

HER vision

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CONTRACEPTIVES WHEN WOMEN CANNOT FIND THEIR PREFERRED CHOICE

UP TO 21% SEXUALLY ACTIVE UNMARRIED WOMEN IN UGANDA PREFER INJECTABLE CONTRACEPTIVES. HOWEVER, SOME LOWER HEALTH CENTRES HAVE STOCK-OUTS OF THE DRUG, CAROLINE ARIBA WRITES

The three months were up and Cherop needed to get her next contraceptive dose. However, health workers at Tumbomboi Health Centre II in Kapchorwa district, where she had received her previous dose, said it was out of stock.

Cherop was told to return the following day, but failed. When she returned a week later, Cherop was told that the contraceptive had just got finished. Was it really finished or had they not received a new consignment?

"They kept saying come tomorrow... or wait just a little bit," she recounts.

But what was a sexually active Cherop to do in the meantime?

"It is God who knows, if I get pregnant, I do not have anything to do," she whispered. Cherop had resigned to fate.

"They say that children are from God, let me just give birth," she shrugged her shoulders in defeat.

"I like the three-month contraception dose, because my husband dislikes the use of family planning methods. I can use it without him knowing," she says. Asked if she could use a barrier method like a condom in the meantime, she laughed sarcastically exclaiming: "My husband to use a condom?"

Morning-after pill

Unlike Cherop who was resigned to fate, Gladys Cheptoris, whose husband is a soldier, has taken to using emergency contraceptives whenever there is a stock-out.

"I get morning-after pills every time my husband comes back," she said. "But the last time he came for almost two weeks and I just kept swallowing them every two days."

Cheptoris was talking about the emergency contraceptives that experts warn are not to be used as a regular family planning method.

Did Cheptoris know that or has she just learnt the hard way?

"I have been bleeding a lot," she said. "I think



it is a result of taking too many morning-after pills. They told me the pills are not supposed to be taken all the time. But I did not want to get pregnant when my baby has not yet made a year," she explained.

Issue at hand

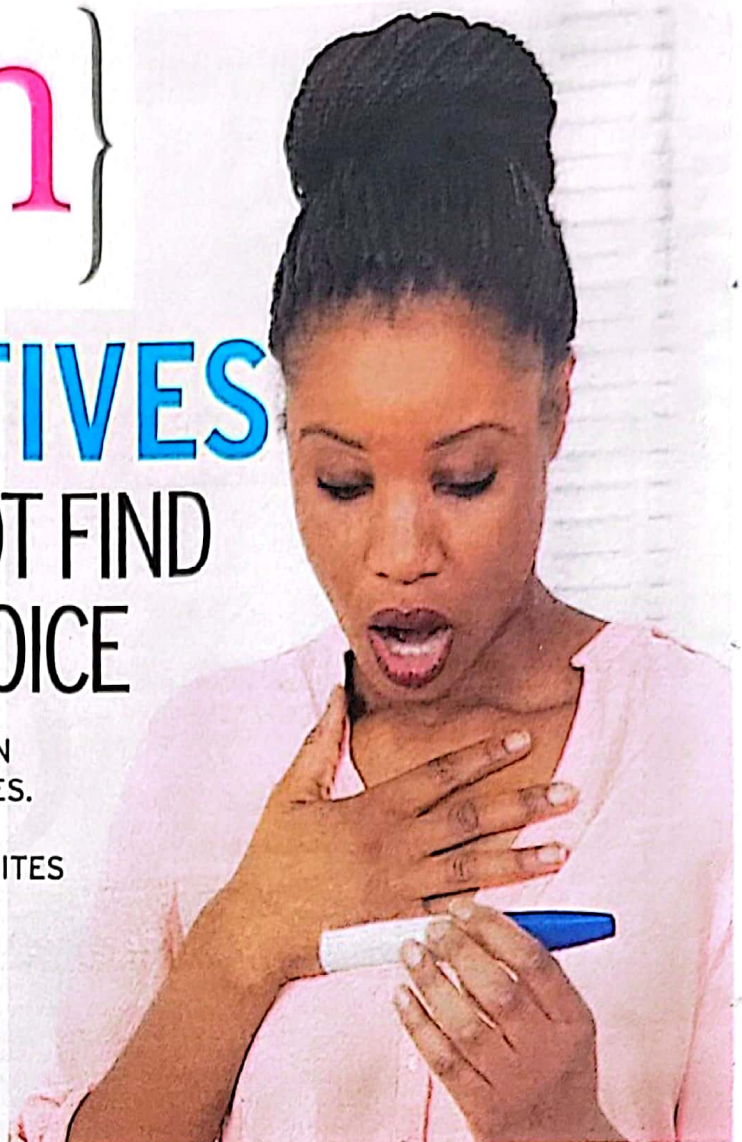
Cheptoris and Cherop were both looking for Depo-Provera, commonly known as depo, an injectable contraceptive given every 12 weeks.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, one of the workers at Tumbomboi Health Centre II said their biggest worry was the fact that when women do not find contraceptives of their choice, many give up.

