

Ministry emphasizes integrating population variables to dev't plans

BY SOLOMON MEKONNEN

ADDIS ABABA - Ministry of Finance and Economic Development Population Affairs Directorate Director Genet Mengistu says that integrating population variables to development plans is crucial to realize the country's Growth and Transformation Plan.

Speaking at an advocacy workshop titled 'Building the Momentum to Meet the Unmet Need for Family Planning' here yesterday, Genet said that in the current national development plan population and development has been considered as one of the crosscutting issues and due emphasis is given to creating conducive environment for the fast-growing working age to be productive and actively participate in the development of the country. "Though remarkable progress has been made in productive health including family planning in recent years, the unmet need for the latter is still high that one in four currently married women has unmet need. The government strongly believes that meeting the unmet need for family planning will substantially reduce maternal morbidity and maternity and is exerting utmost efforts to increase the use of modern family planning methods. Expanding the diversity and coverage of family planning service through health

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institutions, community-based outreach and other outlets was among the priority areas identified in the National Population Policy of Ethiopia," she added.

The Director also said that the workshop was organized at a time when Ethiopia is going to reflect progresses made in fulfilling commitments made to attain the Millennium Development Goals

in relation to family planning on World Population Day Summit which will take place on July 11, 2012 in London.

United Nations Population Fund Representative Dr. Benoit Kalasa on his part said that reproductive health problems remain the leading cause of ill health and death for women of child bearing age worldwide. "Some 222 million women who would

like to avoid or delay pregnancy, lack access to effective family planning. About 1.8 billion young people are entering their reproductive years, often without the knowledge, skills and services they need to protect themselves."

He said: "The government of Ethiopia is committed to enable women and men to choose how many children they have through the use of modern contraception as has been stated in the GTP, the Health Sector Development Plan, and the National Population Policy." The representatives also indicated that the government targets to have 66 per cent of contraceptive prevalence rate by 2015 and achieved significant success. The 2011 DHS has showed a doubling of the contraceptive prevalence rate to 29 per cent and a substantial increases in the uses of modern methods. The unmet need for family planning has declined to 25 per cent in 2011, resulting in total fertility rate to 4.8 children, he said."

According to Kalasa, the workshop is a very good possibility to discuss challenges and opportunities in meeting the unmet need and foster partnership to improve access to family planning. The workshop was attended by Ministries of Health as well as Finance and Economic Development, United Nations Development Fund and other stakeholders.