

JOINT STATEMENT ON WORLD CONTRACEPTION DAY 2024



On this World Contraception Day, the Embassy of Sweden and UNFPA in Uganda reaffirm our unwavering commitment to advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for all, particularly women and adolescents. This year's theme, "A Choice for All: Freedom to Plan, Power to Choose," resonates deeply as we address the challenges hindering access to contraception and reproductive health services in Uganda.

Access to contraception is a fundamental human right. When individuals can plan their families and safeguard their reproductive health, they empower themselves and their communities.

Sweden's longstanding partnership with UNFPA underscores our shared commitment to advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) globally. Our collaboration with the Government of Uganda has yielded significant progress in Uganda. Together, we have:

- Expanded access to a wide range of contraceptive methods, enabling individuals to make informed choices about their reproductive health.

- Empowered women and adolescents to advocate for their reproductive rights and access vital health services.
- Strengthened healthcare infrastructure and trained health providers to deliver quality family planning services.
- Addressed stigma surrounding contraception through awareness campaigns and community outreach.

Key joint initiatives driving progress include:

- **UNFPA Maternal Health Thematic Fund (MHTF):** Sweden is a major contributor to this global programme, which enhances maternal and newborn health, particularly in high-mortality countries. In Uganda, the MHTF enhances Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response (MPDSR), strengthens midwifery systems, emergency obstetric and newborn care (EmONC), and obstetric fistula treatment and care.
- **UN Joint Programme to End Gender-Based Violence (GBV):** This programme has increased the utilisation of SHR services, reducing the proportion of women with unmet contraceptive needs from 39.5% (2018) to 20.3% (2024) and increasing the number of family planning users to 719,725 (2024) from 416,882 (2022).
- **2gether4SRHR:** The programme has successfully spearheaded the creation of the National Integration Strategy for HIV/SRHR and GBV services, setting a new standard for comprehensive care. Pilot initiatives in Busoga are generating evidence to inform a strategic national scale-up, demonstrating the programme's potential for transformative impact across the country.

Despite significant progress in improving access to contraceptive services in Uganda, challenges persist. Many, rural and underserved communities still lack access to comprehensive family planning services. Stigma and misinformation about contraception and negative perceptions about family planning compound this issue. High rates of adolescent pregnancy highlight the urgent need for tailored interventions that empower youth.

The unmet need for modern contraception, particularly among vulnerable groups remains a critical issue. The Uganda Demographic and Health Survey UDHS¹ 2022, reveals that 2 out of every 10 married women in Uganda desire to use contraception but lack access to the necessary services. This situation is exacerbated by entrenched gender inequality, harmful practices, and limited access to services.

On this World Contraception Day, we call on the Government of Uganda, civil society organizations, and community leaders for decisive action:

- **Implement comprehensive awareness campaigns** to dispel myths surrounding contraception and promote the benefits of family planning, especially in rural communities.
- **Advocate for sexuality education and youth-led peer-to-peer engagement** as tools for positive change. Uganda's youth deserve access to accurate, age-appropriate information to make informed reproductive health choices.

¹ Uganda Health Demographic Survey 2022

- **Ensure that contraceptive options are available and accessible to all**, particularly for marginalized groups, through community health integrated programmes and mobile clinics.
- **Develop and implement youth-friendly services** that provide adolescents with the resources they need to make informed choices about their reproductive health.
- **Promote gender equality** to empower women and girls to make independent decisions about their reproductive health and increase their access to contraceptive services.
- **Invest in health infrastructure** to provide quality contraceptive services, ensuring that health workers are trained and equipped to offer comprehensive care.

We believe that every individual particularly women, girls and people with disabilities, regardless of their background, deserves the power to choose. We urge governments, civil society and the private sector to prioritize investments in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Equal access to quality contraceptive information and services is essential for all, particularly in humanitarian settings.

On this World Contraception Day, let us recommit to our shared vision of a Uganda where everyone has the freedom to access and use family planning to better plan for their families and the power to choose their futures. Together, we can create a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

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