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CONTRACEPTIVE SECURITY FOR POLICY AUDIENCES: AN OVERVIEW

Contraceptive security exists when people are able to choose, obtain, and use high-quality contraceptives and condoms for family planning whenever they want or need them.

US$1.15 BILLION

is the estimated cost of contraceptive commodities worldwide in 2020.

By sharing experiences and lessons learned, advocates and policymakers can better hone successful strategies to achieve contraceptive security.

The growing use of family planning around the world gives women and couples the ability to choose the number and spacing of their children. Policymakers and family planning advocates are increasingly aware that modern contraception offers tremendous benefits through improved health and economic well-being. Yet helping women and men achieve their reproductive goals relies on a number of critical policy and programmatic steps, including:

- Having the right quantity and combination of products in facilities to serve clients' needs.
- Using a well-functioning distribution system to get supplies to the right locations and on schedule.
- Ensuring adequate funding to purchase needed supplies and to keep facilities operating.

When these steps are coordinated, family planning programs can help ensure that women and men can choose, obtain, and use a wide range of high-quality, affordable contraceptive methods and condoms. Achieving this goal of contraceptive security requires sustainable strategies that ensure access to high-quality contraceptive supplies and services. This set of briefs—*Contraceptive Security: A Toolkit for Policy Audiences*—is designed to introduce the key elements of contraceptive security and provide field-based experiences to illustrate policy and programmatic advances. This overview brief provides an introduction to the six briefs in this toolkit, an explanation about why attention has recently turned to contraceptive security, and examples of how countries are achieving contraceptive security.

Using *Contraceptive Security: A Toolkit for Policy Audiences*

The purpose of this set of policy briefs is to provide policymakers, program managers, advocates, and the media with basic information about achieving contraceptive security. It includes six briefs that address specific topics related to contraceptive security. Each brief includes key messages and supporting information, country-based experiences, and next steps for policy audiences to advance the policy and programmatic issue covered in the brief.

- ***Planning for Contraceptive Security: Start With SPARHCS*** introduces the Strategic Pathway to Reproductive Health Commodity Security (SPARHCS) framework, which focuses on how a country or program can begin to develop strategies for contraceptive security.
- ***Financing Contraceptives: A New Funding Environment*** addresses changes in development assistance and how national governments are increasingly identifying ways to pay for the contraceptive needs of women and men.
- ***Procuring Contraceptives: Options for Countries*** examines some of the common regulatory issues that affect the use of public funds to purchase contraceptives and other health supplies; it also provides examples of how countries can collaborate in sharing information about procurement.
- ***Supply Chain: Getting Contraceptives to Users*** highlights the importance of a well-operating supply and distribution system as a critical element of meeting people's family planning needs.
- ***Policy Environment: Understanding the Context for Contraceptive Security*** underscores the importance of political support for achieving contraceptive security and illustrates how civil society and the commercial sector can be involved in these efforts.
- ***Priority Actions and Recommendations for Contraceptive Security*** brings together a set of next steps on each of the above-mentioned topics to assist stakeholders in helping their countries achieve contraceptive security.

BOX 1

The Growing Demand for Contraception and Additional Resources

Due to growing populations and increasing use of contraceptives, family planning programs need additional funding to provide supplies and services. The table below highlights how these trends are estimated to play out over a 15-year period (2005 to 2020) in three countries—the Philippines, Bolivia, and Kenya. Without adequate attention to contraceptive security, advances in the uptake of modern contraceptive methods may be at risk, leaving women and men more vulnerable to a range of unwanted outcomes including unplanned pregnancy, maternal and child mortality and illness, sexually transmitted infections and HIV, and greater numbers of unsafely performed abortions.

Trends in Population Growth, Use of Contraceptives and Costs of Contraceptive Commodities in Three Countries, 2005 to 2020

INDICATOR	YEAR	PHILIPPINES	BOLIVIA	KENYA
Women ages 15-49 (millions)	2005	21.9	2.3	8.7
	2020	28.6	3.1	12.8
Percent using modern family planning (married women ages 15-49)	2005	35.9	32.8	31.5
	2020	51.1	55.6	44.1
Cost of contraceptive commodities (US$million)	2005	$11.3	$1.0	$6.7
	2020	$19.4	$2.6	$12.1

Sources: United Nations Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision* (New York: United Nations, 2009); and John Ross, John Stover, and Demi Adelaja, *Profiles for Family Planning and Reproductive Health Programs*, 2d ed. (Glastonbury, CT: The Futures Group, 2005).

Why Focus on Contraceptive Security?

