



# ZIMBABWE

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)  
Population, Health, and Nutrition Briefing Sheet

## Country Profile

Zimbabwe is a country with enormous development potential. It is endowed with a wealth of human and natural resources, an evolving industrial base, diversified economy, and well-developed infrastructure. After South Africa, Zimbabwe is the most highly developed country in the southern Africa region, however, Zimbabwe also faces serious development problems. These include recent economic stagnation, deepening poverty among the majority of the population, and a government that appears increasingly remote from its citizens. Most grave of all, among the 11 million adults, an estimated 22 percent are HIV positive, and nearly 200,000 AIDS-related deaths occur annually.

## USAID Strategy

USAID's objective in family planning and health is aimed at reducing two key threats to sustainable development in Zimbabwe: rapid population growth and the spread of HIV/AIDS. USAID has had a long and highly productive development partnership with Zimbabwe, and the country is projected to graduate from USAID assistance in 2003. As the lead donor to family planning efforts, USAID has contributed significantly to rapidly increasing the use of modern family planning in Zimbabwe. Intensified assistance to promote HIV/AIDS prevention has also helped establish a variety of potentially effective programs in the public and private sectors. The greatest challenge now is to ensure that the positive impacts of USAID programs are sustained beyond Zimbabwe's scheduled graduation from USAID assistance.

## Major Program Areas

*Improved Quality and Availability of Family Planning Services.* USAID works with public and private providers to increase demand for and quality of family planning services, promoting a range of contraceptives, including the use of longer-acting contraceptive methods, and their increased availability, particularly to adolescents. USAID is the leading supplier of oral contraceptives in Zimbabwe and recently introduced the female condom. USAID is also helping both the public and private sectors address contraceptive supply and management needs.

*Improved Capacity for Service Delivery.* USAID is working with the Government of Zimbabwe and non-governmental organizations to improve their capacity to provide a wide range of reproductive health services, including HIV/AIDS prevention. USAID also supports improved health care financing mechanisms, particularly cost recovery systems. In the policy arena, USAID is working to reduce barriers to reproductive health services, such as tariffs on contraceptives, and promoting improved policies relating to HIV/AIDS prevention.

*Improved Behavior Change Communication.* USAID's support promotes changes in high-risk behavior among women and young adults, and in selected occupational groups. Efforts to improve prevention of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe include condom social marketing, peer educators, and voluntary counseling and testing programs.

## Results

- Increased use of modern contraceptives from 26 percent of women in 1984 to 42 percent in 1994.
- Reduced rates of fertility, from 6.5 children per woman in 1984 to 4.3 in 1994.
- Increased choice of contraceptive products. In 1997, the CARE™ female condom in Zimbabwe was the first female condom to be marketed in Africa. Over 126,000 were sold, three times more than expected, empowering women to determine choices about family planning and HIV prevention behavior.
- Increased perception of the personal risk of acquiring HIV, from 3 percent of males in 1994 to 22 percent in 1997, and from 7 percent of females in 1994 to 23 percent in 1997.

## Success Stories

Zimbabwe's family planning program, which USAID has supported since 1980, is possibly the highest-impact program in sub-Saharan Africa. Since 1984, the contraceptive prevalence rate has increased by 55 percent and the total fertility rate—the average number of children the average Zimbabwean woman will have in



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her lifetime—has declined by a third. Due in large measure to USAID assistance, Zimbabwe now has the lowest recorded total fertility rate in sub-Saharan Africa. USAID continues to support efforts to increase the range and quality of family planning services available in Zimbabwe and is exploring various means to ensure that these services are sustained after USAID support ends.

In the face of the public sector financial crisis, USAID has helped ensure that Zimbabwean women can receive high-quality reproductive health services at affordable prices from technically qualified private providers. When the Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council, a government parastatal, asked USAID to help facilitate a larger private sector role in the promotion and provision of family planning, USAID collaborated closely with the Council to launch a successful new initiative in 1997. The Zimbabwean private sector participated with great enthusiasm; training courses were over-subscribed, and pharmacists, not in the original design, asked to be included. The results were outstanding: 211 new family planning sites have opened; 53 physicians, 85 nurses and 92 pharmacists were trained; several handbooks were duplicated; and counseling rooms opened in seven model pharmacies. USAID assistance, including extensive consultations with Zimbabweans, was at the right place at the right time.

## Continuing Challenges

USAID/Zimbabwe's portfolio in family planning and HIV/AIDS prevention will be brought to a conclusion over the next two to five years. With the public sector fiscal crises, there is a growing need to firmly establish sustainable private sector alternatives. And as the HIV/AIDS pandemic worsens in Zimbabwe, the need for sustainable preventive programs becomes even more urgent. Awareness of HIV/AIDS has become nearly universal, but as the pandemic worsens, USAID is shifting from a peer education strategy to one emphasizing voluntary testing and counseling services. In both areas, USAID's programmatic emphasis will be on ensuring program sustainability after the agency's departure. The successful transition to self-supporting programs will be the most important USAID legacy in Zimbabwe.



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