowledge the situation and bridge to your core messages

Issue: Reporter allows for a longer than normal period of silence after your response

How to Respond: Don't continue to speak/ramble simply to fill the void

Issue: Reporter asks you what someone else might say on the topic

How to Respond: Never respond on someone else's behalf. Steer back to your prepared messages.

Broadcast and radio interview

Interviewing on camera or on the radio can be intimidating. Like any interview, it's important to practice ahead of time – when possible, in front of a video camera so you're able to see what you look like when responding to questions.

- ✓ **Do** keep your eyes on the reporter, not the camera
- ✓ **Do** be conversational and speak slowly
- ✓ **Do** smile! Even on radio it matters
- ✓ **Do** have good posture
- ✓ **Do** your research. Just because the reporter may not know much about you, don't make the same mistake
- ❖ **Don't** make hand gestures directly at the camera
- ❖ **Don't** cross your arms in front of your body
- ❖ **Don't** speak in a monotonous voice

- ❖ **Don't** wear distracting patterns, stripes and bright colors. Go for clothes that are neat, clean and comfortable

General tips for working with in-country media

- Invest in building strong relationships
- Always assume everything is on the record – if you do not want to be quoted, say so
- Do journalists' work for them – provide them with press releases, fact sheets, etc.
- Where appropriate, reach back out to reporters to correct inaccuracies

CONDUCTING MEDIA OUTREACH

Effectively engaging the media provides you with a platform to reach a wide audience with your carefully crafted message and calls to action.

Develop a media list

The first step in conducting media outreach is thinking through the following questions:

- Which audience(s) are you trying to reach?
 - Media is *not* an audience; it is your means of reaching the audience.
- Who are the decision-makers that can get you what you want?
 - If you can't reach the decision-makers directly, engage influencers who can.
- Where do your audiences get their news? Newspapers, television, radio, social media, etc.

When you know the answers to these questions, you can begin to consider which medium(s) would best communicate your story to the media.

Ways to engage your media targets

Story pitches

- Pitching can help draw reporters' attention to a particular story. Pitch media with story ideas that are timely and relevant to their audiences. The goal is to get journalists interested in a story so they will ask for additional information and cover it. Journalists may be interested in conducting interviews with you or other members of your organization to support the development of their stories. Make sure your pitches are brief and get straight to the point. [See an example of a story pitch below](#)

Media advisory

- An advisory is used to alert or remind media of a newsworthy announcement or event and includes basic information, often in bulleted form. [See an example of a media advisory below](#)

Press releases

- A press release is a written statement, distributed to media through personal contacts or a wire service, intending to solicit interest in a new or developing story, a new report, or an upcoming event.
 - **Q:** In what cases should you develop a press release?
A: If what you're writing about will be newsworthy and timely.
 - **Q:** What are elements of an effective press release?
A: An eye-catching, specific and succinct headline; a lead paragraph with the essential information you want to convey; strong body content; at least one quote from a credible and relevant source; and contact information.
[See examples of press releases below](#)

Desk-side briefings

- A desk-side briefing is a 15-20 minute appointment with a reporter who covers issues related to your organization. Building rapport with these reporters increases the likelihood that they will look to you and your organization for information, and to respond to your

emails and/or calls about story leads and ideas. When conducting a desk-side briefing, always provide a media packet (if applicable) and be sure to send a follow-up thank you note.

Press conferences

- Press conferences offer you an opportunity to speak to, and receive questions from, multiple news outlets at one time. They are most successful when:
 - they are timed to a specific newsworthy event
 - they are combined with a campaign launch
 - they are tied to the release of new statistics or information (such as the release of research findings or a new report)
 - they give the media access to one or more high-profile individuals

Events

- Organizing an event can be a good way to garner attention for your organization and raise awareness about your work. Events can range from a sports tournament to a fundraising auction. Events often require significant financial and human resources. Make sure you weigh your expected return on investment against less costly, but potentially equally effective options.

