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More images available on request.



VIDEO: Stacey Solomon visits Uganda for Sport Relief

Stacey investigates the stark reality faced by millions of women when it comes to family planning and sees how a special project in Uganda is stepping up to help change lives forever

WATCH FILM HERE

Monday 12th March: In a new film released today for Sport Relief, TV presenter and mum-of-two, Stacey Solomon, shares her journey to discover how family planning can help break the cycle of poverty and give women greater control over their lives.

Having access to family planning can be a game-changer for women. It means they can choose to complete their education, pursue that dream job, and choose to start families when they are ready emotionally, physically and financially. But for 214 million women around the world, that choice is not an option - contraception is not available.

Last week, Stacey travelled to Kampala, Uganda's capital, where the unmet need for family planning is huge but The Challenge Initiative, with help from Sport Relief cash, is stepping up to do something about it.

Mothers desperate to give their children the best start in life, shared their personal experiences with Stacey, talking about the pressures that come with having unplanned pregnancies in close succession in their teen years and how, now, the choice can be between food or school for their kids.

After hearing first-hand the reality of life without access to contraception, Stacey spent time with health workers dedicated to making a difference, seeing them in action delivering life-changing services to hundreds of women at a special pop-up community health event on the edge of a city slum.

Stacey said: "I became a mum at 17 and when I had my second child, I had all the right support around me to make sure that I was ready – mentally, financially and physically. I had the freedom of choice but millions of women around the world don't have that choice.

"One mum I met, Nubuwati, has seven children and three grandchildren and she's only 37-years-old. She had her first child when she was 14 and so had to drop out of school. Life is difficult and she told me she has to choose buying food over paying school fees so her children aren't getting an education. She doesn't want any more children and until now, hasn't had any access to family planning. Seeing

Nubuwati get the help she desperately wanted with The Challenge Initiative was incredible, especially as she brought her two teenage daughters along to try and stop the cycle in her family. Both mum and one of the daughters decided to take up a method of contraception. It's amazing to think that they can now live the life they want."

Knowing about, and having access to, family planning methods can save lives, improve health and help families break free from the grip of poverty. From helping girls stay in school by preventing unplanned pregnancies which cut-short their education, to reducing the risk of a mother dying in child birth in developing countries, to helping ensure babies have healthy birth weights – family planning brings a wealth of health and social benefits to families and wider communities.

Stacey added: "I feel so proud to be able to help raise awareness of this work, it's so important and from what I've seen in Kampala, it feels like a no-brainer. The list of health benefits family planning brings for mothers and babies is literally endless – I could go on forever - but the key thing is, women want it and they should have access to it, just like we do in the UK. It shouldn't be any different. Choosing when and whether to have a baby is a fundamental right of all women, no matter where they live."

Sport Relief is back from 17th-23rd March. To find out how to get involved and support more work like this, visit sportrelief.com.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Sport Relief

Sport Relief brings the nation together to get active, raise money and change lives. Since 2002, Sport Relief has raised over £335 million. The money raised by the public will be spent by Comic Relief to tackle the critical issues affecting people across the UK and the world. This year, Sport Relief culminates in a week of activity from Saturday 17th to Friday 23rd March, leading to an unmissable night of TV on the BBC.

Comic Relief

Comic Relief is a UK charity which aims to create a just world, free from poverty - where everyone is safe, healthy, educated and empowered. Since 1985, Comic Relief has raised over £1 billion. That money has helped, and is helping, people both at home in the UK and across the world. For information about Comic Relief and the work it carries out, please visit www.comicrelief.com
Comic Relief, registered charity 326568 (England/Wales); SC039730 (Scotland)

The Challenge Initiative

The Challenge Initiative (TCI) offers a "business unusual" approach to financing, scaling up and sustaining high-impact family planning solutions for the urban poor. It represents the Bill & Melinda

Gates Foundation's single largest family planning investment. Working through implementing partners in East Africa, Francophone West Africa, India and Nigeria, TCI believes expanding access to family planning can mitigate several pressing social issues and save millions of lives. TCI is led by the Bill & Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health in the Department of Population, Family and Reproductive Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. For more information about The Challenge Initiative please visit tciurbanhealth.org.