

## Comprehensive Condom Programming: A Key Tool for HIV Prevention

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Male and female condoms are currently the most efficient and available technology to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among sexually active people. While the search for HIV vaccines and microbicides continues to make progress, condoms will remain the key preventive tool for years to come.

Although condoms are inexpensive and cost-effective, they are not readily available and accessible to everyone who needs them. According to UNAIDS, nearly 13 billion condoms would be needed by 2015 to help halt the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections worldwide. The reality falls short. In 2008, 2.4 billion male condoms were provided by UNFPA, USAID and other donors. That same year, only four condoms were available for every adult male of reproductive age in sub-Saharan Africa, the region with the greatest HIV prevalence.

Female condom availability is also very poor. In 2009, only one female condom was distributed for every 36 women worldwide. Studies have shown that adding female condoms to programmes that are already promoting and distributing male condoms increases the number of protected sex acts. In situations where women lack the power to negotiate the use of male condoms with their partners, access to female condoms gives women an important tool to protect themselves and their family.

Condoms must be universally available — either free or at low cost — and marketed widely to motivate people to use them. They are the only dual protection method available against unintended pregnancies and STIs, including HIV.

### ADVOCATING A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

Within the UN System, UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is the lead agency for all aspects of condom programming. UNFPA advocates for comprehensive condom programming to ensure that those at risk of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and/or unintended pregnancies:

- Are motivated to use male and/or female condoms;
- Have access to quality condoms;
- Have accurate condom information and knowledge;
- Use condoms correctly and consistently.

In 2005, UNFPA launched the Global Condom Initiative, which works in 72 countries to increase both the demand for, and the supply of, condoms at the national level. Governments from low- and middle-income countries should have a budget line for male and female condoms and adequate national financial resources to procure and programme these commodities. This includes motivating users, strengthening service providers and developing educational materials to promote consistent and correct condom use.

UNFPA promotes a combination of prevention strategies in addition to condom use. These include: delayed sexual debut, abstinence, monogamy, partner reduction, male circumcision, voluntary counselling and testing, and prevention of HIV from parents to children to effectively reduce the transmission of HIV.

UNFPA is the largest public-sector procurer of male condoms and the second largest of female condoms in the world.

### KEY DATA

- Sexual transmission accounts for more than 80% of new HIV infections worldwide<sup>1</sup>.
- According to UNAIDS, nearly 13 billion condoms would be needed by 2015 to help halt the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections worldwide<sup>2</sup>.
- In 2008, 2.4 billion male condoms were provided by UNFPA, USAID and other donors as compared to the estimated 10 billion needed that year to cover all risky sex acts<sup>3</sup>.
- In 2008, only four condoms were available for every adult male of reproductive age in sub-Saharan Africa<sup>4</sup>.
- Female condom availability is still very poor. In 2009, one female condom was distributed for every 36 women worldwide<sup>5</sup>.
- The vast majority of low and middle income countries do not have a budget line for condom acquisition, and instead rely heavily on development agencies for their condom supply.

### EXAMPLES OF PROGRESS

- **Thailand's** efforts to de-stigmatize condoms and its targeted promotion for sex workers and their clients dramatically reduced HIV infections in these populations and helped reduce the spread of the epidemic in the rest of the population.
- Recent national population-based surveys in seven sub-Saharan African countries, namely **Botswana, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Malawi, and Namibia**, have shown that an increase in condom use — in conjunction with delayed sexual debut and reduction in sexual partners — is an important factor in the decline of HIV prevalence, contributing to substantial savings in terms of lives and costs.<sup>6</sup>

*Updated July 2010*

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<sup>1</sup> Global Report on the AIDS Epidemic, UNAIDS, 2008

<sup>2</sup> Contraceptive Projections and the Donor Gap: Meeting the Challenges, RHSC, 2009

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> UNAIDS Letter to Partners, 2010

<sup>5</sup> CCP Progress Report, UNFPA, 2009

<sup>6</sup> Global Report on the AIDS Epidemic, UNAIDS, 2008