

SPRING 2016

# Pathways

**Young Mothers  
Take Control of  
Their Future**



**Pathfinder**  
INTERNATIONAL



# Uganda's Young Mothers

For youth without a choice about your support offers hope



DOROTHY

UGANDA: Linda Suttentfield

Living on Bussi Island, surrounded by Africa's largest lake, it's easy to feel isolated—especially if you're a girl.

"No one really knew who I was," says Dorothy.

Like most girls here, Dorothy married by 18, had a baby, dropped out of school, and had more babies. Within five years, she had five children.

"I gave birth every year," she says. "The pain was unbearable."

Dorothy delivered four of her babies at home, without electricity or a doctor to help. As soon as she recovered,

she was pregnant again. "I didn't know what family planning was," she says.

## A Problem for All of Us

Dorothy belongs to the largest generation of young people in history. Today, half the world's population is under 25. And the youth population is growing fastest in the world's poorest countries.

"Everyone should care about this issue," says Dorah Taranta, Pathfinder's Project Manager in Uganda. "Our future depends on young people's futures. Tomorrow's leaders will not be able to



In Uganda, **HALF** the population is **UNDER 16**



# ers Unite pregnancy,

UGANDA: Maren Vespia

lead if their urgent needs for sexual and reproductive health are ignored.”

For young women like Dorothy, the situation is dire.

“We’re talking about some of the most socially isolated people,” says Dorah. Forced out of school by pregnancy, burdened by family obligations and endless chores, “these young mothers struggle to belong and believe in themselves.”

As a Pathfinder supporter, you understand how difficult it is for

these young women to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights when they feel so powerless. So we’re taking action—helping them empower each other.

## The Young Mothers Club

In the shade of a banana plant, Dorothy sits among a group of young women wearing matching shirts that say “HOPE.”

This is the Young Mothers Club. Every month, Dorothy and 19 of her peers come together to gain the

knowledge and support they urgently need. It’s all part of Pathfinder’s Health of People and Environment in the Lake Victoria Basin project.

Since 2012, Pathfinder and our partners in Uganda and Kenya have been uniting groups of underserved young people. We provide them with new information on topics that affect their lives, including family planning, maternal care, child immunization, and how to generate income.

“Pathfinder can train health care providers. We can tell young people where they can access contraception and how to use it,”

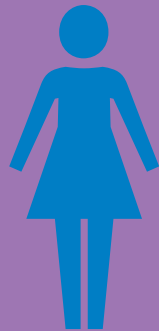
Today's generation of young people is the largest in history

Over  
**50%**  
of our global population is  
under 25



## FOR GIRLS, THE SITUATION IS URGENT

Globally,  
**39,000**  
girls become  
**child brides**  
every day



The **2nd leading**  
**killer of girls**  
ages 15-19 is  
complications  
from **pregnancy**  
and **childbirth**

*"Because of family planning, I can give the children I have more. I want my daughter to be educated."*

—PAULINE AND HER BABY CYNTHIA

Young women need the power to make their own choices about their bodies and futures

Pathfinder advances young people's sexual and reproductive health in **20+ countries**



Source: UNFPA State of the World's Population 2014 & 2015



*"Before, we were seen as wasted. Now we're an example. See us for who we really are. We are the light of Bussi Island."*

—ANNETTE

# Change Lives with Us

says Dorah. “And we do that everywhere we work. But until young women like Dorothy are able to believe in themselves, they won’t believe change is possible. That’s what makes the Young Mothers Club so important.”

Pathfinder implements groups for young women all over the globe. In Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Niger, Tanzania, and Uganda, vulnerable young women are embracing their self-worth and learning about their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Hand in hand, they are becoming stronger and creating their own paths forward.

**Gertrude, the group’s young leader, welcomes everyone to her home.**

“A lot has changed because of this group,” Gertrude says proudly.

“Before, we were shy, almost afraid of people. But now we’ve learned things — about family planning and how to take care of ourselves and our children. We confide in each other.”

