



EMBARGOED 12:01 GMT 22 May 2012
Press Release

Global Leaders Celebrate Innovations in Reproductive Health Funding, Policies and Services

First-ever Resolve Awards recognize Nepal, Malawi, Rwanda, and Ethiopia

Note to Editors: The event will be livestreamed at <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/events/resolveaward> and video, photos and a blog will be available afterwards. To schedule interviews, please contact Cathy.bartley@bartley-robbins.co.uk.

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND (22 May 2012) – 2012 has been a breakthrough year for reproductive health. On 22 May, 2012, the Honourable Joy Phumaphi, former Minister of Health Botswana, will present the [2012 Resolve Award](#) to government representatives from four countries who have embodied these gains: Ethiopia, Malawi, Nepal, and Rwanda.

The Award recognizes the enormous progress each has made towards making family planning and reproductive health services accessible to all of their citizens, mobilizing a growing global consensus which - after decades of neglect - is finally placing women's empowerment at the heart of the development agenda. It is named for the resolve shown by those country's leaders in finding innovative solutions to address access to family planning despite limited resources and other challenges.

The Resolve Award was created by the Honourable Mary Robinson, former President of the Republic of Ireland, and the [Global Leaders Council for Reproductive Health](#) to recognize country led innovations in service expansion, policy development or financing that result in increased access to family planning and reproductive health. The [2012 inaugural awards will be presented at an evening celebration](#) at the US Mission during the World Health Assembly.

The Global Leaders Council for Reproductive Health, established by The Aspen Institute in 2010, works to increase public awareness of the centrality of family planning to all aspects of economic and social development. This year's four winning countries were selected from a robust pool of Resolve Award nominations that spanned social media, access for medically underserved populations, and a wide range of policy and finance mechanisms. In addition, Yemen has been selected to receive an honourable mention.

"Investing in family planning and reproductive health programmes not only has a direct impact on the lives of women and children, it is also a critical factor in conserving natural resources, increasing security. Improving education and promoting economic development," said Joy Phumaphi. "If we are serious about health as a human right, we should begin with full funding of the unmet need for family planning services."

Each winning country sent a representative to accept the award in a ceremony in Geneva, Switzerland at the time of the World Health Organization's annual assembly. The country representatives agreed that in these innovations, political leadership is key, and that leaders in each of their countries have a growing understanding that investments in family planning pay economic

and social dividends – not to mention save lives, save money spent on healthcare and education, and reduce humanity's impact on the planet and climate change.

Health policymakers from countries around the world gathered to hear remarks about each country's award-winning approach, which were divided into the areas of service expansion, financing and policy development.

Through financing mechanisms like cash incentives for pregnant mothers to get trained care and elimination of user fees for delivery, Nepal has increased births in hospital from 18% to 33%.

Malawi's leaders have greeted the 73% of Malawian women who demand access to family planning via increased political will and multiple policy interventions; the country has increased use of modern contraceptives dramatically from 7% in 1992 to 46.1% in 2010.

Rwanda's investment in health for all—especially women and children—is cited as a cornerstone of that country's remarkable progress towards democracy and economic growth. Rwanda has quadrupled its contraceptive prevalence rate from 10% in 2005 to 45% in 2010, and has reduced its fertility rate by more than a third (from 86 per 1000 live births to 50) and maternal mortality by half (from 750 per 100,000 live births to 50). And Ethiopia, the second most populous nation in Africa, has doubled its use of contraceptives from 15 % to 29% and cut average desired family size from 6-7 to 3-4. Policy changes to this end include working across sectors at ministry level and pioneering a powerful community based health worker system.

The Council hopes that the lessons learned from these award winners will stimulate other countries to follow suit prioritizing reproductive health.

"Family planning is a fundamental right; it saves lives and builds the foundation for economic development. The Resolve Awards were created to call attention to scalable innovations that might change the lives of the 215 million women around the world who want to delay or avoid their next pregnancy, but lack access to reproductive health information or services," said Peggy Clark, Executive Director of Aspen Global Health and Development and Vice President of Policy Programs at the Aspen Institute.

"Reproductive health is now recognised and endorsed as a critical component of development by some of the world's most influential individuals and institutions. We hope that the Resolve Award will further inspire both donors and developing country governments to do more to meet the unmet need for family planning. It is inspiring to see Malawi, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Nepal and Yemen, prioritize family planning and women's health. With their strong leadership, inspiration and example, the huge momentum for family planning which is building worldwide, will continue."

Full Speaker List:

Chair: The Honourable Joy Phumaphi, former Minister of Health of Botswana and former Vice President of Human Development at the World Bank; member of the Global Leaders Council for Reproductive Health

Ambassador Betty E. King, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva

Ambassador Shanker Das Bairagi, Nepal's Permanent Representative to the UNOG, WTO, and Other International Organizations

Honorable Kebede Worku, State Minister of Ethiopia

Honorable Joseph Kasonde, Minister of Health, Zambia

Honorable Nils Daulaire, Director, Office of Global Health Affairs, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dr. Jean de Dieu Ngirabega, Director General of Clinical Services, Ministry of Health of Rwanda

Dr. Charles Mwansambo, Principal Secretary for Health Ministry of Malawi

Dr. Jamela Saleh Alraiby, Deputy Minister of Public Health and Population of Yemen

Dr. Ariel Pablos-Mendez, Assistant Administrator for Global Health, U.S. Agency for International Development

Dr. Flavia Bustreo, Assistant Director-General of Family, Women's and Children's Health, World Health Organization

Read a policy brief on the [population/climate connection](#) and on [population growth, reproductive health and sustainable development](#). Follow us at @GLCRHResolve.

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