

## Family Planning

### USAID Global Health

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Family planning assistance is crucial to saving the lives of women and children, helping countries stabilize their populations, protecting the environment, and promoting U.S. political and economic interests throughout the developing world.

An estimated 200 million women in the developing world want to space or limit births, but are not using modern methods of contraception. The health consequences are grave: More than half a million women

die each year from causes related to pregnancy. When a mother dies, her children are less likely to survive.

Maternal and child mortality can be substantially reduced by family planning. Research by the United Nations shows that access to family planning alone would lessen global maternal deaths by 20 to 35 percent and child deaths by 20 percent. Other key researchers estimate that if mothers in developing countries could space their births three years apart, infant and under-5 mortality rates would decline by 24 percent and 35 percent, respectively. Family planning can eliminate at least one in three maternal deaths each year by helping women manage life-threatening births that occur too early or too late in life. It prevents unintended pregnancies that could result in abortion. Also, family planning can help alleviate the spread of HIV/AIDS, particularly mother-to-child transmission.

Women want family planning for the health benefits. They see it in broad terms, recognizing that having smaller families and spacing births are important steps not only in their efforts to improve their own lives and health, but also to ensure that their families are better fed, clothed, educated, and healthy.

Additionally, most of the world's nations recognize that family planning programs play an important role in human and economic development. Since 1967, USAID has been delivering family

planning services and supplies. Currently, the Agency has a presence in 60 countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, Russia, and Eastern Europe at the request of the countries. USAID's work is known worldwide as one of the most successful components of U.S. foreign assistance.

The Agency's support emphasizes choice among a wide range of contraceptives, improved quality of care, and client-centered services. Programs are frequently delivered with other community-based efforts to improve maternal and child health, enhance women's status, prevent HIV transmission, and blend agricultural and environmental protection with health. Counseling about nutrition and obstetric care are included, as well. Essential elements involve training health workers, providing services, designing innovative educational campaigns for mass media, and developing and marketing improved contraceptives. Contributing to these activities is support for research and data collection and evaluation, all of which are crucial to informed decisionmaking and more effective programs.

Because of USAID's work, more than 63 percent of married women worldwide are using family planning. Hundreds of thousands of women and children are alive today because of U.S. help. USAID's contribution costs each U.S. taxpayer less than 3 cents a week, or \$1.44 per year.

With this investment, taxpayers are working in common cause with those living in lesser-developed nations, helping them improve their lives and health, reduce pressure on the environment, stop the extinction of plant and animal species, and lessen food and water shortages. A disaster across the globe can profoundly impact lives in the United States. USAID programs contribute greatly to the prevention of such problems.

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**Web site**

[http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/global\\_health/pop/index.html](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/pop/index.html)

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