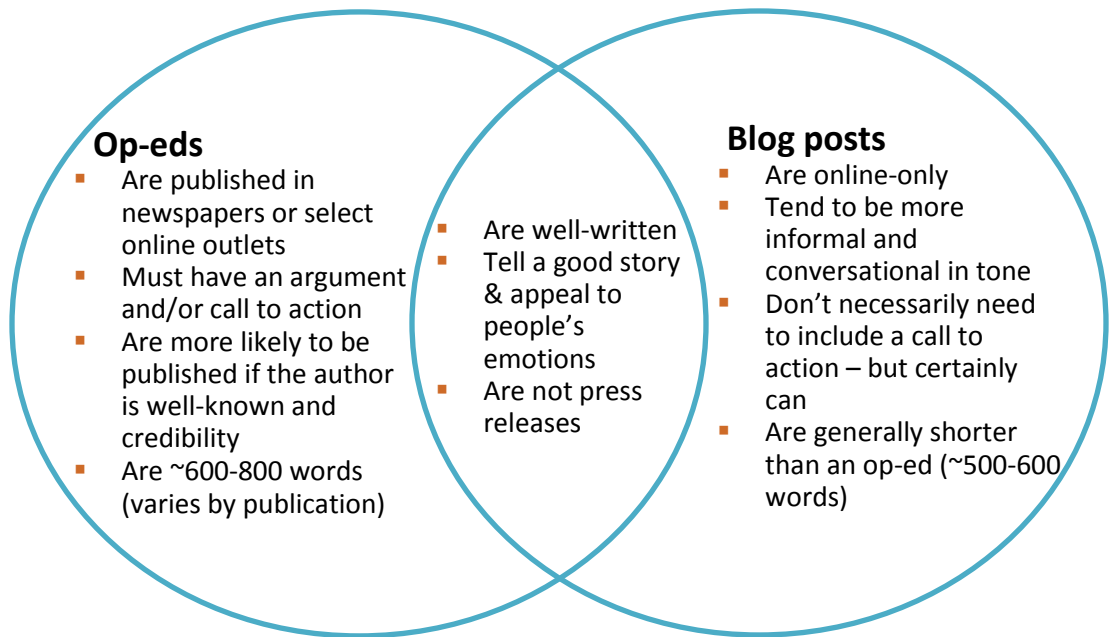
Site visits

- All journalists – but particularly broadcast journalists – are interested in stories with visual components. If your organization has a project that is making a big impact in the community, you should consider inviting journalists to see the program in action. Please note that, under some circumstances, it may be necessary to obtain signed consent forms from program participants when journalists take photos or video to ensure confidentiality. Consent forms are always required if medical services are being provided.

Consider writing an op-ed or a blog post

An op-ed is a long-form article written for publication in newspapers and online outlets that expresses an opinion about a certain topic and is usually authored by an individual who is unaffiliated with the outlet's editorial board. As an advocate, you can write op-eds for publication in your local newspapers and in global news outlets. This is a way for you to communicate directly with your audiences, without a reporter acting as a middleman.

As an advocate, you can also write a guest blog post for online news outlets. Many news outlets have blogs specifically focused on global health and/or development.



[See an example of an op-ed below](#)

Direct communications to policymakers

In addition to media targeted at the general/engaged public, direct work with policymakers can also be an effective and strong means of communications.

Audience(s)

- Government officials (e.g., Ministers of Health, Presidents)
- Parliamentary members/leaders of international governing bodies (e.g., UN representatives)
- Leaders of international organizations (e.g., World Bank, WHO)

Tactics

- Petitions
- Letter writing campaigns to policymakers and influencers
- In-person meetings with policymakers and influencers

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is increasingly becoming a primary source for news and information. You can use this medium to your advantage by directly communicating your message to your audience. In addition to allowing people to connect, social media is an effective tool for raising awareness and increasing engagement among key policymakers and stakeholders. When used strategically, social media can amplify family planning advocacy efforts by sustaining a digital drumbeat.

Overarching social media tips

- Be yourself
- Keep messages short and clear
- Emphasize positive messages
- Avoid jargon and technical language
- Be interactive to keep the conversation going
- Share sources, pictures and videos
- Keep content fresh
- Build your network; connect with other advocates and organizations

Twitter

Twitter allows you to share brief perspectives and interact with other global health activists in 140 characters at a time. A simple guide to Twitter and tweeting can be found online [here](#).

Tips to creating a powerful tweet:

- Be relevant – timely tweets allow you to engage with other users in real-time
- Be brief – tweets should address only one thought, question or piece of news
- Expand the conversation – use hashtags (a # symbol in front of a word), mention specific handles and retweet
- Follow influential handles – identify and engage the family planning and reproductive health community
- Be interactive – most tweet should include a link, mention another handle, or use a hashtag to continue conversations
- Mention @AWLN in your bio

STOP, THINK & POST

It's good to assume that anything you write online can be made public. If you wouldn't feel comfortable with what you've written appearing on the front page of the *New York Times*, then you probably shouldn't hit 'post'.

