



## WHY FAMILY PLANNING MATTERS

Family planning programs help millions of people, providing reproductive health care that saves lives, avoids unintended pregnancies, and offers more choices.

National leadership commitment and adequate funding for family planning programs are essential to assure widespread access to good-quality reproductive health care. Support from health care officials, policy-makers, donor agencies, women's organizations, the news media, and religious and community leaders also is important.

Advocacy for family planning is becoming crucial as demand for reproductive health care grows. Worldwide, as many as 600 million people use contraception, and millions more would do so with better access to good-quality services. Although fertility levels are falling in much of the world, rapid population growth remains a critical issue in most developing countries, where needs are great and resources are scarce.

### Benefits of Family Planning

Family planning benefits individuals and countries in many ways. Among the most important ways are:

- **Saving women's lives.** Avoiding unintended pregnancies could prevent about one-fourth of all maternal deaths in developing countries. Especially, using contraception helps avoid unsafe abortions to end unintended pregnancies. It also enables women to limit births to their healthiest childbearing years and to avoid giving birth more times than is good for their health.
- **Saving children's lives.** Spacing pregnancies at least two years apart helps women have healthier children and improves the odds of infants' survival by about 50%. Limiting births to a woman's healthiest childbearing years also improves her children's chances of surviving and remaining healthy.
- **Offering women more choices.** For many women, controlling their own childbearing, by using effective contraception, can open the door to education, employment, and community involvement. Also, couples who have fewer children are more likely to send their daughters as well as sons to school.
- **Encouraging adoption of safer sexual behavior.** All sexually active people need to protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS. Always using condoms correctly or avoiding sex except in a mutually monogamous relationship are the best ways. With enough support, family planning programs along with parents, schools, and peers could help more young people make sexual decisions responsibly, avoiding STIs and unintended pregnancies.



## **Benefits of Slower Population Growth**

As more people choose family planning, fertility falls and population growth slows. Although fertility has fallen throughout the world, further declines would make a crucial difference in many developing countries. World population has reached 6 billion and is growing by nearly 80 million people each year.

- **Slower population growth helps protect the environment.** It conserves resources, preserves clean air and water, improves health, eases pressures on cities, and helps avoid conflict.
- **Slower population growth aids development.** It buys time and, with more of the population in their productive years, provides a demographic bonus that can be invested in education, job creation, health care, and other efforts to raise living standards. The sooner fertility falls to low levels, the better most countries will be able to achieve sustainable development. Even small declines in fertility today will make a substantial difference in population size in the future.

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