

We won't give contraceptives to teenagers, says minister

Background. The government has been under pressure from some sections of the civil society to introduce contraceptives to teenagers.

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ENTEBBE. State minister for Primary Health Care Joyce Moriku has said government will not be forced to give contraceptives to girls in a bid to reduce the rising teenage pregnancies in the country.

The recent decision by government to halt the release of the guidelines on contraceptives for teenage girls has been sharply criticised by many human rights activists. The rejected guidelines were, among others, intended to offer contraceptives to children as young as 10 years.

However, Dr Moriku insisted that "the issue of contraceptives and family planning methods isn't our approach to end teenage pregnancies."

"Contraceptives are for married people but for the young people, that's not the appropriate method," Dr Moriku said.

The minister made the remarks yesterday during the opening of a



Demonstration. A health worker explains to school girls how a female condom is used at a recent Health camp in Masaka District. FILE PHOTO

two-day joint UN planning meeting for the integration of new sexual and reproductive health and rights, HIV/Aids and sexual and gender-based violence programmes in Entebbe.

"Giving contraceptives to the young girls is not the solution. Let us go to the root cause of the problem. Let us not give answers but get solutions. We can still reduce teenage pregnancies without using con-

traceptives," she said.

Dr Moriku emphasised the need for parents, and religious leaders to partake in teaching morals to children and girls.

"We want to give appropriate information on sexual reproductive health to children according to their age. If a child is 10 years or 15 years, we give them information that is appropriate," she added.

Endorsement

Dr Moriku noted that integrating the reproductive health programme in the country and across 10 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa would help share best and emerging health practices.

"The integration helps in reducing waiting time by 5 per cent among clients attending their first antenatal and increases health care worker productivity by 54 per cent and an increased uptake of services by clients," she said.

The minister also called for the need to scale up the integration of services in health facilities to ensure that at least 50 per cent of the facilities are able to provide integrated services by 2020 and 100 per cent by 2030.

NUMBERS

The concern. According to the 2016 Uganda Demographic Health survey, 25 per cent of adolescent girls and young women aged between 15 and 19 are either pregnant or mothers.