

Countdown 2015

EUROPE

Campaigning for universal access
to reproductive health

Family planning, poverty & economic development

What is family planning?

Family planning refers to supplies and services which enable individuals and couples to attain and plan for their desired number of children, and the spacing and timing of births. Supplies include modern contraceptive methods, such as oral pills, injectables, IUDs, hormone-releasing implants, vaginal barrier methods, and male and female condoms. Services include health care, counselling and information and education related to sexual and reproductive health.

Today, 222 million women in developing countries wish to avoid pregnancy but are not using a modern form of contraception. In other words, they have an unmet need for family planning. In many places, this is because family planning services and supplies are not available, accessible or affordable.

Access to voluntary family planning is a fundamental human right. This is acknowledged by governments in international agreements such as the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Family planning also plays a catalytic role in improving the health and well-being of women and children, while at the same time influencing other areas of human development, including gender equality. In particular, family planning is a crucial and cost-effective step towards poverty reduction and economic development.

Family planning helps prevent household poverty

Complications from pregnancy and birth not only threaten the health and lives of women and children, they can also have economic consequences for families. In many countries, maternal health care is not free and can be extremely expensive for poor households. For example, in Burkina Faso, delivery costs are estimated to be 43% of the per capita income in the poorest households and as much as 138% for a caesarean section.

On the other hand, when family planning services are accessible and affordable, they can have positive, long-term effects on the lives of women, girls and families. For instance, sexually active adolescent girls who use contraception are less likely to drop out of school due to pregnancy than their peers who do not use contraception. In addition, girls who delay their first birth until later in life are better able to take advantage of training and education, which is a deterrent to household poverty. Healthy women are also more productive in the workforce and stand to earn more throughout their lives than women who suffer ill health.

Overall, studies find that women and couples who can decide on the number, spacing and timing of their children are better able to save resources, increase their household income, invest in their existing children, and better plan their lives (see box 1).

Box 1. Use of contraception and women's likelihood of paid employment in three countries (2010)



Family planning and economic development

In recent decades, countries with lower fertility and slower population growth have experienced higher productivity, more savings and more effective investments. In many countries, a reduction in fertility at the household level has translated into potential economic growth at the macro level in the space of just one generation. This is attributed to the 'demographic dividend': lowered fertility results in a larger group of working-age people, who support relatively fewer older and younger dependents.

While reduction in fertility alone is not sufficient to improve economic development, it is a necessary component. Countries in East Asia, in particular, have benefited from the demographic dividend. An estimated 30–50% of the region's economic growth from 1965 to 1990 can be attributed to changes in population dynamics, which are strongly influenced by access to reproductive health services and contraceptives.

Globally, there is a correlation between the prevalence of modern contraceptive methods and per capita gross domestic product (GDP).

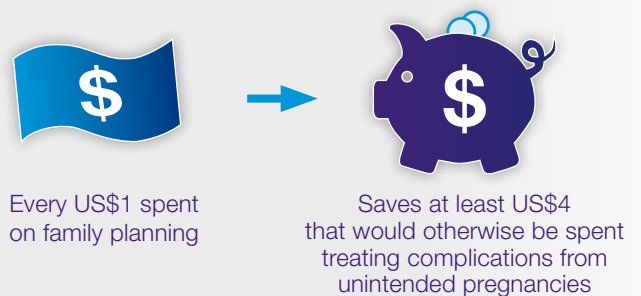
In addition, the private, for-profit sector may find that providing employees with family planning services can lower medical costs of pregnancy and maternity leave, lower employee turnover and increase productivity and profit.

Addressing unmet need is a cost-effective investment

In the past decade, aid for family planning has declined as a proportion of total aid for health in virtually every recipient country. There is a significant risk of losing ground with regard to the gains made in family planning and rights to health unless investment and commitment increase.

Fortunately, the costs of providing family planning are outweighed by the savings generated in other areas. For example, to meet unmet need for modern contraception in developing countries, costs would increase by **US\$3.6 billion per year**. However, costs for providing newborn and maternal health services would decrease by **US\$5.1 billion per year**, and costs for providing post-abortion care would decrease by **US\$140 million per year** (see box 2).

Box 2. \$1 spent on FP saves \$4



WHAT EUROPEAN DONOR GOVERNMENTS CAN DO

- **Governments should increase funding for family planning in development cooperation.** This will promote economic development, reduce overall health system costs, and increase the autonomy, productivity and earning power of women and girls.
- **Governments should ensure that private-sector involvement in family planning provision is effective and transparent.** The private, for-profit sector could play a role in helping to provide family planning services and supplies. Governments should ensure that donor support to the for-profit sector is transparent, accountable, takes into account the United Nations Global Compact principles, and prioritizes local small- and medium-sized businesses in developing countries.

Countdown 2015 Europe is a consortium of 16 leading European non-governmental organizations working to address the unmet need for family planning in developing countries. The consortium raises awareness and promotes increased European donor support in terms of policies and funding to ensure universal access to reproductive health and family planning worldwide. For more information, please contact the International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network (IPPF EN) at: countdown2015europe@ippfen.org or visit www.countdown2015europe.org



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