Facebook & Other Social Media

Facebook and Instagram are popular mediums to share thought-provoking stories within your personal networks. Post links to blog posts, articles and photo albums. You can share links from AWLN on your personal page, as well.

Images are Key

When you are presenting information, visuals such as photos, videos and even graphs can add polish and appeal to your content. People respond to visuals, and by using them, you can increase the likelihood that you grab their attention.

Easy ways to stay involved

- Follow other AWLN members & family planning advocates
- Retweet others in your network
- Tweet from live events
- Focus on the issues you care about and the work you are doing
- Link your Facebook and Twitter together
- Set a goal – Tweet, retweet, share a link or a photo every week

HAVE FUN!

Most importantly, it is important to remember that engaging the media can be not only impactful, but also fun. Always remember to be relaxed and be yourself – and know that, by leveraging the media, you are helping to reach more people with your important messages about the need to expand contraceptive access and options for women everywhere.

APPENDIX

Story Pitch

Dear XX,

Hope you are well. I am writing with some exciting news about Senegal's progress toward increasing women's access to family planning.

Today, the government of Senegal announced that 20.3% of women in union are now using modern family planning methods – an increase from 16% in 2013. This is the largest gain a West African country has ever made in a single year and positions Senegal as a leader in improving access to family planning in the region.

The story behind this success is compelling. Since before the London Summit in 2012, family planning has been a priority for the Minister of Health. Champions such as the Director of Reproductive Health and Child Survival, Dr. Bocar Daff, and the Director of Family Planning, Dr. Chimère Diaw, have been critical in employing innovative strategies to ensure more women have access to the information and services they need. For example, contraceptive pills and injectables, including Sayana Press, are now available at the community level, and the government has launched a community health strategy that will ensure families living far from health facilities will have access to the basic medicines and services they need. Additionally, the government has had great success with a new supply delivery system called the Informed Push Model, to ensure that the method of contraception a woman chooses will be in stock at local clinics. In 2012, it was estimated that stocks-outs of contraceptive implants occurred 83% of the time – today that number has dropped to almost zero.

If you are interested in covering this important milestone for Senegal, below are a few quotes from advocates commending Senegal for its leadership on family planning. Beyond this, if you are interested in conducting an interview with an in-country spokesperson, please do let me know, and I'm happy to connect you.

Best,
XX

Media Advisory

****** MEDIA ADVISORY ******

**Press Briefing
Thursday, 7 November 2013
8:00AM-9:30AM**

**From Pledges to Progress:
Expanding Family Planning Access & Options in Kenya**

MOH, local & international partners showcase Kenya's commitment to reaching more women with contraceptives

In July 2012, global leaders at the London Summit on Family Planning committed to provide 120 million more women around the world with voluntary access to contraceptives. Since the Summit, countries around the world have made tremendous progress toward expanding family planning access and options, and Kenya has emerged as a proven leader.

On **Thursday, 7 November** – just days before the landmark International Conference on Family Planning begins in Addis Ababa – the Kenyan Ministry of Health and a group of public and private sector partners will host a family planning-focused media event from **8:00-9:30 AM** at the **Nairobi Serena Hotel**. Light breakfast, coffee and juice will be served.

Join us as leaders from the **Kenyan Ministry of Health, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Bayer HealthCare, Clinton Health Access Initiative** and **Jhpiego** highlight concrete successes since the London Summit, showcase the Kenyan government's commitment to expanding contraceptive access and options, and demonstrate the role public-private partnerships can play in driving progress.

SPEAKERS:

- **Keynote: Prof. Fred H.K. Segor**, Principal Secretary, Kenya Ministry of Health
- **Moderator: Dr. Isaac Malonza**, Kenya Country Director, Jhpiego
- **Dr. Shahnaz Sharif**, Director of Public Health, Kenya Ministry of Health [TBC]
- **Elizabeth Lule**, Director, Family Planning, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- **Alice Kang'ethe**, Executive Vice President of Vaccine Delivery and Maternal & Child Health Programs, Clinton Health Access Initiative
- **Klaus Brill**, Vice President of Corporate and Commercial Relations, Bayer HealthCare
- **Beatrice**, Family Planning User & Champion [TBC]

WHEN: Thursday, 7 November 2013 from 8:00-9:39 AM EAT

LOCATION: Nairobi Serena Hotel, Amani Room, Lower Level (Kenyatta Avenue / Processional Way)

