

ABSTRACT

Title: “THE ROLE OF FAMILY PLANNING IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN UGANDA- a Case study of the Bududa District, Eastern Uganda”

Significance/Background (200 words)

Bududa district in Eastern Uganda, is found in the Mount Elgon Region. According to the 2016 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey, this district has an unmet need for contraception of 38%, higher than the national average of 32%. This has resulted in a high population growth rate of 4.5% in the region, compared to the national growth rate of 3.2%.

This rapid increase in population has placed significant pressure on natural resources, e.g., pressure for land had led to the cutting of trees on the steep mountain slopes, as communities continue to employ poor agricultural methods. Because of the tree loss, this area has become prone to landslides, which, in 2010, claimed more than one hundred lives.

Population, Health & Environment (PHE) programs bring together family planning and conservation programming to support community members in their pursuit of living healthy lives in harmony with their environment. To support this approach in implementation, this study, drawn from the *Integrating Population dynamics, SRHR and Climate Change Adaptations (CISU) Project*, provides evidence to prove the effectiveness of promoting Family Planning (FP) as a critical component of promoting sustainable development in some communities, but it is important that communities first be consulted and surveyed to ascertain their perceived need of such an intervention.

Program intervention/activity tested (100 words)

A survey was conducted which was intended to clarify the role access to Family Planning (FP) plays in managing population growth and promoting sustainable development. The results of the survey would be used to assist in programming, and family planning would be prioritized while budgeting and the results could become a basis for national advocacy for increased budget allocation for family planning to promote sustainable development.

The questions posed to the community were general and open-ended in nature, to offer wider assessment of the level of knowledge of the respondents in relation to the role of family planning in promoting environmental protection.

Methodology (location, setting, data source, time frame, intended beneficiaries, participant size, evaluation approach) (200 words)

The survey was conducted in Bududa district in November 2016, where more than 128 sample participants were interviewed. These included both district leadership and local community members. Additionally, district journals and publications were reviewed to ascertain the perspectives on the role of family planning in the development of their communities.

The survey methods included the use of questionnaires, key informant interviews and a desk review to capture data on the “Role of Family Planning in Promoting Sustainable Development”- using Bududa district as a case study. Questionnaires were presented to survey respondents with both open and close-ended questions. Information interpretation would be done through the creation of tables and graphs for easy information collating and analysis.-

The intended beneficiaries of the survey were policy makers at district and national level. However, other beneficiaries included the residents in the landslides-stricken areas of Bulucheke and Namitsi where the intervention of the district leadership, would foster promote interventions to combat further environmental degradation by increasing budget allocations to FP, tree planting, training locals in better agriculture methods, etc.

The information gathered from the survey would be used to provide evidence to policy makers, but also act as a reference point for added advocacy.

Results/Key Findings (250 words)

From the survey it was found that more than 75% of the respondents agreed that by managing population growth through investing in Family Planning, there will be a reduction in unintended pregnancies. This will prevent further encroaching on natural resources, lessening the risk of environmental impacts and enhancing the potential for societal resilience to climate change.

-Information from the desk review showed that FP or population dynamics at district level, in the past, were rarely considered, if at all, as factors that exacerbate climate change vulnerability. The area’s massive population growth, and the way it undermines efforts made to improve climate change resilience, as well as other development efforts to ensure schooling, health, jobs, etc., were not clearly linked.

However, there had been recent enlightenment around the issues. Mr. Wilson Watira, the District Local Council 5 Chairman, who is the highest decision maker in terms of policy and resource allocation in the district, said family planning is “key to managing population growth and the resulting negative impacts on the economy, environment, and national and regional development efforts including increased national budget allocations for family planning.

It is increasingly being appreciated that addressing population growth is critical to saving the environment, especially in poor marginalized communities, living in a resource deprived environment. To reduce pressure on natural resources and ecosystems, it is important for local district structures to invest in family planning, particularly when striving to attain the Demographic Dividend.

Program Implications/Lessons (250 words)

Lessons learnt from the survey indicate that investment in Family Planning can be the ‘magic bullet’ in sustainable population management and environmental conservation and, this can help to, restore and

husband natural resources sustainably; the study also highlights the value of linking family planning to environmental conservation.

To realize this, it is essential to address the unmet need for FP, appreciate the value of addressing access to family planning services, and ensuring increased budget allocation for FP commodities to enhance access. Empowering communities with modern family planning methods can help reduce average family size and effectively manage the high population growth rates, subsequently addressing natural resource degradation and overuse, leading to overall benefits in livelihoods and survival.

There is need to increase knowledge and awareness amongst key decision makers on the importance of including population dynamics and reproductive health and rights in the formulation and implementation of plans for climate change, incorporating population dynamics and reproductive health needs in strategies, district and national frameworks and interventions for climate change adaptation. It is also important to demonstrate, at local level, these linkages to both policy makers and the affected communities.

A critical gap identified is the skill and ability of affected communities to advocate for these issues with key stakeholders, and the lack of knowledgeable partners to work closely with the communities.