



Weekly News Review – 30 June 2017

A round-up of the week's most important, Africa-focused Family Planning and Reproductive Health reporting

SRHR Crossroads

[Sexual health and reproductive rights are at a crossroad](#), according to an editorial in The Lancet, which summarizes that, “there is perhaps no area of health where politics and ideological beliefs meet evidence and human rights in such a contested arena.” While Guttmacher finds that [greater investment is required](#) to meet women’s sexual and reproductive health needs in developing regions, the Trump administration’s contraception cuts “[will make the world poorer](#),” at the same time that [military spending in Africa is growing at the expense of humanitarian aid](#). The [upcoming international family planning conference](#) in London will address ways of “expanding access to contraception and family planning programmes... one of the most cost-effective ways to break the cycle of poverty.”

Among the issues: Contraception and abortion

The [CDC issued its latest guidance on contraceptives](#), noting that “nearly half of US pregnancies are unintended, and among teens the percentage is even higher—about 75%” and providing “numerous evidence-based ways to decrease medical barriers to contraception, helping patients plan, prevent, and space pregnancies.” Increased contraception access and education initiatives were also discussed in [DRC](#) (“high potential for improvement”), [Ghana](#) (“teachers lack resources”), [Kenya](#) (“take up family planning”), [Mali](#) (“increase access through public sector social franchising”), [Nigeria](#) (“secure the future for teenagers”), [Uganda](#) (“high teenage pregnancies dues to lack of access to contraceptives”) and [Zambia](#) (“young people are still ill-equipped to make safe decisions about their sexual health”). An excellent [compendium of statistics on global contraceptive access](#) was released by the Guttmacher Institute – well worth a read.

The [debate about abortion access in the UK](#) has come to the fore in the aftermath of the recent election, as PM Theresa May stood down in her opposition to abortion in the Queen’s speech, while the [prospect of doctors who perform abortions being prosecuted](#) was decried by the BMA. Many of the arguments against abortion are [disprovable lies](#), which Nancy Northrup of the Center for Reproductive Rights vows to combat in the courts. The real life consequences of the political debate occur every day – in Botswana a report about [a botched backstreet abortion](#) ruining a woman’s reproductive life; in Uganda “[barriers to safe abortion in Uganda Lead to unhealthy & dangerous outcomes](#).” In South Africa, to make access easier, 92 % of patients surveyed said they were happy with [advice via SMS](#), along with “a checklist and a simple home urine test after a medical abortion”, rather than a return visit to the doctor or clinic.

Child marriage and teen mothers

A [startling report on child marriage](#) from the International Center for Research on Women states that “every day more than 41,000 girls marry before the age of 18,” which beyond the personal

toll, the lack of education attainment, the rise in fertility, causes economic consequences of more than \$4 billion in global loss of activity. Among others across the continent is an initiative in [Malawi](#) to combat the practice.

The debate about [allowing teen mothers back into school](#) continues, the week after President Magufuli decreed they would not be barred, with some politicians [supporting the move](#) and others calling it “[barbaric](#)”.

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