"It is hard to get couples to agree to family planning, when they agree, there are stock-outs," the employee said.

"Many young mothers prefer depo and injectables, that their husbands who are against contraception, do not know anything," the employee added.

When first asked if the district had depo stock-outs, Dr Mike Mwanga, the Kapchorwa district health officer, acknowledged that there was an issue. He said there were stock-outs mostly in the lower health centres.



WITHOUT CONTRACEPTIVES, UNPLANNED PREGNANCIES BECOME COMMON

"We are relying on the district hospital for depo," he said. "The different health centre staff have to travel to town to make a request whenever their stock is finished."

Mwanga said unlike the district hospitals, the health centres cannot make direct requests.

"The last supply of depo was last year and for months now, health centres have been relying on the district hospitals," he re-affirmed.

Asked how often it had been supplied previously, Mwanga said at least every two months, the district should get a new supply; although depo was not one of them.

Is the policy to blame?

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a source at the National Medical Stores (NMS) said the

issue was more than stock-outs, but rather that the Ministry of Health was phasing out depo.

"There is a policy by the ministry to halt the distribution of depo," he said. "NMS cannot stick to something that has been phased out."

However, when asked if there was any such policy change, Sarah Opendi, the State Minister for Health, said she did not know about it.

"No, no way!" she exclaimed. "Who is saying that?"

Opendi was just as shocked as Mwanga. "No, what policy? I have not heard of it!" she exclaimed.

Opendi went on to say that there were lots of depo in the stores and wondered why health centres did not have it.

Mwanga thinks that this can all be attributed to the drug distribution policy.

"These issues begin with the 'push' policy. Why should the lower health centres, which serve most of the population, keep requesting for help from the district?" Mwanga asked.

In a paper titled: *Changing from the "Pull" to the "Push" System of Distributing Essential Medicines and Health Supplies in Uganda*, Global Health Governance says many knots were left untied. They said while in the pull policy, where health facility staff determined the medicines needed, the push has proved to be inflexible.

The researchers found that the push system was implemented in a drastic fashion, as

STATISTICS

Women prefer injectable contraceptives

The 2016 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS) found that a large majority of women preferred injectable contraceptives. Up to 21% sexually active unmarried women use the injectable.

The UDHS maintains that overall, nearly 38% of married women, aged 15-49, do not want more children. Even further, the UDHS reveals that up to 85% of married women want to space their children. It tells of how up to 80% of women with three or more children want to stop giving birth.



“
editor's letter

Sensitise more on family planning

It has been mentioned on several platforms that couples need to plan their families and have children whose basic needs such as health, education, food and clothing, they can meet. The key tool in achieving this is adopting family planning methods. A key hindrance in the use of family planning methods is misconceptions about it, which include health complications that come with contraceptives and men claiming that their wives will become unfaithful once the threat of unplanned pregnancy is removed. Eradicating such misconceptions takes continuous sensitisation.

