

## ACHEST at the ICPD +25

The African Center for Global Health and Social Transformation (ACHEST) hosted a side event at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD+25) in Nairobi from 12 to 14 November 2019.

The event, under the theme 'Accelerating Actions to close the gender equity gap and youth services delivery: Relevance

of the CSO engagements in driving the ICPD agenda 2030', was convened in partnership with the Ugandan Ministry of Health and advocates from Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Kenya and Zambia.

It sought to deliberate on the role and contribution of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in driving the ICPD agenda, with a special focus on closing the gender equity gap and health service delivery for the youth. The event held on November 13 at Serova Stanley hotel was attended by 61 participants from different countries.

The keynote address titled, 'Accelerating the promise for gender, adolescent and youth equity by 2030', was delivered by Dr Anne Kihara, the president of the African Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (AFOG).

She passionately spoke about how we need to reflect on some of the key things we seek to change by 2030 to drive the development agenda.

Dr Kihara stressed that various population categories have been left out in the development of nations, including women, girls, and young people. She also emphasised the need to focus on gender equity as it is an essential component for realising the demographic dividend or achieving the agenda 2030. She stressed that gender equity and gender mainstreaming means assessing the implications for all genders in any planned action, including legislation, policies and programs. She called for the need to focus on adolescents and youth through the bottom-up approach.



Dr Kihara further shared context analysis on population and development as detailed in the presentation.

During the side event meeting, Eve Merin, the Director Gender and Social Services Kajiado, who represented the Kenya Minister for Gender, revealed that Kajiado is one of the counties in Kenya that has continuously registered poor indicators for young people. She revealed that teenage pregnancies stand at 40%; and about 80% of women are illiterate and yet they comprise the biggest proportion of the population. Even worse, the new HIV infection is constantly increasing with the county ranking fifth in the entire country; and this is catalysed by medieval traditional practices such as female genital mutilation.

However, not all is gloom. With this data, the county leadership acted by working closely with line ministries and CSOs to create change in these indicators. The ministries of gender, health and education formed an inter-ministerial caucus, and together with partners, the county has so far registered success in partnership with organisations like ACHEST and other CSOs. Some of the interventions in place are the new county health policy, women's empowerment policy and a programme to end teenage pregnancies.

The panel, which was moderated by Dr David, Okello the Director of Non-Communicable Diseases and Healthy Ageing at ACHEST, deliberated on the context analysis discussed by Dr Kihara during her keynote address. The

panelists included: Fatma Kaugo (youth leader, Tanzania), Dr Richard Mugahi (Commissioner MoH, Uganda), Gastone Zulu (SAFAIDS Zambia), Roberto Limpaso (Youth Chair, Kajiado County) and Dr Elizabeth Gitao (Kenya).

ACHEST's Director of Policy and Strategy Dr Patrick Kadama called for

the need for CSOs to contextualise messaging from global platforms to the individual communities that they represent so that they can relate to them.

Participants committed to:

- Advocate policies and programmes of action that raise awareness and mind-set change to mitigate the widespread crisis of teenage pregnancies in African communities.
- Lobby for statutory Universal Access to SRHR for adolescents and youth with mandatory Comprehensive Sexuality Education.
- Leverage prior successful experiences of supporting leadership capacity building in advocacy for youth-led organisations, stakeholders to mobilise, create and sustain the space for policy dialogue, networks and communities of practice in the Africa region.

It was agreed that if youth responsive intersectoral policies and programmes were implemented, they would reduce the unmet RAMNAH needs to 30% of their current level in 2019 by 2025 and gradually reduce to zero by 2030 in all countries represented.

*Reporting by Paul Gabula, Project Coordinator, Health Systems Advocacy Project at ACHEST*