

**First Lady Jeannette Kagame's Remarks At the
24th Ordinary General Assembly of OAFLAD,
On the Margins of the 33rd African Union Summit**

Under the Theme:

**“Gender Equality and Women Empowerment: A Pathway to the Africa
We Want”**

Question 5: In 2019, what were your key efforts towards enhancing adolescents' sexual and reproductive health in your country? How do you plan to take your efforts forward in 2020?

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
10 February 2020**

**My Dear Sisters,
Distinguished Partners,
Esteemed Technical Advisors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good Morning.

Distinguished Guests,

Recent studies conducted by UNFPA inform us that social ills, such as child marriage, transactional sex, alcohol and drug abuse, and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, still persist around us. We know these are taboos in our societies

We should be concerned that growing gaps in parent-child communication, as well as limited access to Sexual Reproductive Health information and quality services, are hindering our efforts to delivering the Africa we want, and that our youth deserve.

Indeed, how comfortable can we be, knowing that in East and Southern Africa, nearly one in five adolescent girls are getting pregnant?

Undeniably, we must not rest as long as in Sub-Saharan Africa, at least one third, of early pregnancies are unplanned – building up to pregnancy and childbirth complications, being the leading cause of death, among 15 to 19 year-olds.

Esteemed audience,

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo, in 1994, brought about a shift as it called all nations to enforce women, and girls' sexual reproductive rights.

Rwanda, in its commitment, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, by the year 2030, declared Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health, a national priority, for our socio-economic development.

Through a multi-sectoral response, and the support of partners, we invested in designing and implementing regional commitments, youth-friendly policies, legal and institutional frameworks, to preserve SRH rights.

To compliment our Government's efforts, my organisation, Imbuto Foundation:

1/ Through the **Adolescent and Youth Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights project**, is pairing schools and communities, with healthcare centres, to provide SRH knowledge and youth-friendly quality services, through 'youth corners';

2/ Through the multi-partner, **Baho Neza Integrated Health Project**, we are carrying out nationwide awareness campaigns, on Sexual Reproductive Health, Family Planning, and the prevention of teenage pregnancy - while disseminating manuals, to facilitate Parent-Adolescent Communication.

3/ Through the **Innovation Accelerator (iAccelerator) programme**, in partnership with UNFPA, we are encouraging the youth to become agents of change, by providing innovative and business-led solutions, to SRH challenges – with this year's challenge surrounding teenage pregnancy.

Last but not least,

4/ Through the **First Time Young Mothers programme**, we are supporting young mothers aged 10 to 19, from vulnerable backgrounds, to access maternal and newborn health services, counselling, as well as family reintegration, as they are often confronted with stigma.

Distinguished Guests,

With this, allow me to conclude by sharing with you some key recommendations, based on my countries' experience:

1/ **Policy and legal reforms**, addressing age of marriage, consent to sexual activities, and access to SRH information and services, on the continent, **should be treated as a matter of urgency**,

2/ **Young people's participation**, in the planning and delivery of SRH and rights services and information, at all levels, **should be promoted**, as nothing can be done for them without them.

3/ **Strengthening national and global partnerships**, with committed partners like you here present, **should be prioritised**.

4/ And most importantly, as Sisters, let us further use our platform, **to learn from each other's best practices**, for the true upliftment of our communities.

I thank you for your kind attention.