



Directorate of Information and Communication

MEDIA ADVISORY

3rd International Conference on Family Planning-Youth Pre-Conference

THEME: " INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE: ADDRESSING FAMILY PLANNING WITHIN THE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS OF YOUTHFUL AFRICA "

INVITATION TO MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES

When: 10-11 November 2013

Where: The African Union Commission Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in the Medium Conference Hall

Who: Department of Human Resources Science and Technology of the African Union Commission (AUC).

Why: The case of sexual and reproductive health rights in Africa has been a topic highly discussed. The AU and its partners are taking up the responsibility and challenge to ensure the good health of the youth by delivering on their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). SRHR provides skills to adolescents to prevent unsafe sexual behaviour.

There is a huge risk, that if countries do not address the needs with in the extremely young age structure through such investment as scaling up Family Planning, young people will not achieve their full potential for economic growth, and subsequently the opportunity that comes through a demographic dividend.

Objective: the objectives of the Youth pre-conference on Family Planning include the following:

1. Position family planning and fertility management within continental youth health data and youth & SRHR commitments and the African Common Position on the post-2015 development agenda.

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2. Prioritize family planning and fertility management actions and investments that will have the greatest positive impact on youth health
3. Identify and agree on key actions to be taken by regional economic communities and AU member states to realize these priorities and investments.
4. Recommend to the AUC a framework for measuring progress on youth family planning and fertility management within broader SRHR.
5. Agree to mechanisms through which youth participate in and contribute to young people's SRHR discussions in the Post 2015 development Agenda at continental level.
6. To acknowledge and celebrate the progress made in improving the SRHR of African youth at regional, national and community levels.

Methodology:

The Youth pre-conference on Family Planning will be structured in such a way that will be plenary sessions, breakaway parallel discussions, official conference opening which all will funnel into a final plenary discussion to consolidate all the key issues, actions and recommendations.

Outcome:

The pre-conference is expected to be highly interactive, in view of the items to be discussed. Recommendations adopted, shall guide the African continent in addressing youth FP challenges within the health sector and other key sectors that impact on the health of young people. Through sharing of challenges/experiences, the lessons learnt will be used to tailor the FP interventions on the continent.

Background:

The African Union recognizes that family planning in Africa is a key indicator of the overall health status of the continent and remains central to human capital development which is critical for equitable and sustainable socio-economic growth and development.

It is estimated that 90% of the global 1.8 billion¹ young people between the ages of 10 to 24 live in developing countries and each year, births by adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 account for 16% of all births in sub-Saharan Africa. These figures are a major concern given that teenage pregnancies impact negatively on the development of the young mothers, with the major implications including dropping out of school, curtailed personal development and increased vulnerability to exploitative sexual relationships. Children of teenage mothers are also

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usually caught in a vicious circle of poverty and disadvantage. To a large extent the high adolescent pregnancy rates and unintended pregnancy in sub-Saharan Africa can be attributed to low contraceptive prevalence among young people, lack of knowledge about contraception, health concerns, high costs, limited supplies, and cultural or personal objections to using contraception (Bulato, 1998; Swartz, 2003; Cooper et al, 2004)

Africa is one of the youngest continents in the world and, with the exception of North Africa, adolescents and youth numbers in the continent are expected to grow to 436 million by 2025. Youth 15-24 are currently estimated at 209 million -- the largest number of young people to ever enter the productive and reproductive ages in the region. The nations of the continent have the opportunity to usher them into healthy and economically productive adult citizens who will lead Africa's renaissance through on-going democratization, increasing human development, well-being and equity, and participating in socio-economic development and global integration.

Within SRHR policy framework, Africa has developed or adopted a number of treaties and agreements most notably, the Maputo Plan of Action for the Operationalisation of the Continental Policy Framework for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and the emerging African common position on the International Conference on Population and Development. With respect to youth, the African Youth Charter is the continent's blue print for youth development and integration.

Within these continental commitments, Family Planning is an essential pillar of SRHR and overall youth health and development. It provided the mechanism for reducing health risks and improving youth opportunities for education and a productive livelihood and citizenship.

While these commitments place Africa centrally within the global movement to support youth development, they have not always been translated into policy or laws across the continent. Where they have been translated into national legislation, they are not always adequately funded, implemented or reported upon. Commitments also need to be accompanied by plans that form the basis for resourcing and capacity building to promote policy implementation. When policy makers and those responsible for implementation are knowledgeable and comfortable with the issues, they are more likely to carry them through. (E. Green 2012)

Despite efforts and the significant progress made by Member States, it is clear that current progress still falls short of what is required for Africa to achieve the MDG 4 and 5 targets.

JOURNALISTS ARE INVITED TO COVER THE YOUTH PRE-CONFERENCE ON FAMILY PLANNING.

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Attached is the draft work program

Media enquiries and requests for interviews should be directed to Mrs. Esther Azaa Tankou, Directorate of Information and Communication, African Union Commission, E mail address: yamboue@africa-union.org , Tel: +251 361185

For more information contact:

Dr. Raymonde Agossou
Head of Division of Human Resources & Youth Development
African Union Commission
Email: agossour@africa-union.org
Cc: nonkululekon@africa-union.org

Dr. Ademola Olajide
Head of Division - Social Affairs Department
African Union Commission
Email: olajidea@africa-union.org
Cc: kennetho@africa-union.org

Ms. Annick-Laure Tchuendem
Conference Coordinator,
Division of Human Resources & Youth Development
Email: secretariat@youthfpc.org

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