

Child marriages contributing factor to high young population in Uganda

Every year, the world commemorates the World Population Day and the theme for this year's celebration is 'Family planning: Empowering people, developing nations.'

Uganda is one of the countries with the fastest growing population in the world – standing at 3.2 per cent, which is feared to reach 71 million people by 2050 (UN Population Division).

While some people may argue that high population growth is good for the economy, Uganda's population growth seems to be putting a lot of pressure on the already limited resources. I stand to validate the fact that child marriage is one of the greatest contributors to these surging numbers.

Out of every 10 girls, five are married before the age of 18, according to Unicef and 19 per cent of adolescents aged between 15 and 19 have given birth. If the life expectancy for a woman is at 60.5 years and 58.5 years for a man, how many children will a sexually active person have by 60 years if he/she is already a parent at the age of 15 years?



Marrying children off at an early age makes them susceptible to early pregnancies, which increases the number of children given birth to by the end of the productive age.

Child marriage and its resultant teenage pregnancy are more common in rural areas as compared to urban areas. A number of factors are responsible for this, including a few number of school-going children, information gap, poverty and poor parenting.

Parents no longer have time for their children, including passing on essential sex education and, therefore, children rely on uncensored information.

It is also important to mention that child marriage has not only accelerated the population rates, but also increased the poverty levels and greatly hampered access to education given the fact that 49.9 per cent of Uganda population, is below the age of 15.

Most of the population below 25 years old is still dependent on their parents and cannot afford birth control methods. Some have negative attitudes towards family planning methods and the practice is socially unacceptable. Young parents are highly reliant on their parents whose financial statuses are alarmingly low.

This makes it impossible for such children and their children to afford a 'reasonable' standard of living.

If Uganda is to develop, it should control her population and empower the young people through education, which will significantly reduce child marriage and teenage pregnancy.

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