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UN official calls for greater investment in voluntary family planning programmes



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World leaders must invest more in voluntary family planning programmes, a senior United Nations official said today, stressing such programmes not only save and improve the lives of women and children, but also reduce poverty and empower people.

As a global [conference](#) on family planning kicked off in Dakar, Senegal, Babatunde Osotimehin, the Executive Director of the UN Population Fund ([UNFPA](#)), said there was an “appallingly high” unmet need for voluntary family planning.

“Investing in voluntary family planning today will not only pay dividends now, but will also help history’s largest generation of young people enjoy opportunities and forge a brighter future.”

Dr. Osotimehin, a keynote speaker at the conference, said: “Family planning will also save women’s lives and enable them to space their pregnancies, so that they can seize educational and employment opportunities. This would empower and enable them to contribute even more to their communities and nations.”

To meet the global demand, he said “we must galvanize greater political and financial support. We must hold governments accountable for their commitments, and champion innovation and access – both in the global North and in the South. Commitments need to turn from words to action.”

More than 2,000 scientists, experts and policy-makers are attending the four-day conference to discuss the latest research and programmes aimed at advancing family health and increasing access to family planning.

Currently an estimated 215 million women living in developing countries do not have access to modern family planning.

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