Contraceptive security has become a priority not only because of the health and economic benefits of family planning, but also because of changes in demographic trends, the demand for family planning, and the ways development assistance is administered. To ensure that women and men can choose, obtain, and use the contraceptive method they want, policy audiences should understand how changes in these three issues contribute to the greater attention on contraceptive security (see Box 1).

- **Demographic trends.** The number of women of reproductive age is increasing at a rapid pace. In 2005, it was estimated that globally there were 1.7 billion women ages 15 to 49. By 2020, that number is estimated to reach 1.9 billion. Responding to the family planning needs of this growing number of women requires a tremendous global family planning effort with real budget implications.[1]
- **Growing demand for modern contraception.** Globally, the demand for modern contraceptives—which include female and male sterilization, injectable and oral hormones, intrauterine devices, diaphragms, hormonal implants, spermicides, condoms, and fertility awareness methods—is increasing. In 2005, for example, approximately 16.5 percent of married women in sub-Saharan Africa between ages 15 and 49 were using modern forms of contraception. By 2020, use of modern methods is expected to rise to 24.3 percent among married women in the region.[2]
- **Changes in development assistance.** With increasing numbers of women of reproductive age and expected growth in the use of contraceptives, the total cost of contraceptive commodities will increase significantly—from an estimated US$914 million in 2005 to US$1.148 billion in 2020.[3] As the structure of development assistance changes, national governments are increasingly assuming more responsibility for purchasing contraceptive commodities. For family planning to obtain national government funding and be included in development strategies and new foreign assistance mechanisms, stakeholders must advocate for family planning by linking the health and economic development benefits to the investment in supplies and services (see Box 2).

BOX 2

Contraceptive Security Contributes to National Development

Strong family planning programs can contribute to a range of development issues by slowing rapid population growth. In responding to the needs of a smaller population, nations are better equipped to reduce poverty and inequity; better address food security and environmental pressures; and foster security and reduce civil conflict.

In Bangladesh, long-term investment in an integrated family planning/maternal and child health program resulted in improved health and economic well-being in the communities where the program was implemented, including:

- Smaller families.
- Higher incomes and more assets.
- Better educated children.
- Better access to water.
- Women with greater average body mass index.
- Greater childhood immunization.
- Lower child mortality rates.

Source: James Gribble and Maj-Lis Voss, *Family Planning and Economic Well-Being: New Evidence From Bangladesh* (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, 2009).

Achieving Contraceptive Security Is Possible

Although contraceptive security entails a number of complex issues, many countries have made significant advances toward it. Achieving contraceptive security requires ongoing commitment and builds on continuing advances. These improvements require strategic planning, the involvement of multiple stakeholders, and the work of advocates who effectively make the case for supporting each aspect of contraceptive security. Some advances are large and some are small, but they all represent efforts within a given political context to help ensure that women and men can obtain and use the family planning method of their choice. Some of the recent advances in achieving contraceptive security are summarized below.

- In Kenya, family planning and the contraceptive logistics system received greater attention from policymakers when contraceptive security advocates were successful in including an indicator in the national health financing mechanism for tracking the percentage of women of reproductive age receiving family planning commodities.[4]
- In Romania, efforts to expand use of family planning methods were challenged by insufficient public sector resources. Analysis of survey data showed that free public-sector supplies should be targeted at rural women. A steady supply of contraceptive commodities, together with effective information, education, and communication activities, contributed to an increase in the uptake of modern contraceptives in rural areas, and without adversely affecting the private sector.[5]
- In Honduras, the secretary of health began purchasing contraceptives with its own funds in 2002, as donated contraceptives were phased out. Over time, the public sector financed increasingly more contraceptives, and by 2006, had budgeted US$1million for this purpose, which covered nearly all its estimated contraceptive needs. These financial commitments helped ensure that contraceptives remained available after donations ended.[6]

Although most efforts to achieve contraceptive security have been focused at the country level, regional and global coordination provide opportunities to learn from other experiences. The Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition (www.rhsc.org), for example, is a global partnership of public, private, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) whose mission is to ensure that all people in low- and middle-income countries can access and use affordable, high-quality supplies for better reproductive health. The coalition has been a leader in securing reproductive health supplies by increasing resources, strengthening systems, and building effective partnerships.

Regional efforts have also focused on contraceptive security in East Africa, West Africa, eastern Europe and Eurasia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Asia-Pacific region. For example, the 2005 East African Forum on Contraceptive Security brought together stakeholders to focus on improving program efforts in the region. A result of the forum was that Ethiopia's family planning technical working group developed a forecast for contraceptive commodities and the department of family health successfully advocated with the United Nations Population Fund for additional funding to fill the resource gap between available and necessary funds.