CONTACT: If you have any questions about the event, please contact: [add e-mail address and phone number]

Press Release

Kenya announces progress toward expanding family planning access & options

On eve of International Conference on Family Planning, Kenyan Ministry of Health & global partners showcase Kenya's commitment to giving more women access to contraceptive options

7 November 2013, Nairobi, Kenya – Today, Prof. Fred H.K. Segor and other senior officials gathered in Nairobi to showcase Kenya's progress toward expanding contraceptive access and options and to highlight innovative public-private partnerships that are accelerating efforts to increase access to voluntary and quality family planning to save and improve the lives of women and infants. Additional speakers at the event represented the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), Bayer HealthCare and Jhpiego.

This gathering comes just over a year after the July 2012 London Summit on Family Planning, where global leaders committed to provide an additional 120 million women and girls in the world's poorest countries with voluntary access to modern contraceptive information, services and supplies by 2020.

Kenya pledged to protect women's rights to family planning by securing additional financial resources and implementing strategies to reach the poorest and hardest-to-reach segments of the population.

"Kenya has long recognized that family planning is a key driver of development, leading to healthier, better educated and more productive populations," said Prof. Fred H.K. Segor, Principal Secretary, Kenya Ministry of Health. "This is why our constitution protects the right of every woman to access family planning, and why access to contraceptives is an essential component of Kenya's national development framework, Vision 2030."

Kenya's Progress

Today, the Government of Kenya announced it is nearly on track to achieve its goal of reaching a 56 percent modern contraceptive prevalence rate by 2015. Last October, the country launched a 2012-2016 National Family Planning Costed Implementation Plan, which outlines its priority strategies for increasing contraceptive prevalence and the costs needed to implement them. In fiscal year 2013/2014, the Government of Kenya committed USD 9 million to family planning programs.

Currently, one in four women in Kenya who wishes to delay or prevent pregnancy does not have access to modern contraceptives. The poorest women and those with the lowest levels of education report the highest unmet need. In fact, almost half of the poorest women report that their most recent pregnancy was unplanned. Family planning is one of the most cost-effective methods to improve the health of women and provides them with the tools to plan their families and their lives.

To reach the most marginalized populations with improved access to affordable contraceptive options, the government will expand its voucher system to provide easier access to reproductive health services, including family planning, in five rural and urban districts in Kenya. The government has also committed to reaching more youth with comprehensive reproductive health information and other social services by creating Youth Empowerment Centers across Kenya. Additionally, Kenya has changed its guidelines to allow community health workers to provide injectable contraceptives.

"Kenya's leadership on FP2020 has been exemplary and can serve as a model for other countries across Africa and around the world to follow," said **Elizabeth Lule**, Director of Family Planning at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. "Efforts to expand contraceptive access and options are guided by the belief that all women, no matter where they live, should be empowered to plan their own lives and shape their own futures."

Public-Private Partnerships

Since the Summit, innovative public-private partnerships have played a key role in expanding women's access to a range of contraceptive options in Kenya and globally. Bayer was the first pharmaceutical company to make a commitment to FP2020, cutting by 50 percent the price of its long-acting, reversible contraceptive implant, Jadelle®. This will provide access to contraception for more than 27 million women in the world's poorest countries over the next six years.

Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD) has also demonstrated its leadership on FP2020 by reducing the price of its long-acting, reversible contraceptive implants, Implanon® and Implanon NXT®, by 50 percent over the next six years. Both companies' agreements were developed and supported by partnerships with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, CHAI, the Governments of Norway, the United Kingdom, the United States and Sweden, the Children's Investment Fund Foundation and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Both Bayer and MSD are working closely with international partners, including Jhpiego, Marie Stopes International and national Ministries of Health, to ensure that health workers are trained to properly insert and remove implants and provide counseling on all methods of contraception.

“Social commitment is at the heart of Bayer’s business strategy, and we are proud to contribute to global efforts to expand access to family planning,” said Klaus Brill, Vice President of Corporate & Commercial Relations at Bayer HealthCare. “Through our Jadelle® Access Program, we are working to ensure that women have more contraceptive options available at local clinics so they can choose a method that best suits their needs.”

Continuing Momentum

This event in Nairobi takes place just days before the International Conference on Family Planning in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (12-15 November). There, global leaders will celebrate progress since the London Summit, announce new commitments and call on donors and governments to do more.

