

NO WOMAN SHOULD DIE GIVING LIFE

FACTS and FIGURES 2

CONTRACEPTIVES SAVE LIVES

Meeting the Needs for Family Planning

WORLDWIDE, 200 MILLION WOMEN report wanting to delay or prevent a pregnancy but are not using effective contraception—either because they don't have access to it, they fear side effects or because their husbands and families object. This results in thousands of unintended pregnancies, ill health and maternal deaths.

Researchers estimate that the lives of 150,000 women could be saved each year with access to sufficient family planning. In addition, by increasing birth intervals to at least 24 months, the deaths of one million or more children under the age of 5 could be averted. Access to family planning empowers women, reduces poverty and enhances sustainability.

Increased family planning services are needed because demand will grow by an estimated 40 per cent during the next 15 years. Although an economically sound investment, family planning has unfortunately slipped down the global agenda, both as an international development strategy and as a priority. Funding is falling, and the gap between need and available resources is growing.

If the Millennium Development Goals are to be met, the international community will need to re-establish family planning at the top of the development agenda—and that requires both political and financial commitment.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

- An estimated 200 million women worldwide want to delay or avoid pregnancy but are not using family planning.
- Researchers project that the demand for contraception will grow by 40 per cent during the next 15 years.
- Worldwide, the use of modern contraceptive methods, including voluntary sterilization, has increased from 10 per cent to 65 per cent over the past 45 years.

Why family planning?

The aim of family-planning programmes must be to enable couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, timing and spacing of their children and to have the information and means to do so and to ensure informed choices and make available a full range of safe and effective methods. (ICPD, paragraph 7.12)

- In 26 of 32 countries with a yearly population growth higher than 2 per cent, only 17 per cent of married women aged 15–49 on average—or their partners—are using contraceptives.
- In most of Asia and Latin America, national family planning programmes have stabilized population growth. Despite this, the needs of the poorest populations have only been partially addressed.
- In nine sub-Saharan African countries, over 30 per cent of married women have no access to contraceptives. In 15 more, between 20 and 30 per cent of married women have an unmet need for contraceptives.
- Fewer than 20 per cent of all sexually active young people in Africa use contraception. Key barriers to use include insufficient knowledge, fear of social disapproval, side effects, health concerns and often, misperceptions regarding the partner's opposition.
- In 56 developing countries the poorest women average six births, compared to 3.2 in the wealthiest fifth.
- The rate of unmet need for contraception is higher for poorer couples than for wealthy ones.
- Every year, 50 million of the 190 million women who will become pregnant resort to abortion—often in unsafe and unhygienic conditions.
- An estimated 19 million unsafe abortions were carried out in developing countries in 2000.
- Every year, an estimated 68,000 women die as a result of unsafe abortions and millions more suffer from related complications.
- About 90 per cent of global abortion-related deaths and disabilities could be avoided if women who wanted it had access to effective contraception.

BENEFITS OF ACTION

- About one third of the 536,000 maternal deaths each year could be averted if women had access to reliable family planning methods.
- Modern contraception prevents 2.7 million infant deaths annually in the developing world.
- Having fewer, healthier children can reduce the economic burden on poor families and allow them to invest more in each child's care and schooling, helping break the cycle of poverty.

- Since the 1960s, family planning has reduced fertility in developing countries from an average of six births per woman to three,
- When fertility rates fall, more women join the labour force.
- Fulfilling the unmet need for family planning could reduce fertility by 35 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean, 20 per cent in the Arab States, eastern and southern Africa and 15 per cent in Asia and West Africa.
- In most African countries, high fertility and runaway population growth pose a greater threat to the achievement of anti-poverty goals than HIV.
- Contraception contributes to the fundamental right of families and individuals to choose when and how many children to have.
- Universal access to primary education and the elimination of the educational gender gap is more likely to occur where there is lower fertility, slower population growth and later childbearing.
- Investing in family planning enables faster economic growth in nations by reducing fertility and changing the age structure and dependency ratio of a given population.
- Depending on what social services are offered, each dollar spent on family planning may save governments up to US\$31 in spending on health, education, housing, water, sewage and other public services.
- Slower population growth places less stress on limited natural resources, including fresh water and arable land.

WHAT MUST BE DONE?

Family planning and access to contraceptives are essential for the prevention of maternal deaths and to achieve universal reproductive health for all. Unfortunately family planning has slipped down the list of international development priorities, and unmet need, inadequate supplies and increasing demand pose serious challenges to development in many countries.

Most governments in poor countries have adopted appropriate population and family planning policies, but many are not implementing them owing to lack of funds and/or political will.

There is an urgent need for high-level political and financial commitment to promote family planning at the global, regional, national and local levels. NGOs and civil society are crucial to this work.

UNFPA believes the following will help provide that commitment:

- A broad coalition of support from influential groups.
- Adequate funding.
- Universal access to contraception and information about contraception as well sexuality, health and reproductive rights counselling for both men and women.
- Mass media campaigns that legitimize the idea of smaller families by focusing on benefits.
- A wide range of safe and effective contraceptive methods to be made available in health facilities and through social marketing and outreach services.
- National and local debate regarding the rights of men and women in relation to their bodies, health, education and access to resources.

WHAT IS UNFPA DOING?

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, works to ensure universal access to reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health for all. Advocacy and provision of family planning is essential to this work.

The complex logistics of providing the right quantities of the right products in the right conditions in the right place at the right time for the right price involves many actors, including both the public and private sectors. UNFPA works with governments, civil society and sister United Nations agencies, and takes a lead role in providing and coordinating the distribution of reproductive health commodities, forecasting needs, mobilizing support and building logistical capacity at the country level.

UNFPA advocates the right of all people to family planning and provides contraceptives to health posts and hospitals that supply millions of men and women worldwide. In just one year, UNFPA helped procure and distribute more than US\$27.4 million worth of condoms.

LINKS

UNFPA: No women should die giving life:
<http://www.unfpa.org/safemotherhood>

Family planning: so that every pregnancy is wanted
<http://www.unfpa.org/rh/planning.htm>



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