

## Youth Reproductive Health: Satisfying Unmet Need for Family Planning

### WHAT IS UNMET NEED FOR FAMILY PLANNING?

Women with unmet need are broadly defined as those who want to postpone their next birth for two years or more, or not have any more children, but are not using a family planning method.<sup>1</sup>

### WHY LOOK AT UNMET NEED IN YOUTH?

Although countries are making progress in addressing the family planning needs of youth ages 15 to 24 globally, challenges persist. Inadequate availability of services, lack of knowledge, legal barriers, and negative provider attitudes all prevent young people from obtaining services. But youth have a right to sexual and reproductive health care—including family planning services. In addition to benefitting the health of young people themselves, increased investment in family planning for youth contributes to broader development goals such as improvements in the overall status of women and reductions in poverty among families. The more we understand the characteristics of young women with unmet need, and the reasons they are not using family planning, the more we can improve services and better meet the needs of young women and men around the world.

### WHAT IS THE SITUATION IN NIGERIA?

- According to the latest national survey, about 15 percent of young married women in Nigeria reported having an unmet need for family planning, and about one-quarter of sexually active unmarried women reported having an unmet need.<sup>2</sup> The proportion with unmet need translates into more than 1,383,000 women—an estimated 1,140,000 married and 243,000 unmarried women.<sup>3</sup>
- Among married women, contraceptive use is very low, with only 4.5 percent using a modern method of family planning and 2.5 percent using a traditional method.<sup>4</sup>
- Total demand for family planning—women currently using plus those with unmet need—is low (22 percent) for married women, while nearly universal (95 percent) for unmarried women.<sup>5</sup>
- An estimated 13 percent of young married women with no education have an unmet need, compared to 22 percent of women who have completed primary, secondary, or higher education. For sexually active unmarried women, nearly three-quarters with no education have an unmet need, compared to 45 percent with primary and 28 percent with secondary.<sup>6</sup>

- While there is a small difference in unmet need among young married women living in urban versus rural areas—19 percent and 17 percent respectively—more than one-third (36 percent) of sexually active unmarried women in rural areas have an unmet need, compared to 18 percent in urban areas.<sup>7</sup>
- According to a study by the Population Reference Bureau, about 60 percent of young married women with demand for contraception who have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) in the last 12 months have an unmet need for family planning.<sup>8</sup>

### Youth Reproductive Health Data (Ages 15-24)

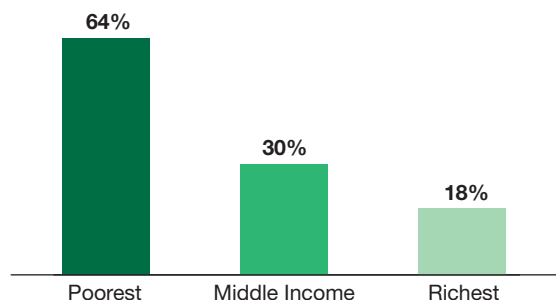
- Marital status for young women
  - 15-19 – 29%
  - 20-24 – 65%
- Median age of marriage – 18
- Sexually active by age 15
  - Women – 17%
  - Men – 3%
- Median age at first childbearing – 20.2 years
- Infant mortality
  - <20 – 95 deaths/1,000 live births
  - 20 – 29 – 71 deaths/1,000 live births
- Under-5 mortality
  - < 20 – 179 deaths/1,000 live births
  - 20 – 29 – 134 deaths/1,000 live births
- Modern contraceptive use among married women
  - 15-19 – 1%
  - 20-24 – 6%
- Modern contraceptive use among unmarried sexually active women
  - 15-19 – 50%
  - 20-24 – 64%
- Unmet need for family planning
  - Married – 15%
  - Unmarried – 24%
- Total demand for family planning (currently using contraceptive + unmet need)
  - Married – 22%
  - Unmarried – 95%
- Unplanned pregnancies – 9%
- Difficulties accessing health care (all women) – 53%
- Ever experienced intimate partner violence – 21%

Source: Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2013.

## WHY ARE YOUNG WOMEN IN NIGERIA NOT USING CONTRACEPTION?

- A recent analysis revealed the top three reasons why women ages 15 to 24 who say they want to avoid a pregnancy are not using family planning.<sup>9</sup> Postpartum/breastfeeding was the number one reason for not using family planning (34 percent), although many young women are not sure how long they are safe from getting pregnant after giving birth. Opposition to use, either by the respondent, their husband or partner, or owing to perceived religious prohibition was the second most commonly cited reason for not using (30 percent). The third most common reason for not using was “infrequent sex” (11 percent); many wrongly believe that if they only have sex occasionally, they are not at risk, and therefore do not need to use family planning.
- While lack of contraceptive supplies—and logistical problems getting the contraceptives to the provider—continue to be a challenge in some areas, only a small proportion of women (less than 3 percent) stated that lack of access (distance or costs) was the reason for not using.

**Poor women (ages 15 to 24) are more than three times as likely to have unmet need for family planning than the wealthiest women**



Source: Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2013.

## WHAT ARE THE POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH?

The evidence indicates several priority action areas requiring attention including the need to:

- Be responsive to the special needs of adolescents and young women and men, ensuring that services are provided in a respectful and confidential manner that does not stigmatize sexually active youth and that enables access to a full range of contraceptive methods.
- Improve and expand the provision of reproductive health information to young people using a variety of methods—including providing sexual and reproductive health education to adolescents and young people in schools and through community programs for those who are not attending school.
- Focus on reducing the leading barriers to family planning uptake—improving counseling services to reduce health concerns and fear of side effects, educating women about their bodies and when they are most at risk of getting pregnant, and breaking down cultural and social barriers to contraceptive use.
- Take advantage of all opportunities! Providers need to integrate family planning counseling, services, and follow-up into postpartum programs as well as other services that provide an opportunity to reach women—services for postabortion care, IPV, child survival, community health, and HIV, among others.

Recognizing the reproductive health rights of young people is an important step toward satisfying the family planning needs of the nation’s youth. Ultimately, this goal calls for renewed efforts to address unmet need—tailoring educational programs and family planning services to better reach and respond to youth, especially during this vulnerable stage of their reproductive lives.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This fact sheet was produced by the Population Reference Bureau (PRB). Funding for this publication was provided by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

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## REFERENCES

- 1 Sarah E.K. Bradley et al., *Revising Unmet Need for Family Planning* (Calverton, MD: ICF International, 2012).
- 2 Unless otherwise noted, all data for this fact sheet come from the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2013 (Abuja, Nigeria and Rockville, MD: National Population Commission, Nigeria and ICF International, 2014).
- 3 Population Reference Bureau (PRB) analysis of data from the Nigeria DHS 2013, calculated in the manner of Kerry L.D. MacQuarrie, *Unmet Need for Family Planning Among Young Women: Levels and Trends* (Rockville, MD: ICF International, 2014).
- 4 MacQuarrie, *Unmet Need for Family Planning Among Young Women*.
- 5 MacQuarrie, *Unmet Need for Family Planning Among Young Women*.
- 6 PRB analysis of data from the Nigeria DHS 2013.
- 7 PRB analysis of data from the Nigeria DHS 2013.
- 8 Toshiko Kaneda, *Intimate Partner Violence and Unmet Need for Family Planning*, research brief (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, 2015), available at [www.prb.org/Publications/Reports/2015/unmet-need-research-brief.aspx](http://www.prb.org/Publications/Reports/2015/unmet-need-research-brief.aspx).
- 9 PRB analysis of data from the Nigeria DHS 2013.



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