

# Dr. Tedros Adhanom

*Speech by Dr. Tedros Adhanom, Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) during a global conference of Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition (RHSC) held in Addis Ababa.*

Board members of the Coalition,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me a great pleasure to welcome you to Ethiopia to celebrate the anniversary of Access for All: Supplying a new decade for reproductive health and mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 2001 Istanbul conference, Meeting the Challenge, which many view as having given rise to today's global reproductive health commodity security movement.

I wish to thank the members of the Coalition for your relentless work. We are increasingly reminded of the fundamental importance of commodity security, and of the consequences that befall those unable to access the quality supplies they need.

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, an estimated 201 million women want to postpone or delay childbearing, but do not have access to family planning. Closing the gap so that every woman at risk of unintended pregnancy has access to modern contraceptives would cost around \$4 billion more per year. It would save the lives of an additional 1.5 million women and children annually, reduce abortions by 64 per cent and reduce illnesses related to pregnancy. Surveys show that it is the poorest women and couples that have the least access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, including family planning. If we ensure access to these services and supplies, we will reduce social inequity and the poverty that runs from one generation to the next. The family planning agenda and meeting unmet need for contraception must be revitalized and for this we need greater partnership and collaboration. Today, commodity security has become an integral, indispensable part of the RH equation.

No national, or even regional, RH strategy would not address reproductive health, and we can attribute this higher profile to the work of the RHCS community. Now, through the RHCS programme, countries are moving towards more predictable, planned and sustainable country-driven approaches to securing essential supplies and ensuring their use.

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me outline what we are doing to achieve reproductive health commodity security in Ethiopia. Recognizing the importance of RHCS for health and development, the government of Ethiopia is engaged in a range of efforts to improve access and quality of Family Planning services in an accelerated manner. The Health Sector Development Plan has put an ambitious target of increasing the CPR from 32% to 65% by 2015. To reach this ambitious target, the major leap forward over the past years is provision of Family Planning services at community level through the Health Extension Program. Health Extension Workers play a key role in the government's strategy to expand access to family planning information and services to all woredas/districts.

Thus, they are engaged in distributing condoms, pills, providing injectables and inserting Implanon (a single rod implant) at the community and health post level. While contraceptive prevalence is rising, many potential users, especially those in rural areas, lack information or have misconceptions about long acting and permanent methods. An estimated 34 per cent of sexually active women would like to stop childbearing or delay their birth by at least two years, but are using no contraceptive methods.

To address this issue, UNFPA through the Global Program to Enhance Reproductive Health Commodity Security (GPRHCS) program provided a total of \$25 million between 2008 and 2010 to support the family planning program. In 2008, the Ministry of Health together with UNFPA and other partners, embarked on an initiative to both increase access to long-acting contraceptive methods and to create demand through strategic communications. The ongoing support to encourage family planning over the past three years has meant a significant increase in CPR. According to the recent JSI-Last 10 Kilometer (L10k), USAID funded survey the CPR has increased from 32% to 40%. This is mainly attributed to the Health Extension Programme.

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Ministry of Health has regularly allocated and ring-fenced funds for reproductive health commodities, which, while not adequate, are a step in the right direction. We all recognize that the unmet need for family planning is increasing and yet we are still constrained by the resources available with competing priorities in a bid to improve availability of Reproductive Health Commodities at the district level.

Furthermore, fundamental changes were introduced in the way procurement and distribution of reproductive health supplies are handled in this country by establishing a semi-autonomous agency - the Pharmaceutical Fund Supply Agency. This agency is pushing standard essential medicines, RH commodities and contraceptives to lower level health facilities through Integrated Pharmaceutical Logistic Systems. At this moment I wish to extend my gratitude to development partners who have been vital in assisting the Ministry in maintaining adequate stocks of contraceptives and other reproductive health supplies in the country, mainly UNFPA, USAID, and others.

The stock-outs report and availability of at least three contraceptive methods for contraceptives at all frontline health facilities (health posts) has increased from 60% to 95% and 60% to 90% respectively. This increase is attributed to the GORHCS Program. However, I call for increased funding, strengthening supply chain systems and establishment of a strong coordination mechanism.

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We need to redouble our efforts if we are to ensure universal access to reproductive health by 2015. Without supplies, individuals cannot exercise their reproductive rights. We need to work together on stronger advocacy.

As we move forward in our efforts to achieve commodity security, we look to the Coalition as a critical source of information, guidance, and solidarity.

It is my sincere conviction that by working together, we can achieve our intended objective to ensure that every person living in Ethiopia can choose, obtain, and use the reproductive health supplies he or she needs.

Thank you!!!