**Pauline, another young mother, steadies her daughter on her lap.**

“I think it’s important to share what I’ve gone through,” she says. “I didn’t space my pregnancies and faced a lot of problems. My children got sick. I didn’t have clothes or enough food. But now I want to wait to get pregnant again. My daughter is still so young. She needs my attention and love.”

**Dorothy nods. This sounds like her story too.**

“My youngest child is two and, for the first time, there is no new baby immediately after her.” Dorothy smiles and points to the contraceptive implant in her upper arm. “I learned the truth about family planning.”

## Change You Made Possible

Through this Pathfinder program, nearly **20,000 women** began using contraception for the first time in 2012–2014. More than half of them were young women between the ages of 12 and 24.

Thanks to you and your support for Pathfinder’s work, some of the world’s most vulnerable youth now have the power to prevent unintended pregnancy and shape their futures. And they have become a force for change in their communities.

Just look at Dorothy—exercising her rights and helping more young people have choices about their bodies and health.

“We go to community meetings on Sundays now,” says Dorothy, “People recognize me. They say, ‘It’s young mother Dorothy. She can talk to us about family planning!’”

“It feels good,” she says.

*The Health of People and Environment in the Lake Victoria Basin project is made possible through a close partnership between Pathfinder International, Nature Kenya, and Ecological Christian Organization. Funders: USAID via the Evidence to Action project, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the Barr Foundation.*



**“We are united.  
We feel good  
about ourselves.  
It hasn’t always  
been this way.”**

— GERTRUDE



## Change You're Making Possible



### In Niger, Deciding Together

**In a country with one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world, young brides and their husbands discover contraception**

NIGER: Tagaza Djibo

#### **THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR WORK IN NIGER!**

#### **13,000+ young married women**

now have a favorable opinion about using contraception to delay and space their pregnancies.

#### **Nearly 13,000 packets of contraceptive pills**

have been distributed in health facilities and in communities, ensuring even the most isolated young women can get the health care they need.

#### **Husbands have made 10,000+ visits**

to workshops to learn about and reflect on sexual and reproductive health and family planning—to transform their thinking and protect their families' futures.

Your support for Pathfinder enables us to go where the need is greatest. That's what brought us to Niger, where three out of every four girls are married by 18. And a staggering 93 percent of married girls between 15 and 19 are not using any form of contraception.

"Most of these young brides don't have the power to decide whether or when to have children," says Sani Aliou, MD, MPH, Pathfinder's Country Representative in Niger. "In these communities, men make the decisions. You cannot do anything without their support."

Pathfinder accepts the challenge—engaging husbands and male community leaders to reflect on gender norms and inequalities and to support the rights of their young wives. "We reach young women with contraceptive services," says Dr. Aliou, "and we make sure they have their husbands' support to use it."

In the village of Bougoum, a Pathfinder-trained community health worker named Salamatou visits 16-year-old Kadidja and her husband, Aboubacar, 21, in their home. "I am here to give you both information about family planning," says Salamatou, displaying a sample of contraceptive methods across her lap. The young couple listens closely. They are not ready to have children.

"I got married at 15," says Kadidja. "We want to wait until I am 19 or 20 to have a baby, so there won't be any problem with my delivery." Her husband agrees. "We don't want to become one of those couples we see, where the wife gets pregnant after only three months of marriage and there are a lot of problems," Aboubacar says. "Salamatou advised me on family planning and opened my mind. We are learning another way."

This work is made possible through funding from the John Templeton Foundation, Pathfinding Fund, Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and with support from donors like you.

## Dear Pathfinders,

### Why do we care so much about this cause?

For me, it's simple—I dream of a world where women and men are seen as equal. Where a woman has opportunities and can exercise her rights, the same as a man.

In Mozambique, my dream can sometimes feel very far away. We have many challenges to overcome, and too many women must fight just to survive.

I will never forget her. Laying in an emergency room, the woman could not talk. She could not walk by herself. A nurse had to guide her, holding her arm. She was like a dead woman walking.

