



## ISSUE BRIEF

### Repositioning Family Planning in Sub-Saharan Africa

Repositioning Family Planning is a multilateral initiative to ensure that access to quality family planning services remains a key issue for policymakers and providers working to impact children's health as well as the health of women and men in Africa. The goal is to mobilize commitment to and strengthen family planning services in this region, which will lead to expanded access and help meet women's stated desires for safe, effective modern contraception. Crucial to the success of this initiative are:

- Increased political commitment for financial and human resources for family planning
- Strengthened participation and coordination among national leaders, donors, and other partners, including the private sector
- A more effective allocation of resources toward technically sound programs

#### Why Family Planning?

Over the past 40 years, the availability, use, and funding of family planning programs and services have increased worldwide. However, in many countries, family planning services are not meeting demand. This is especially true in sub-Saharan Africa, where contraceptive use, though increasing, is low and already high levels of unmet need are rising. Unless more can be done now, the situation will worsen as growing populations place even greater demands on health systems. At the society level, unwanted fertility fuels a rate of population growth that outpaces the socioeconomic development capacity of governments and undermines national goals to increase equity and reduce poverty.

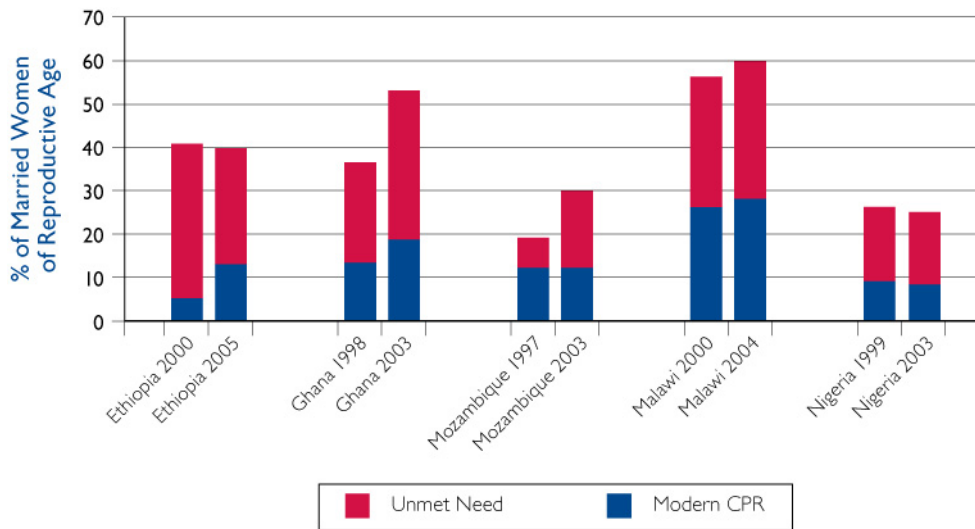
If governments helped people achieve their expressed desired fertility, they would vastly improve the health and lives of millions of women, girls, infants, and families, and, by so doing, contribute to national development. Access to affordable, high-quality family planning services is one of the most important health interventions to:

- Decrease maternal and child mortality
- Reduce poverty
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Promote development

Fewer and better-spaced pregnancies result in lower maternal mortality and improved health for both mothers and children. Smaller families mean a decreased dependency ratio, allowing increased investment in the health, education, and welfare of each household.

#### Keeping a Focus on Family Planning

Family planning programs in Africa showed some dramatic successes through the 1990s. Kenya almost doubled its modern contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) from 17.9 percent in 1989 to 31.5 percent in 1998, accompanied by a steady decline in the total fertility rate. Malawi had an even more dramatic upsurge in modern CPR – almost quadrupling from 7.4 percent in 1992 to 26.1 percent in 2000. However, the emergence of HIV/AIDS has resulted in shifts in priorities and funding, diluting attention to family planning. At the same time there has been a paradigm shift in development programs with the advent of population reduction strategy papers, Millennium Development Goals, and sectorwide assistance plans, all of which are systemwide approaches requiring an integrated response. Proponents have worked to keep family planning on national agendas, but new approaches are needed to ensure family planning is an integral part of national health programs.



### Priority USAID Repositioning Family Planning Activities

Identifying targeted areas for increased investment and technical support in family planning at the country level

Providing leadership development training to ensure advocates and managers have the skills needed to work in this new environment

Developing methodologies for National Health Accounts sub-account analysis and other financial tools to support Ministries of Health in planning and budgeting for family planning services and commodities

Improving the policy environment for private sector involvement in family planning service delivery

Increasing health sector capacity by expanding the cadre of service providers, including training community-based distributors to administer injectable contraception

Working with international and national partners in identification and dissemination of best practices

**August 2006**