

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SUPPLIES: THE FACTS

350 million women worldwide still lack access to reproductive health supplies and every single minute a woman dies of pregnancy related causes, usually due to lack of supplies. There is a massive gap between the demand for reproductive health and its supply, due to part to the largest ever generation of young people, the increased risk of sexual HIV transmission and decreased donor support for sexual and reproductive health and rights programming.

Interact Worldwide is the UK partner of Countdown 2015 Europe a group of 18 leading European NGOs experienced in advocacy for reproductive health in ODA. We work in 15 European countries in a concerted effort to achieve increased financial support of European donors for Reproductive Health Supplies (RHS) and to improve European coordination and coherence to narrow the gaps between the needs, demand and availability of the necessary supplies to secure universal access to reproductive health as an essential step toward achieving the MDG's.

Why are Reproductive Health Supplies Important?

The massive lack of reproductive health supplies (RHS) endangers the lives of both mothers and their children. Ensuring a consistent and secure supply of RHS is one of the most efficient and cost effective ways of saving lives. Satisfying the unmet need for family planning in developing countries would avert 52 million unintended pregnancies annually, which, in turn, would save more than 1.5 million lives and prevent 505,000 children from losing their mothers¹.



Globally, each US\$ 1 million in funding for reproductive health supplies could avoid:

- 360,000 unintended pregnancies
- 800 maternal deaths
- 150,000 induced abortions
- 11,000 infant deaths²

What is Reproductive Health Supply Security?

Reproductive health supplies are not just condoms or contraceptives. They refer to all essential equipment, commodities and medicines required for sexual and reproductive health, maternal and neonatal health and for effective responses to HIV and AIDS.

Ensuring reproductive health supplies security means ensuring that supplies are affordable, accessible, appropriate and available.

Ensuring reproductive health supplies are available to all of those who need them would allow countries to make massive strides towards the achievement of the MDG's.

Life expectancy of individuals living in countries with higher levels of contraceptive prevalence is on average more than 22 years higher than in countries with poor prevalence rates³. For example, Angola, which has a contraception prevalence rate of 6.2%, has an average life expectancy of 41 years, while neighbouring Gabon has a contraception prevalence rate of 32.7% and an average life expectancy of 57 years. Even slight differences in the availability of reproductive health supplies can make a huge difference⁴.

¹ UNFPA and The Guttmacher Institute, 2003, Adding It Up: The Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health Care, www.unfpa.org/upload/lib_pub_file/240_filename_addingitup.pdf

² UNFPA <http://www.unfpa.org/supplies/securing.htm>

³ Calculated from WHO data

http://www.who.int/whosis/whostat/EN_WHS08_Full.pdf

⁴ Ibid

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Are there Enough Supplies?

- 350 million women worldwide still lack access to reproductive health supplies.
- In 2003, half of all pregnancies in Uganda were unintended, and on average, every Ugandan woman has 2 more children than she wants⁵.
- In rural Tanzania, 6 times more unmarried and 11 times more married teenagers want to use contraception than currently have access to it⁶. Overall only 29% of women in rural Tanzania use modern contraceptive methods⁷.

It is clear that there is a massive gap between the demand for reproductive health supplies and their availability.

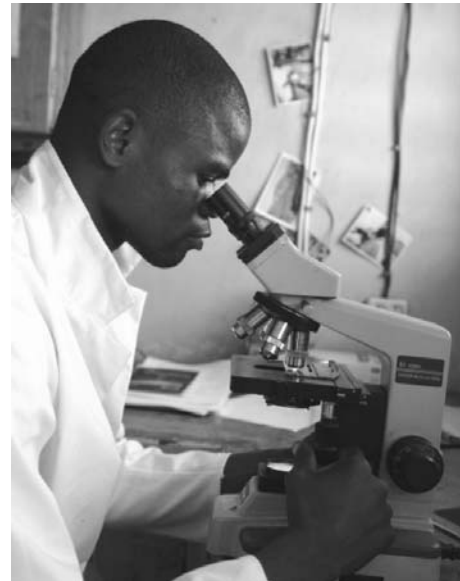
Why are there Shortages?

1. Increased demand from an increasing population and the largest ever generation of young people.
2. Increased risk of sexual HIV transmission.
3. Supplies are expensive and not accessible.
4. Decreased donor support for sexual and reproductive health and rights programming.

Donor contributions for reproductive health supplies have stagnated over the past 5 years. While donors contributed around 40% of the total global cost in the mid 1990s, since 2000 this has fallen to around 25% of global need. Total donations have remained relatively constant since 2001. Meanwhile, the cost of providing reproductive health supplies continues to rise, and is expected to almost double by 2015⁸.

Recommendations

- **The UK must maintain its commitments to provide universal access to reproductive health services and channel funding for reproductive health supplies through a mix of aid instruments.**
- **Invest in the research and development of new reproductive health supplies, such as new varieties of female condoms and microbicides to ensure a variety of options are available to fill all needs.**



Sources:

All photos by Countdown 2015 Europe and Arjen Van de Merwe

⁵ Singh et al 2005, International Family Planning Perspectives

⁶ Marchant et al, 2004, African Journal of Reproductive Health

⁷ Marchant et al, 2004, African Journal of Reproductive Health

⁸ UNFPA <http://www.unfpa.org/supplies/facts.htm>