

# Multipurpose Prevention Technologies (MPTs): Innovation to Protect Women's Reproductive Health in South Africa

## The number of women who die from HIV and pregnancy-related causes is unacceptably high.

Women and their families face alarming reproductive health risks in South Africa.

- The maternal mortality ratio has more than doubled, increasing from 150 deaths per 100,000 births in 1998 to 310 deaths per 100,000 births in 2011.
- The proportion of people living with HIV increased from 10.6% in 2008 to 12.3% in 2012.
- In 2012, condom use at last sex act decreased to 36.2%, after a high of 45.1% in 2008.
- The teenage pregnancy rate declined from 65 per 1,000 in 2001 to 54 per 1,000 in 2008 but still remains unacceptably high.

Women are especially vulnerable when it comes to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

- Women between the ages of 15–49 are almost twice (43%) as likely as men to have HIV.
- High rates of transactional sex and sex between individuals of different generations, primarily young women with older men, combine with related power imbalances to put young women at high risk for HIV. Girls 15–19 years old are eight times more likely to have HIV than boys.
- In 2012, almost 36% of women between 30–34 years of age in South Africa are living with HIV. They have the highest prevalence of HIV among the general population.
- Commercial sex workers account for one in five new HIV infections and an HIV prevalence rate of between 44% and 69%.

- Approximately 55% of women in South Africa have herpes simplex virus 2.

## What can be done to accelerate change?

Multipurpose prevention technologies (MPTs) combine protection against unintended pregnancy, HIV, and other sexually transmitted infections.

Male and female condoms are existing MPTs. Male condoms do not sufficiently address women's reproductive health needs because they are used inconsistently even though they are inexpensive and widely available. Issues of trust and power make it difficult for women to negotiate condom use.

- Male condom use declined among all age groups in South Africa in 2012. In the same year, 399 million condoms were distributed, falling far short of the 1 billion unit goal.
- Female condom use has been limited to date, but new female condom designs have the potential to lower cost and improve acceptability for couples.

### MPTs IN DEVELOPMENT



Rings and devices



Drug combinations



Multipurpose vaccines and injectables



Gels and films

Many new MPTs in development are female initiated to enhance usability for women. Promising MPTs include a new single-size diaphragm combined with drugs to prevent HIV, vaginal rings, injectables, film, and some microbicide gels in development.

## CALL TO ACTION

**PRIORITIZE** the development of MPTs. South Africa's commitment to improve the health of women has never been stronger.

- South Africa is a signatory of the African Union's Campaign for the Accelerated Reduction of Maternal, Neonatal, and Child Mortality.
- South Africa recently renewed its emphasis on access to high-quality health care, stronger health systems, and provision of national health insurance.

**GALVANIZE** recent improvements in reproductive and sexual health outcomes in South Africa.

- Deaths from AIDS-related causes have dropped more than 27% from 2001 to 2011.
- HIV prevalence among youth aged 15–24 years has declined significantly from 10.3% in 2005 to 7.3% in 2012.
- South Africa has the highest rate of modern contraceptive use in sub-Saharan Africa (60% of married women between the ages of 15–49 use a modern method).

**FUND** development of new MPTs—in addition to encouraging more frequent and widespread use of condoms.

- MPTs can reduce the number of new HIV infections, save millions of lives over time, and help ease the burden of providing treatment and care for an increasing number of HIV-positive men, women, and children around the world.

**DEVELOP** new HIV-prevention methods.

- South African researchers have played leading roles in HIV-prevention research.

**RESEARCH** the acceptability of MPTs to women.

- Evidence shows that when women have the ability to choose contraceptive methods, usage and health outcomes improve.

**COLLABORATE** to advance development of MPTs to ensure women can access a range of high-quality reproductive and sexual health options.

By advocating for the development of MPTs, South Africa is working to ensure healthier men, women, and families.

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