



Raising Public Support: family planning's benefits

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[Slide 1, Raising Support: the benefits of family planning]

Family planning is at the heart of solutions to world problems. The poverty cycle can't be broken as long as there is fast population rise – aid sent in can never supply enough. It is becoming clearer that population multiplication from ever larger generations will inevitably deplete world water, food and fuel resources. The global temperature is already simmering as the human family gets too large to live in peace and equity on our planet.

[Slide 2, Family planning as a principal strategy]

Family planning has been overlooked as a principal strategy, in part because of cultural/religious opposition, in part because of the rise of AIDS. In recent years only 5% of reproductive health spending worldwide has been for contraception. Funding for family planning services decreased in absolute dollar amounts by over a third between 1995 and 2003. Australian Government overseas funding for reproductive health shrank by 84% over the past eleven years.

[Slide 3, The best option to deal with climate change]

Family planning is vastly under-funded and is by far the cheapest option to deal with climate change. Family planning is essential to combat poverty and social disruption and must be properly resourced. Migration and fighting are traditional tools of population limitation. Family planning would help sustain the delivery of education, because 2 million additional elementary teachers are required each year to serve present birth rates.

[Slide 4, Foundations can lead thinking, photos]

Private foundations can lead, proposing models for governments to evaluate. Foundations can raise public awareness as well as funds, to fill a need. In many cultures it is difficult to talk about family planning, and we need public support so that governments and NGOs will include it.

Women's Plans Foundation holds fundraising morning teas, lunches, dinners and auctions. We invite people to enjoyable occasions so they can learn of the good that family planning can do. In welcome speeches we explain, so that public opinion will be on the side of government's increasing inclusion of family planning programs. The Australian Government matches donations 3 for 1 in approved ANCP projects, and this motivates donors.

Women's Plans Foundation also works hard to get donations for its Trust Fund. The donations are tax deductible. The Trust Fund generates a recurring income for donation to NGOs .

[Slide 5, Projects' outcomes improve]

Women's Plans Foundation raises funds so that family planning may be included in a wide range of development projects. Projects' outcomes improve when women can space and plan the births of children; agricultural improvements can keep pace with the size of the community; nourishment and education can be for all children; microcredit projects can be completed; women can develop their full potential. Couples' relationships benefit when there is no fear of unwanted pregnancy and the incidence of prostitution and introduced AIDS is reduced.

[Slide 6, What works? ChildFund, Save the Children and SH&FPA]

Women's Plans Foundation donates to a number of NGOs, who have demonstrated different emphases and outcomes. What works? Where? What should we aim for?

ChildFund has added to the methods of contraception available in their maternal health portions of child sponsorship programs in Vietnam. This adds a service to people already being reached with other development initiatives such as maternal health and nutrition. It has been demonstrated that child spacing improves childbirth survival of mother and infant.

Save the Children has had one pilot project where they have experienced the improvement in community health and education as a result of the addition of contraceptive access. They now are expanding, reaching rural areas with health teams. The annual reports of these child sponsorship organisations do not include much about family planning, though it is understood well as an important part of reproductive health.

Family Planning Australia (SH&FPA) was affected over the past eleven years by the shrinking AusAID allocation for family planning and has taken funding where available, principally for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. They have done social work in running Men and Boys' Behaviour Change programs to raise awareness of the negative impacts of violence and gender discrimination. Recent projects and partnerships are in PNG and the Solomons.

[Slide 7, What Works? Marie Stopes]

Marie Stopes Australia International has both clinics to reach urban populations, and motorbike teams for rural and remote areas, which include midwives who can explain child-spacing and provide contraceptives at a time when women will best appreciate planning how soon the next birth should be. Interestingly, the preference of many women is injectable contraceptives, because it can be their decision, not prevented by their husbands.

A choice of methods of contraception available allows for personal and cultural sensitivities. When people have completed their families, they can choose vasectomy or tubal ligation. When people want a space of two or more years between children, they can choose the contraceptive pill, or barriers to contraception, or IUDs. Condoms, for men and for women, offer the briefest protection. Where prevention of AIDS is being targeted, family planning should always be part of the thinking. We

hope that research on microbicides will eventually produce a gel that is easy, clean and inexpensive for people everywhere. This would be truly health rights for all.

#### [Slide 8, Community Leaders]

Community leaders are important in gaining acceptance of contraceptives. Role models and peer group outreach can be very successful.

Religious leaders and cultural networks can enable education and awareness-raising activities. It is important to approach the gatekeepers for access to the women and young people who need reproductive health services. The Women's Plans Foundation strategy of focussing on contraception emphasises the key element of achieving reproductive health, because it is pro-active and preventative.

#### [Slide 9, Breaking the Poverty Cycle diagram]

Starting from the poverty level at the bottom, we can follow the worsening effects of rapid population growth causing scarcity of resources, which causes social unrest. Maternal mortality and sexually transmitted diseases bring a society into great difficulties. At the top, when family planning is made accessible, women and children gain health and education, making possible women in business and government. With stabilisation of the population there is a levelling off of demand on resources and depletion of the environment, and the poverty cycle can be broken.

#### [Slide 10, The Ripple Effect]

The Ripple Effect and Measurement

- Where women have no choice about the number and spacing of their childbearing, their role and aspirations are limited, perhaps without their knowing what they are missing.
- Increased ability to measure multiple effects of reproductive health programmes for people in poverty can bring understanding to government and regional health systems.
- In areas of poverty there is limited local capacity to gather data to validate the wide-spreading effects of access to family planning. While experts and conferences assert, and many programs demonstrate, that women's control of fertility is fundamental to the capacity to rise to more equal status in education and representation in government, gathered statistics could trace the ripple effect through
  - enhanced health,
  - education,
  - enterprise and career,
  - to elective office
  - and a sustainable society with health rights for all.
- Evidence of wide community benefits is what policy-makers need to defend decisions to include an equitable portion of budgets for family planning.