

Technical Reference Team

Commodity: Female Condom

Background

The UN Commission on Life-Saving Commodities for Women and Children (the Commission) was formed in 2012 by the UN Secretary-General as part of the global Every Woman, Every Child (EWEC) movement. EWEC challenges the global community to increase access to and appropriate use of essential medicines, medical devices, and health supplies that effectively address the leading preventable causes of death during pregnancy, childbirth, and childhood.

Led by a wide range of high-level leaders from around the world, the Commission developed a framework for action on Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health (RMNCH) products that can be applied nationally and utilized in global RMNCH initiatives. The framework outlines a priority list of 13 commodities, key barriers to access and use, and 10 cross-cutting recommendations to rapidly increase both access and use. By increasing access to and use of these 13 commodities, it is estimated that 6 million women and children can be saved by 2017.

Moving forward

To help carry forward the Commission's recommendations at the global and national levels, **Global Technical Reference Teams (TRTs)** were established. One group was formed for each of the 13 commodities and 10 recommendations, and an advocacy working group is dedicated to advancing cross-cutting goals. The groups carry out their work through a variety of mechanisms, including guidance documents and tools to support countries in their efforts to implement recommendations and address global and regional bottlenecks. The TRTs are coordinated by a Strategy and Coordination Team hosted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).



PATH

Spotlight on Female Condom

Contraceptives are an important and cost-effective component of good maternal health care, supporting safe pregnancy, labor, and childbirth. Yet, an estimated 222 million women in developing countries want to use modern contraceptives but do not have access. Further, there are 340 million cases of curable sexually transmitted infections (STIs) annually and half of the 39 million HIV infections are in women. Female condoms (FC) offer women dual protection from unplanned pregnancies as well as sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS.

The goal of the TRT on female condoms is to expand access and use of FC for dual protection in low- and middle-income countries. The TRT's objectives are to:

- Raise awareness and demand for FC.
- Increase availability and accessibility of the FC.
- Increase utilization of FC.
- Strengthen capacity of national officers to deliver quality FC programs.
- Generate scientific evidence on the FCs effectiveness to prevent STIs and pregnancy.
- Update existing and develop new tools and guidelines that expand accessibility and use of FCs.

Group membership

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is the lead convener of the TRT on female condoms.

Members of the group include the Center for Health and Gender Equity; the Condom Project; Cupid Ltd; FHI 360; HLL Lifecare Ltd; International Planned Parenthood Federation; Management Sciences for Health; MatCH; PATH; Safehaven International; SUPPORT/Female Health Company; The Universal Access to Female Condom; and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Progress to date

Since its inception, the TRT on FC has engaged in the following activities:

- Developed an assessment to monitor new FC introduction and reviewed existing tools that were used to introduce Female Condom 1, Female Condom 2, and Cupid FC.
- Field tested the tool in all countries where Cupid FC is currently being distributed through partners, United Nations' agencies, and governments.
- Developed a step-by-step guide to introduction of new FC adapted from the "WHO Making Decisions about Contraceptive Introduction: A guide for conducting assessments to broaden contraceptive choice and improve quality of care," published in 2002.
- Reviewed a survey on the knowledge, attitudes, practices, and behaviors of FC users, with a special focus on individuals' decisions to use or not use FC and why.
- Reviewed documents and one survey of countries that promote FC, and identified patterns of use across countries reflecting use towards method mix.
- Provided technical support for the development/adaption of a user-friendly quantification and forecasting tool for FC, taking into consideration national reproductive health and HIV strategies.

- Provided technical assistance for the development and dissemination of best practices on FC promotion.
- Provided technical assistance for the development of quality strengthening and regulatory efficiency aimed at defining the technical specification for FC, neonatal resuscitator, and syringes for injectable antibiotics; developing harmonized registration requirements and assessment process for FC, neonatal resuscitation and syringes for injectable antibiotics.

Upcoming activities

The TRT on FC will release drafts of its documents by December 2013.

Available resources

The TRT on FC will hold a face-to-face meeting with representatives of the eight pathfinder countries in late 2013 to define the priority actions that can be taken to accelerate and increase demand, access, and use of FC.

Contact us

For more information or to request tools and technical assistance, please contact Bidia Deperthes, UNFPA (deperthes@unfpa.org).