Weekly News Review – week ending 10 November 2017

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

Population Council “Ideas that Changed the world”

The week saw a celebration of the Population Council’s 65th anniversary, for which they released “10 Ideas the Changed the World.” Taking their lead, some of those ideas have direct relevance in the week’s news:

- Making the case to invest in adolescents when it counts
- Recognizing sexual health education is about more than biology and individual behaviors
- Recognizing women and girls as central to development
- Putting clients at the center of quality health care
- Demonstrating the benefits of family planning programs
- Establishing the field of long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs)

Adolescents and Education

An essay in Modern Ghana points out that educating young women on reproductive health is “the way to teenage pregnancy and maternal death eradication.” In Malawi, religious leaders gathered and approved a plan to disseminate more material on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights through churches and mosques, and to create more youth-friendly outreach clinics, to “break the silence.” A new mobile family planning clinic in Namibia will bring services to young people in remote areas to provide “family planning, HIV screening and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, sexuality education and much more.” A broad-ranging study tracked 450 teenagers and their guardians over four years in 15 countries, including Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa, and determined “If you’re waiting until your children become teenagers to talk to them about sex and gender, it may be too late.” South Africa is taking action, “introducing sex education to youngsters.” In Uganda: Adolescents and sex: Education is key, which gives young people a say in deciding their future.

Protecting Nigerians young girls Safe Love’s “No Sugar Daddy, Bright Future Campaign’… hopes to combat the negative effects of inter-generational sex, reduce the high rate of new HIV infections among young girls, discourage widespread sugar daddy culture and beckon on the government to tighten sexual abuse laws so as to protect young girls and give abused girls justice.”

University of Pennsylvania Nursing researchers found that “sexually active teenagers and young adults who encounter sexual risk reduction information on social media platforms are more likely to use birth control or protection.”
Sex education can have its sensitivities. A UNESCO report says “*secondary school teachers in Kenya depict sex as dangerous and immoral to their students.*” A cartoonist takes on “*teaching girls to be ashamed in sex ed. This has to change.*”

Pathfinder International released “*Cue Cards for Counseling Adolescents on Contraception,*” which can help de-mystify the process.

**Family Planning Access and Development**

Important *research* shows *IUDs may cut risk of cervical cancer by a third.*

In Tanzania, where *registration of new clients for family planning is on the increase,* “*family planning is a crucial economic catalyst.*”

*Avoiding adolescent pregnancy* has significant economic benefits, for the girls and their families. One World Bank study cited in the report “suggests that the lifetime opportunity cost related to *adolescent pregnancy*—measured by the mother’s foregone annual income over her lifetime—ranges from 1 percent of annual GDP in China to 30 percent of annual GDP in *Uganda.*

Safe abortion is overwhelmingly understood to save lives. In *Kinshasa,* Guttmacher shows that clandestine abortion is “*common and often unsafe.*” IPAS reminds that *safe abortion services are “relevant” in Ghana.* In Rwanda, *the law is being examined to reduce illegal abortions:* “*Critics say that while this law is good, it has also fueled the problem of illegal abortions because of the conditions one has to fulfill in order to get safe abortion services.*” In Namibia a woman is being prosecuted for performing *an illegal abortion with a stick.* A study in *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth* shows that *abortion rights give women empowerment,* especially in legally-restricted contexts.

Abortion law liberalization drives in *Ireland, South Korea, Scotland,* and *Jamaica;* challenges in *Poland, Brazil* and *Mexico,* where “*a baby death trial reveals growing persecution of women who miscarry.*”

While the new US government policy is *hurting women and the environment,* and *forcing foreign health groups to cut services,* recent elections showed *wins for champions of reproductive rights,* and a group of 24 major corporations (and growing) vowed to *continue to support birth control for their employees.*

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