

Family planning is a human right and investing in making it available will yield economic gains that can propel development, writes Lillian N. Magezi

Tomorrow is World Population Day. The day, set aside by the United Nations (UN), aims at focusing attention on the urgency and importance of population issues, such as high fertility rate, poverty and international migration, including their relation to the environment and development.

This year, the day will be commemorated under the theme *Family planning: Empowering people, developing nations*. According to the UN, the theme was chosen because this year's World Population

Day coincides with the Family Planning Summit (the second meeting of the FP2020 (Family Planning 2020) initiative). FP2020 was launched at the 2012 Family Planning Summit in London, where world leaders made a commitment to deliver rights-based family planning services to an additional 120 million women and girls by 2020.

The World Health

Organisation (WHO) acknowledges that access to safe, voluntary family planning is a human right, which is also central to gender equality and women's empowerment. In addition, it is a key factor in reducing poverty, which is partly attributed to couples having big families to look after.

Therefore, investing in making family planning available will yield economic gains that can propel development.

Unmet need

Irrespective of the gains that can be realised by making family planning available to all who need it, the high fertility rate in many parts of the world, especially in developing countries, such as Uganda, has been attributed to an unmet need for family planning.

Kiggundu explains that an unmet need for family planning refers to people who are sexually active and want to delay pregnancy, stop having children or do not want to start having children, but they are not using an effective contraception. The 2016 Uganda Demographic



Psychosocial care (counselling) should be provided for women and young girls with unwanted pregnancies

and Health Survey (UDHS), explains that pregnant women are considered to have an unmet need for spacing or limiting the number of children, if their pregnancy was mistimed or unwanted.

According to the WHO, around the world, 216 million women in developing countries who want to avoid pregnancy are not using effective family planning methods.

The 2016 UDHS states that in Uganda, 28% of married women have an unmet need for family planning services, while the percentage of unmarried women is 32%.

Kiggundu adds that research has shown that among young people who are sexually active, only 9% use effective contraception.

WHO notes that reasons why people do

9%

The number of young people who are sexually active, using effective contraception.

28% **20%**

The number of married women having an unmet need for family planning services

The number of health centres in Uganda that can provide emergency obstetric services.



The UN believes one of the key factors in reducing poverty is couples having small families