

FAMILY PLANNING: SAVING THE LIVES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

By allowing women to limit and space childbearing, family planning decreases rates of pregnancy-related morbidity and mortality. Women who become pregnant within 18 months of giving birth do not have sufficient time to recover from the physical stress of the earlier pregnancy, and each subsequent pregnancy multiplies a woman's chances of dying from complications of pregnancy or childbirth. Today, it is estimated that 222 million women in the developing world want to avoid a pregnancy, but are not using a modern method of contraception. This unmet need has a profound impact on the health of these women and their children. Family planning can play an essential role in preventing premature deaths in the developing world and improving the lives of women and their families.

800

WOMEN A DAY
DIE FROM CAUSES
RELATED TO
PREGNANCY AND
CHILD BIRTH

MEETING THE
UNMET NEED FOR
FAMILY PLANNING
COULD PREVENT

1.1M

INFANT DEATHS
A YEAR

FAMILY PLANNING SAVES THE LIVES OF WOMEN

Every day approximately 800 women die from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. Almost all of these deaths occur in developing countries, and most could be prevented. Meeting the unmet need for contraception could save the lives of 79,000 women each year by allowing them to delay motherhood, space births, and avoid unwanted pregnancies.

FAMILY PLANNING SAVES CHILDREN'S LIVES

Closely spaced pregnancies are associated with an increased risk of low birth weight, small size for gestational age, preterm birth, and other health risks for children. Birth spacing also gives mothers more time to breastfeed, improving infant health and nutrition. A recent report in *The Lancet* suggests that a 2% increase in spending for maternal and child health could save the lives of 147 million children and prevent an additional 32 million stillbirths by 2035. Just meeting the unmet need for family planning alone could prevent 1.1 million infant deaths every year.

FAMILY PLANNING SAVES THE LIVES OF ADOLESCENT WOMEN

Family planning helps to reduce adolescent pregnancies. Although progress has been made in reducing adolescent births, today more than 15 million of the 135 million live births worldwide occur among girls aged 15-19 years old, and 90% of adolescent pregnancies in the developing world are to girls who are already married. Complications in pregnancy and childbirth are the leading causes of death among adolescent girls in developing countries, and babies born to adolescent mothers have a higher rate of neonatal mortality. Pregnant adolescents are also more likely than adults to have unsafe abortions; an estimated 3 million unsafe abortions occur globally every year among adolescents aged 15-19.

FAMILY PLANNING REDUCES ABORTIONS

More than one quarter of pregnancies worldwide, about 40 million annually, end in abortion. Nearly half of all abortions are conducted by persons lacking the necessary skills or in an unsafe environment. The overwhelming majority of unsafe abortions (98%) occur in developing countries. An estimated 47,000 women die every year from unsafe abortions, while millions of others suffer long-term disabilities. Meeting the unmet need for family planning services and education could reduce unintended pregnancies in developing regions by 60%, and eliminating 54 million unintended pregnancies would prevent an estimated 26 million abortions a year.

90%

OF ADOLESCENT
PREGNANCIES IN
THE DEVELOPING
WORLD ARE TO
GIRLS WHO ARE
ALREADY MARRIED

47K

WOMEN DIE
EVERY YEAR
FROM UNSAFE
ABORTIONS

EVERY DAY

700

INFANTS BECOME
INFECTED WITH
HIV, AND 90% OF
THESE INFECTIONS
ARE ACQUIRED
THROUGH
MOTHER-TO-CHILD
TRANSMISSION



SUB-SAHARAN
AFRICA'S
POPULATION WILL
INCREASE FROM
926 MILLION IN
2013 TO

2.2B

BY 2050



EVERY \$1 INVESTED
IN FAMILY
PLANNING SAVES

\$6

IN OTHER AREAS
OF DEVELOPMENT.



FAMILY PLANNING REDUCES DEATHS FROM AIDS AND REDUCES THE SPREAD OF STIs

Globally, women of childbearing age account for more than half of all HIV cases. By promoting condom use, family planning programs can prevent sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Unintended pregnancies, unfortunately, are very high among HIV-positive women. Every day 700 infants become infected with HIV, and 90% of these infections are acquired through mother-to-child transmission. By preventing unplanned pregnancies among HIV-positive women, mother-to-child viral transmission can be averted. Integrating family planning into PEPFAR and other HIV programs can save lives.

FAMILY PLANNING IMPROVES FOOD SECURITY

Progress has been made in reducing global hunger, but progress has been slow in countries experiencing rapid population growth. While the number of undernourished and stunted children below the age of five fell to 25 percent of the world's population in 2010 from 40 percent in 1990, the number of stunted children in sub-Saharan Africa rose from 44 million to 58 million.

Despite declining fertility, demographers project that sub-Saharan Africa's population will increase from 926 million in 2013 to 2.2 billion by 2050. Because of drought and rising temperatures, crop production may not be able to keep pace with population growth, particularly in countries experiencing the highest rates of population growth. The population of Niger, which demographers believe could quadruple in the next 40 years, already suffers from very high rates of hunger, malnutrition and stunting.

FAMILY PLANNING REDUCES PRESSURES ON HEALTH CARE DELIVERY SYSTEMS.

Rapid population growth in developing countries puts a strain on health care delivery, slowing the expansion of vital health care services to poor communities. By reducing that strain, family planning can improve a community's access to health care. This is particularly true in sub-Saharan Africa, where substantial investments in reproductive health care services, including significant increases in the number of health care attendants, have done little to increase the percentage of women receiving antenatal care. For every \$1 the U.S. spends in family planning, \$6 is saved in other areas of development, enabling the U.S. to invest that money in other lifesaving programs.

**Giving women the ability to space
or limit their pregnancies is a *life-saver...*
for them and their families.**

For more information see: *Adding it up: Costs and Benefits of Contraceptive Services*,
Guttmacher Institute and United Nations Population Fund.



POPULATION
INSTITUTE