Leaders will also discuss efforts to track progress toward the FP2020 goals. Kenya is one of 10 countries that will implement the Performance Monitoring and Accountability 2020 (PMA 2020) program, which will be led by International Centre for Reproductive Health-Kenya, with support from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In early 2014, Kenya will begin training female, community-based data collectors across the country to conduct nationally-representative surveys, via mobile technology, every six months to routinely update family planning data.

Globally, it is estimated that reaching an additional 120 million women with family planning by 2020 will result in 100 million fewer unintended pregnancies; three million fewer babies dying in their first year of life; and 200,000 fewer women and girls dying in pregnancy and childbirth. Beyond this, reducing unintended pregnancies leads to more young women staying in school, advancing their education and providing a better future for their children.

Last week, UNFPA released its 2013 State of the World Population report, which focused on adolescent pregnancy and analyzed global data and trends to develop a better understanding of barriers to access and the impact of family planning programs.

Contact
Name, Title
E-mail address
Phone number

###

Op-Ed

Let's Empower Youth for Sexual and Reproductive Rights

September 23, 2013

By Jill Sheffield, President of Women Deliver & Remmy Shawa, the International Sida Project Coordinator for the Sonke Gender Justice Network

Today, nearly half the world's population is under the age of 25. These 3 billion people -- the largest ever generation of young people -- are our future and our present. Each has an indispensable role to play in

achieving international development goals, driving economic and social development, and shaping the course of history.

Yet around the world, young people are all too often unable to make critical choices that impact their futures. We hear it straight from the young people, particularly adolescent girls and young women we work with every day -- they are unable to access the information and services they need to protect their sexual and reproductive health and plan their lives. Unmet need for contraception is greatest for women under the age of 20 and, in the world's poorest countries, one in three women has a child before the age of 18.

For far too long, the issues of reproductive health and family planning for adolescents have been taboo, and in many places, the issues have been almost completely ignored. Consequently, pregnancy and childbirth-related complications remain the leading killer of teenage girls in the developing world. And countless more girls who drop out of school due to early pregnancies do not learn the skills they need to gain paid employment and contribute productively to their families, communities and nations.

These facts cannot be ignored, and what we urgently need now is more support from every sector of society. First, we need developing country governments and donors to prioritize and scale up youth sexual and reproductive health programs. This includes comprehensive sexuality education that teaches young people about their rights and their options, as well as programs to ensure that girls and young women have access to a range of contraceptive methods. We also need governments to pass supportive policies that impact reproductive health, like increasing the legal age of marriage in countries where child marriage is still prevalent.

Second, we need to reduce the stigma associated with youth sexuality. Even when girls and young women are informed about family planning and services are available, many do not access the services due to fear of reproach or criticism. To lower cultural and social barriers to care, we must engage community leaders -- including political and religious leaders -- as champions for youth sexual and reproductive health and rights. We also need to train health care workers to provide services to young people confidentially and without judgment.

Third, we need to encourage and empower young people to be their own advocates and agents for change. Young people everywhere have the right to the knowledge, tools and services they need to make informed decisions about their bodies and live full, healthy and productive lives. In many communities around the world, young women and men are working tirelessly -- both individually and collectively -- to demand access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

For too long, these young leaders have been on the sidelines of the global dialogue about health and development. We must bring them into the conversation. At the Women Deliver 2013 conference in May in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Women Deliver convened 100 Young Leaders, a program supported by Johnson & Johnson that aims to build the capacity of youth to advocate for issues around maternal and reproductive health. At the conference, these 100 Young Leaders spoke passionately about the challenges youth face and shared their strategies to fight for change. Giving youth a voice at international forums like these is an important first step forward.

And, finally, we must involve boys and men in the process. That's why the 100 Young Leaders program includes almost 40 young men. And, that's why we are excited about the amazing work that's being done to increase male involvement in sexual and reproductive health and rights. For example, we've

seen great success through programs like the Learning Centers Initiative in Zambia and Uganda, run by the Sonke Gender Justice Network and supported by the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RSFU). These centers encourage boys and men to be equal partners in their relationships; access sexual and reproductive health services themselves; and promote their peers' adoption of these behaviors.

By enacting supportive policies, bringing new voices into the conversation, and implementing effective, age and culturally-appropriate family planning programs, we can make a real and lasting impact on the lives of young people everywhere and help ignite a virtuous cycle of development.

As we celebrate World Contraception Day on September 26, let's all take up the charge -- across generations -- to make sure that young people have the information, services and support they need to become agents of change for girls and women around the world.