JOY E. ABO

THINK ABOUT IT

“You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it,” Maya Angelou, an American poet, memoirist and civil rights activist

who we are

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opposed to a systematic and gradual process involving all stakeholders. This engendered negative attitudes among staff and created resistance to change,” they found. “The culture of policies originating from the top without participation of stakeholders, especially in the context of decentralisation, institutionalises top-down approaches that inhibit development of sustainable policy and institutional frameworks.”

In resource-constrained settings like Uganda, the researchers worry that such drastic policy shifts are not owned by stakeholders and may not lead to desired outcomes. Attempts to get an official response from NMS on whether they knew of the stock-out of depo, the duration of supplies to lower health centres and issues raised on the ‘push’ process, were futile.

Survival

Indeed, a loophole in the policy has since been lower health centres turn not just to the hospitals, but the private sector.

In Sipi, for example, Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU) has introduced an alternative to depo called Savana-press. And though Savana-press is just as good, Richard Mugenyi, the communications person at RHU, says a stock-out of depo jeopardises the campaign on family planning.

“One, depo is the most preferred method of family planning by women,” he said. “Therefore, stock-outs means thousands of women, who would want to use family planning, are not doing so because their preferred method is unavailable.”

Asked how sustainable it would be for partners, Mugenyi said: “As Reproductive Health Uganda, we do provide commodities to public health facilities that may be stocked out, we, too, access these

A MEDICAL WORKER INSERTING AN IMPLANT INTO A PATIENT. MANY WOMEN IN RURAL UGANDA DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO FAMILY PLANNING METHODS OF THEIR CHOICE



WHEN PREFERRED Contraceptives ARE OUT OF STOCK

commodities at no cost, but this is not sustainable,” he said. “Besides we can only do so with a few partner facilities.”

Mugenyi said while the re-distribution strategy currently going on might look good on paper, it is not sustainable. He insists that the best solution is to strengthen the supply chain in health centre IIs and IIs to ensure they are stocked for at least six months.

“Secondly, there is need to implement the alternative distribution strategy that allows for NMS to pick commodities from Uganda Health Marketing Group (UHMKG) for supply to public health facilities and UHMKG to pick from NMS for supply to non-profit agencies,” he explains. “However, for this to be fully operationalised, the Government needs a budget.”

FAMILY PLANNING METHODS



This, he insists, will then put a hurdle towards the country's efforts to attain the family Planning 2020 goals of reducing unmet need to 10%. The UDHS report states of

28% and 39% of married and unmarried women respectively, have failed to get family planning services.

“Also, the goal on increasing modern contraceptive prevalence rate (MCFR) to 50% by 2020 is disrupted,” Mugenyi adds.

He applauds the Government for fulfilling many of its commitments made at the 2012 Family Planning London Summit, but worries this might all be going down the drain. “In terms of funding, the first three years Government was allocating more than the commitment of \$3m annually,” he begins.

“However, this was reduced by half in the last financial year and no funds have been allocated for family planning for the financial 2017/2018 under the NMS vote.”

A QUESTION OF LAW

WHAT SHOULD I INCLUDE IN A LOAN AGREEMENT?

DEAR LAWYER,

MY HUSBAND HAS ASKED ME TO LEND HIM SH5M TO SET UP A BUSINESS. I AM BORROWING THE MONEY FROM A SAVINGS SCHEME AT WORK. I TRUST THAT HE WILL PAY BACK, BUT I DO NOT WANT TO TAKE ANY CHANCES. I WANT US TO SIGN AN AGREEMENT STATING THE AMOUNT HE HAS BORROWED, THE INTEREST HE WILL HAVE TO PAY PER MONTH, AS WELL AS WHEN AND HOW HE WILL PAY. WHAT OTHER ELEMENTS SHOULD I INCLUDE IN THE AGREEMENT?

REBECCA

In addition to the aforementioned, the agreement should state that your husband shall give you security for the loan (provided it is not your matrimonial home) so that in case of failure to repay it, that security shall be sold to clear the loan. Penalties should be included in the agreement for failure or delay of loan repayment. The penalties may include forfeiture of the security for the loan and instituting a court case against him for breach of contract so that court holds him liable for specific

performance (repay the loan) and damages. Question answered by Dorcus Bayiga Send your questions to herision@newvision.co.ug

NOTE

The advice is intended to provide information about the law and is not intended to create an advocate-client relationship. You should contact a lawyer on specific legal problems.