Global, regional, and national initiatives continue to support contraceptive security efforts by creating an environment in which stakeholders share experiences and identify ways to continue to coordinate efforts, such as through sharing information and providing technical assistance to one another.

These are but a few examples of the many advances that are taking place around the world to address the different aspects of contraceptive security. There is no single way to achieve contraceptive security because each country and program have their own contextual issues that advance in different ways (see Box 3). By sharing experiences about these efforts, advocates and policymakers alike are better able to hone strategies that help ensure that people are able to choose, obtain, and use high-quality contraceptives and condoms when they want them.

BOX 3

Monitoring Advances in Contraceptive Security

Advances in contraceptive security ultimately contribute to improved family planning services. One way to monitor some of the different types of advances is with the Contraceptive Security Index. The Index illustrates how program aspects and outcomes are interrelated, and is a powerful tool for raising awareness about contraceptive security.[1] The Index includes 17 indicators that are grouped into five categories:

- **Supply chain:** How well the contraceptive supply chain works.
- **Financing:** The prospects of financing family planning services and contraceptives through government and household funds.
- **Environment:** How the broader health and social environment influences contraceptive security.
- **Access:** The availability of and access to modern contraceptive methods.
- **Use:** Current use of contraceptives.

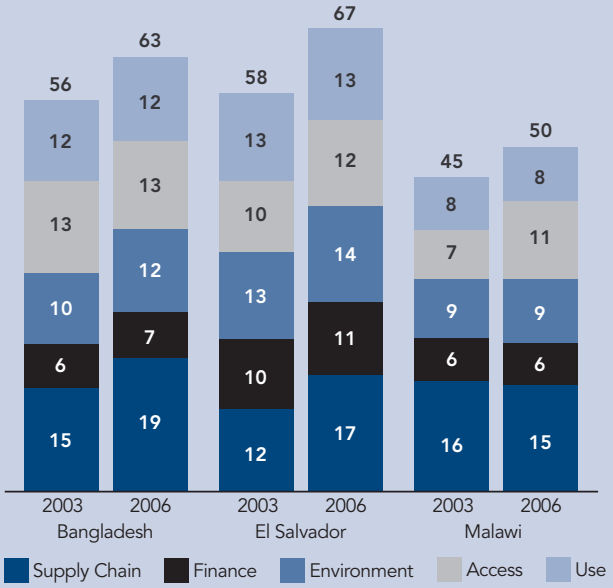
Each category has a maximum score of 20 points, for a total contraceptive security index of 100.

The figure includes index scores for the five categories from 2003 and 2006 for Bangladesh, El Salvador, and Malawi. In each country, the index has increased due mainly to improvements in supply chain and access to services.

In addition to using the index to track advances in different aspects of contraceptive security, it can also be used for other purposes, such as:

- Serving as the basis for advocacy efforts about contraceptive security by demonstrating successful results.
- Identifying which aspects of contraceptive security should be prioritized at the global, regional, and national levels.
- Allocating resources based on which aspects are most in need.[2]

Contraceptive Security Index 2003 and 2006, Selected Countries



Source: DELIVER Project, *Contraceptive Security Index Users Guide* (Arlington, VA: DELIVER Project, 2006).

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1 DELIVER Project, *Contraceptive Security Index* (Arlington, VA: DELIVER Project, 2006).

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For More Information

Population growth: United Nations Population Division, *World Population Prospects*, available at http://esa.un.org/unpp/.

Family planning program needs: *Profiles for Family Planning and Reproductive Health Programs*, available at www.policyproject.com/pubs/generalreport/Profiles116FP2ed.pdf.

Contraceptive prevalence estimates: Demographic and Health Survey country reports, available at www.measuredhs.com/pubs/start.cfm.

Global family planning supply advocacy: Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition, available at www.rhsc.org.

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Contraceptive Security: A Toolkit for Policy Audiences

A seven-part series of briefs designed to explain different aspects of contraceptive security to policymakers, program managers, media, and civil society. The topics included in the toolkit are:

- Contraceptive Security for Policy Audiences: An Overview
- Planning for Contraceptive Security: Start With SPARHCS
- Financing Contraceptives: A New Funding Environment
- Procuring Contraceptives: Options for Countries
- Supply Chain: Getting Contraceptives to Users
- Policy Environment: Understanding the Context for Contraceptive Security
- Priority Actions and Recommendations for Contraceptive Security

Each section of the toolkit may be accessed at www.prb.org.

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