

HLPF SDG 5 Session: *Lightening Talk by Menyo Innocent, Team Lead M-SCAN*

With only 7 and a half years left to 2030, is there hope for member states to achieve the set targets of SDGs!? A Case for M-SCAN, and our contribution to SDG5; Gender Equality & inter-linkages with SDG3: Good health & Well being.

In light of gender equality, there has been progress with more women in decent work places & achieving high quality job. However, social protection, poverty and freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes and **safe childbirth spaces** are still a big challenge. Key to note, many of these areas of inequality have been exacerbated by COVID-19 pandemic: with a surge in reports of sexual violence. The Pandemic also exacerbated delays in seeking for maternal health care with; delay in accessing health facilities due to restriction in movements, delay in seeing a medical personnel and delay in making a clinical decision/taking action.

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.

As such in line with social protection of women, we cannot talk gender equality without talking about safe spaces for delivery and overall maternal health.

Maternal mortality in Uganda in 2015 when SDGs were set stood at: **387 women per 100,000 births**

Maternal mortality in Uganda as of 2021 stands at: **368 deaths per 100,000 births**

Maternal mortality in Uganda in Covid-19 increased by 10.4%⁹ (A report by UNFPA Uganda) and as such future responses to pandemics should be balanced with reproductive and maternal health services through giving special consideration to women in all responses. Government, through a multi-stakeholder approach, should ensure that maternal health services are inevitable whether or not the country is in crisis. When crises hit the country, high priority should be given to women in need of Maternal Health Services who may be struggling to get to health facilities.

Through my innovation M-SCAN, a low cost portable ultrasound device that can work on laptops, tablets and mobile phones for use in low resource facilities, we are tremendously contributing to maternal health in Sub-Saharan Africa through penetrating the hardest to reach areas and offering the much needed ultrasound services to pregnant women. This comes a long way in early detection of risk factors of maternal health and timely intervening mothers hence safer maternal experiences for the women.

Through our approach we believe women deserve a worthwhile child bearing experience with no worry of dying during the process, and as such through having timely scans, they and the midwife/clinician plan for birth adequately and timely even in presence of complications.

To-date, we have scanned over 2,000 pregnant women and detected over 600 complications, deployed to over 25 hospitals and we are scaling our impact. At the peak of Covid-19, we offered home based ultrasound services to pregnant women stranded in their homes, through this there was a 16.3% increment in detection of complications in mothers we scanned.

With more global partnerships and collaborations, we project to deploy over 200 devices and scan at-least 3.6 million pregnant women by 2030. This is our contribution to gender equality and to good maternal health with a mind of leaving no one behind.