{sorted}

MY WIFE WANTS ME TO REFUND THE MONEY SHE SPENDS ON BILLS

We got married five years ago when my wife had just graduated from university and was four months pregnant. We agreed that she stays home to take care of our baby. When our firstborn was two years old, my sister came to live with us and take care of him. This allowed my wife to pursue a master's degree, which I paid for. She got a job in a bank after graduation. I recently quit my job to focus on my business. However, the business is not

doing well and I asked my wife to support with some of the bills. She insists on recording every bill she pays, saying I have to pay her back. I am disturbed because pursuing her master's, I gladly paid every bill at home. I have tried talking to her, but she turns a deaf ear. What should I do?

Gerald

EXPERT OPINION

THERE COULD BE AN UNDERLYING PROBLEM

Dear Gerald, Your wife insisting on recording all the expenditures with the view to making you pay back sounds unreasonable in a marriage. In the first instance, couples are expected to work out a mechanism for providing individual financial or social support for the common good. In terms of finances, you made your contribution while the going was good for you. It is inconceivable that your wife should refuse to reciprocate now that she is financially able. Ideally, the management of finances should have been discussed before you got married. At the time you were planning to leave your job, did you discuss it with her? What were her views? Do you discuss with your wife any major decisions that you take? Could

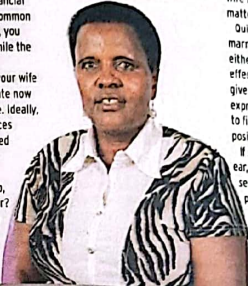
there be any reasons which you have not mentioned that could have prompted your wife to behave in this manner? The current position that is held by your wife requires you to do some soul-searching and hold

discussions with her. This issue may be a symptom of underlying concerns that might rock your marriage. Therefore, you may need to review your relationship with your wife because this is not a small matter.

Quite often, challenges in marriage arise because there are either misconceptions or lack of effective communication. If you give a chance to your wife to express herself, you are more likely to find out why she is taking this position.

If she continues to give a deaf ear, you will have no choice, but to seek support from a counselling psychologist or a neutral third party that both of you trust.

CLEMENCE BYUMUHANGI, COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGIST



YOUR ADVICE

Keeping records is important for accountability

Paying your wife's tuition does not mean that she should just give you money without records. Are you saying that whatever money she uses on family items should be regarded as a refund for what you paid for her education?

Don't you think she is avoiding being extravagant due to a plan which may benefit the family?

Recording home expenditures is normal as she wants to know how



back her money when it picks up. For proper monitoring of your daily expenses, you need a basic personal financial plan to guide you. Therefore, she has to document her current spending and earnings so that she gets a better financial footing. Just take her actions simple, eventually, you will realise the importance of keeping records.

Robert Mugenyi, marriage counsellor

It is your home too

Many women still believe that men should provide for their every need while the money they get is to cater for themselves. This is not right.

This man provided while she was a stay-home mother. Why should he be made to pay back for the items bought for use at home? It is the woman's home too. The sooner she gets that, the better.

Anita Atuhare

Do not take her for granted



Educating her does not mean she should carry the family on her shoulder.

Financial management in marriage should be handled with discipline since it causes breakups. Seek professional counsel as you improve your business, you must provide for your family irrespective of the circumstances.

Carol Carlisle

NEXT WEEK'S PROBLEM

Dear Counsellor, I used to lend my ex-boyfriend money to invest in his business. He paid back occasionally. The last time I lent him sh5m, which I borrowed from a savings scheme. He never paid back. I left him because he even refused to formalise our

relationship. I met another man, who is starting a farm. He wants me to invest with him, but I am reluctant to do so before we get married. He says this shows I do not love him. I do not want to lose him, but I cannot invest with him before marriage. What should I do?

Lindah

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- Drinks - Pastries/Cakes - Apparel - Buffet
- Muchomo - Juice & Snacks - Crafts

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