Press Release
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Marie Stopes International: lessons from East Africa could help countries make huge cost savings and reduce unintended pregnancies

New interactive tool shows benefits of nurses and midwives delivering contraception

Addis Ababa, Thursday 14 November 2013: Marie Stopes International claims that a solution transforming healthcare in East Africa could help countries the world over save money and reduce unintended pregnancies.

“Task sharing” – the training of health workers, such as nurses and midwives, to complete tasks that would otherwise be carried out by doctors - is already routine practice in many pioneering East African countries where Marie Stopes International works. In Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique and Uganda, for example, health workers now safely provide a large number of surgical procedures, including tubal ligation, implants and even obstetric surgery, but many other countries are missing out on the potential benefits.

Nils Gade, Marie Stopes International’s Ethiopia Country Director said:

“Task sharing has helped to generate huge cost savings in Ethiopia and massively increased access to high quality family planning, particularly in isolated parts of the country where women struggle to get contraception. Yet up until now it has often been considered a stop-gap until countries had trained enough doctors. But our experience in Ethiopia proves that countries should embrace task sharing full-stop.”

Task sharing has the potential to rapidly expand access to voluntary family planning. In 2009, Marie Stopes International Ethiopia launched an innovative programme to task share tubal ligation services from physicians to health officers. As a result, the number of sites where the service is offered increased by 400% between January 2009 and April 2012 and the total number of tubal ligations increased by 122% – from 1,623 to 3,600 annually¹.
Task sharing also generates cost savings. In our experience it costs approximately 70% less every year to employ a health officer rather than a physician to provide tubal ligations. These savings can then be passed on to women by increasing the number of places that provide the service.

Speaking at the Conference, the Rt. Hon. Baroness Jenny Tonge, Chair of the UK’s All Party Parliamentary Group on Population, Development and Reproductive Health, said:

“The innovations we are seeing with task sharing are too good to keep to East Africa, the UK and countries the world over should seek to replicate them to give women more choice.”

Marie Stopes International is launching two new task sharing tools at the International Conference on Family Planning in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, this week. The task sharing impact model will enable countries to estimate the potential cost savings that task sharing could have for them, as well as how many more women could be reached and the increased health impacts, including the prevention of unsafe abortions and maternal deaths. The Reproductive Health Policy Index shows how regulatory restrictions on the task sharing of family planning vary across countries, leaving many missing out on the potential benefits.

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Notes to Editors

Task sharing innovation: Lessons from East Africa for health systems globally
Thursday 14 November, 6.00pm, Small Conference Hall 2, African Union Conference Centre

Moderator: Prof. Marleen Temmerman, Director, Dept of Reproductive Health and Research, WHO
Keynote Speaker: H.E. Dr. Kesetebirhan Admasu, Minister of Health, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Mario Festin, Lead Specialist Family Planning, WHO
The Rt. Hon. Baroness Jenny Tonge, Chair of the UK’s All Party Parliamentary Group on Population, Development and Reproductive Health
Amy Rwakihimbo, Senior External Relations Manager, Marie Stopes Uganda

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