

THE PRESIDENT SAID WOMEN SHOULD HAVE FOUR CHILDREN FOR HEALTH AND CONVENIENCE REASONS

By Eddie Ssejjoba

President Yoweri Museveni's advice to women not to produce more than four children is a major breakthrough for the country in advancing reproductive health and development, state minister for planning David Bahati has said.

Bahati said when the President speaks, he impacts on the population. For him to say a woman should have a maximum of four children is a welcome achievement that should be popularised throughout the country, he said.

He said major players in population issues should reflect on the President's message and capitalise on it to push forward matters regarding reproductive health, including family planning. He was speaking during a high-level strategic planning meeting for the Government and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) at the finance ministry headquarters in Kampala on Wednesday.

Bahati directed the National Population Council (NPC) to propagate the President's message as an advocacy tool in advancing population issues throughout the country.

He said funds should be allocated for the campaign, noting that the country should make use of this breakthrough since the biggest population listens to the President's advice.

Attending a thanksgiving ceremony for Constance Kabakaali, the mother of Burahya County MP Margaret Muhanga, in Kabarole district last month, Museveni counselled young women to avoid having many children.

He said the maximum number should be four, for both health reasons and convenience.

Bahati said for some time, the President had been speaking about population issues, including teenage pregnancies and domestic violence.

"He has clearly come out to say we

Museveni's message on birth control to be popularised

Tabifor Miranda (left), the UNFPA deputy country director, speaks to Charles Zirarema, the director of the National Population Council, after a high-level meeting in the finance ministry.

Photo by Eddie Ssejjoba



should do child spacing and produce children that we can afford to look after," Bahati said.

The UNFPA country representative, Alain Sibenaler, applauded Museveni's message, which he said was key towards achieving middle-income status by

2040.

He said the country's total fertility had reduced and that the President speaking about a number (four children), lower than the current total fertility rate, is in a positive direction.

Sibenaler said UNFPA had mobilised

about \$14.8m (sh54.2b) to support the implementation of the eighth country programme for the period 2017 to 2020. He was however concerned about the shortfall of about \$7m (sh25b).

Dr Jotham Musinguzi, the director general of NPC, said they would to

BETWEEN THE LINES:

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popularise the President's view on child spacing.

"We need to inform people that in this age in Uganda, children are not dying as they used to, so couples should only have a manageable family size other than before when they would produce many children and a few would survive," he said.

Musinguzi appealed to stakeholders to advocate improved and better medical services targeting women and children.

Uganda's fertility rate stands at 5.87 births per woman, with a total population of 44.27 million people, as per the 2018 population estimates.

Musinguzi said health providers should explain myths and misconceptions surrounding family planning methods and side effects, so that people can make informed choices. He said once people know about the likely side effects, they do not get shocked when they occur or can choose to use other methods.

Govt to establish new land tribunal