



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

ISSUE BRIEF

USAID'S Family Planning Services

USAID has long been a leader in the effort to improve health by providing couples with voluntary family planning services. Because USAID's programs maximize access to quality family planning and reproductive health care, more couples and individuals in the developing world have been able to determine freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children. Family planning programs:

- Provide modern methods of contraception to hundreds of millions of couples annually
- Save the lives of mothers and children and enhance their health and well-being
- Slow population growth and reduce poverty

USAID missions in more than 50 countries serve as the point of direct contact, while the Washington, D.C., technical staff work with U.S. and host-country partners to design programs centered on clients' needs and expressed desires. All initiatives are cost-effective; promote quality, voluntarism, and informed choice; maximize access; and achieve a sustainable public health impact.

Priorities

More than 200 million women in the developing world will enter their reproductive years during the next decade. To meet their needs and increase the impact of its programs, USAID has set the following priorities:

Increase women's and couples' access to services. More than 380 million women, nearly 60 percent of couples in the developing world (excluding China), want to limit or space their births, yet more than 200 million of them do not have access to family planning services.¹ To increase access to and quality of reproductive health care, USAID's programs train health care professionals and ensure adequate physical facilities, commodities, and equipment while integrating family planning with other health care programs.

Increase contraceptive security. USAID strives to ensure that women and couples have long-term access to a range of high-quality contraceptives, condoms, and other essential health supplies in several ways. Commodity distribution is supported across all sectors – public, private, and nongovernmental – in all countries.

Help fight the AIDS epidemic. Incorporating education and counseling to promote condom use and other HIV/AIDS prevention messages in family planning programs, especially in countries with medium or high HIV/AIDS prevalence, can help stop the spread of the epidemic. Currently, USAID works to reduce the incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), promotes private sector condom marketing, and supports intensive communication campaigns to promote safer sexual behaviors. USAID research also shows that adding family planning programs to programs for the prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission can greatly reduce the number of orphans while saving the lives of thousands of women and children at less cost than antiretroviral drug treatment programs alone.

Reinvigorate family planning in West Africa. Recognizing the critical need for family planning programs, USAID works to raise awareness of the importance of family planning in meeting other health and development goals while continuously identifying ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of programs in a region with high birth rates and high unmet need.

Maximize access and quality of care (MAQ). MAQ identifies and addresses barriers to client access and works to improve family planning service delivery standards and quality. Additional assistance is essential in such areas as provider training, service management and supervision, client education, and increasing the choice of available contraceptive methods.

Provide special programs for youth. More than 1 billion young people are entering their reproductive years, with 2 billion more soon to follow. Too many young people lack basic information about reproductive and sexual health and are not being adequately served by existing programs. USAID is working to meet the challenge of establishing patterns of informed and responsible reproductive decisionmaking early in life. Delaying sexual activity and first pregnancy and increasing responsible practices, including abstinence and condom use, will not only protect young people's health and quality of life, but will also contribute to the health and prosperity of the world's future population.

Strengthen postabortion care. Improving treatment for complications of spontaneous and induced abortion both saves lives and is useful in providing women with the family planning information and services they need to avoid repeat abortions.

Program Assistance Is Offered in Many Areas

USAID-funded programs have trained more than half a million medical professionals and community-based health workers. This alone has helped increase access to and improve the quality of both family planning services and client education, especially for people living in hard-to-reach rural communities.

USAID developed a global system for the delivery of contraceptives. Many countries and donors rely on the Agency's contraceptive supply forecasting system, which ensures availability and contraceptive choices year-round.

USAID helps developing-country professionals collect and use data from Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and other surveillance instruments to plan and evaluate their programs and to develop and implement policies that improve access and quality of family planning. DHS include statistics on maternal health and mortality, fertility, contraceptive use, HIV/AIDS, child health, and safe motherhood.

USAID pioneered contraceptive social marketing programs and supports innovative mass media and public information campaigns that educate consumers about issues ranging from family planning and contraception to HIV/AIDS prevention.

USAID research has advanced the development of new and improved contraceptive pills, intrauterine devices, and female-controlled barrier methods that can protect against STIs. USAID also uses research to improve understanding of client needs in order to advance the quality of services.

In addition, USAID addresses **poverty and health equity** issues by exploring the linkages and improving access to family planning and reproductive health programs in developing countries. USAID's family planning programs promote **gender equity** by providing guidance in areas of research, training, communications, and service delivery. USAID works to encourage **private sector participation** in the commodities market. Programs also work to abandon **female genital cutting** and address the reproductive health concerns and needs of **displaced populations**. A final priority is to identify the synergistic relationship between **population, health, and the environment**.

Facts and Figures

Since 1965, the use of modern family planning methods in the developing world has more than quintupled, from less than 10 percent to 54 percent in 2005.²

In the 28 countries with the largest USAID-sponsored programs, the average number of children per family has dropped from more than six to less than four.

If fertility were to remain constant at current levels in all countries, the world population would almost double by 2050, reaching 11.7 billion. Other scenarios predict that much lower global population increases are possible (e.g., to 7.7 billion by 2050), but these projected declines in fertility are contingent upon access to family planning.³

1) Singh S., et al. (2003). Adding It Up: The Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health Care. New York: The Alan Guttmacher Institute and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). 2) UNFPA. (2005). State of World Population 2005. New York: UNFPA. 3) United Nations. (2005). World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision. New York: United Nations.