I warn you that what I'm about to say is really upsetting: she had been raped by six men inside of her home in front of her husband and their three children. I thought, 'What happens to her future?' I felt heartbroken and so angry. Women do not deserve this. I knew I had to do something. I think about her almost every day. She inspires my work for Pathfinder.

I stand up for women's sexual and reproductive rights because I've seen what it looks like when those rights are taken away.

When you don't have the power to decide what happens to your body—when someone makes those decisions for you—it's devastating. Someone else decides when you have sex. Someone else decides when you are pregnant and when you finish school. If you live or die—someone else decides.

### **As Pathfinders, we refuse to accept this.**

Every day, I commit myself to helping women in my country make informed decisions about their own bodies and futures. I help bring women together in small groups so they share their experiences and learn about their health, their rights, and their options for contraception.

These women inspire me. And I want you to know their names:

**I want you to know about Olga**, who had three children by age 19 and learned how to effectively prevent future unintended pregnancies through



MOZAMBIQUE: Maren Vespiá

## TELL US WHO INSPIRES YOU

This spring, we're celebrating women like Nina who fight for equal opportunity, reproductive rights, and the better future we all know is possible.

Recognize a strong woman in **YOUR** life—a loved one, colleague, teacher, or fellow activist—who dares to change the world.



**WOMENDARE.ORG**

our support group. Today, Olga tells us she even has the confidence to ask her husband to use a condom during sex—to protect herself.

**I want you to meet Lucia**, who suffered violence at the hands of her partner, but had no idea it was a crime until she participated in one of our trainings. After learning her rights, Lucia pressed charges against the perpetrator, took legal action to protect her children, and became an activist and role model for women everywhere.

These women—and thousands more like them—keep me going. They prove that we are making a difference and that my dream may be closer than I think.

Thank you for defending the rights of women,



**Nina Yengo, MA**

Pathfinder's Project Officer for Gender-Based Violence & Sexual and Reproductive Health in Mozambique

## It All Starts Here For Bill Tate

**“My daughters are amused because their father has a great deal of difficulty talking about sex and reproduction,” jokes Bill Tate.**

A longtime Pathfinder supporter, Bill knows this subject is important. So despite any discomfort, he speaks out, carefully choosing each word.

“Sexual and reproductive health is not only a matter of life and death for individual mothers and children. It’s also the foundation on which the health and vitality of families, communities, nations—and ultimately our world—is built.”

Like you, Bill knows that a woman’s ability to decide if and when to have children affects everything. “Her health and happiness, her ability to work in ways that are productive and satisfying to her and her community,” he says, “it all starts here.”

That’s why Bill and his wife, Susan, have donated to Pathfinder every month for the past decade.

“Pathfinder is the best at what they do. They are scrupulously fact-based in their work and have a superlative staff. Most of all,” says Bill, “we give because we feel the need to put our money where our mouths are.”

Bill believes that every individual should be able to choose their own path forward. This belief has guided him for most of his life:

**As Chief of Staff in the US House of Representatives**, serving progressive Republican Jim Leach of Iowa for over 20 years. “We worked for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment and for a woman’s right to choose...”

**As husband to Susan and father to Winifred and Frances**—three strong women whom he affectionately calls “the fundamental influence on my life.” Bill says, “I want for everyone what



I’ve always wanted for them—a full and healthy life of their own choosing.”

**And as a steadfast supporter of Pathfinder’s work.** “Every woman needs the knowledge and means to determine how to live her own sexual and reproductive life. That’s what Pathfinder does,” says Bill.

“My role is to move that work forward in whatever small way I can.”

In 2015, Bill joined Pathfinder’s Board of Directors. It was an opportunity to make an even bigger difference.

“As an older white man, I’ve had all of the benefits society can give. I’ve come to the realization, relatively late in my life, that these benefits are not earned. They’ve been given to me as a result of cultural biases. People of color and half the human race—women—have not had access to them. So I need to do whatever I can to share these benefits, share these opportunities.”

By raising his voice and supporting Pathfinder’s work, that’s exactly what Bill is doing.

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