



International Community of Women Living with HIV Eastern Africa

Press statement

For immediate release

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Its time our governments dedicated more resources and eliminated barriers to access to Family Planning

Today September 26th, 2017, The International Community of Women Living with HIV Eastern Africa (ICWEA) joins the World in Commemorating the World Contraceptives Day with a call for more comprehensive Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights information, better and more Family Planning options and choices for Women. Access to safe, voluntary family planning is a human right, and central to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality calls for empowering women to make informed decisions about their reproductive health. We recognize that one of the ways to attain this is through the provision of adequate information on services available and all ranges of contraceptives to all women and girls irrespective of their HIV status.

However, we continue to see provider bias in ensuring access to information and services to women and girls living with HIV. Such provider bias limits access to knowledge on available options and appropriate Family Planning methods.

Not only do women deal with provider bias but other challenges and barriers such as stock outs, age restrictive policies, widespread stigma, discrimination, and in some cases, forced and coerced contraception, abortion and sterilization.

We take note of the March 2, 2017, World Health Organization (WHO), released updated recommendations concerning the use of hormonal contraceptive methods by women at high risk of HIV¹. The recommendations for use of progestogen-only injectables (DMPA) among women at high risk of HIV changed from Medical Eligibility Criteria (MEC) 1* to MEC 2. Recommendations for all other methods of hormonal contraception remained unchanged. It is a requirement that all women on DMPA should be given full information and enabled to make an informed decision as guided under MEC 2 and by WHO in the March 2017 guidance. At

¹ http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/family_planning/hormonal-contraception-hiv/en/

country level however there is no or minimal dissemination of the information to women and girls.

While Family Planning is on the world agenda right now, projections show one of the largest shortfalls in financing for family planning. UNFPA during the FP2020 summit indicated that they face a funding gap of about \$700 million for 2017 to 2020². The availability of contraceptives relies on funding from donor countries and sufficient investments from domestic financing by governments. The impact of this contraceptive funding crisis is likely to be felt in the form of stock outs, interrupted supply chains, and inability to guarantee contraceptive security.

CALL TO ACTION

- We call upon the International Community and all duty bearers for an expanded and a comprehensive contraceptive, HIV and other STI prevention method mix, with all women having access to full, non-judgmental routine information and to comprehensive options that are available, accessible affordable and of high quality.
- Women should be informed about the benefits and risks of all the methods available to them.
- Improve Family Planning counseling services and break down cultural and social barriers to contraceptive use.
- Let us all rise up to advocate for women and girls living with HIV to have access to a full range of contraceptive methods to satisfy their reproductive needs at different life stages.
- Follow up and honor the funding commitments that the governments made at the July 11, 2017 FP2020 summit.
- Governments should dedicate domestic resources to contraception, foster an enabling environment to ensure sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls and prioritize sexual and reproductive health services within national and district-level governments.

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² <http://www.unfpa.org/press/global-leaders-commit-support-unfpa-london-family-planning-summit>