



# COUNTING WHAT COUNTS: TRACKING ACCESS TO EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

Emergency contraception (EC) is included in Sierra Leone’s national Essential Medicines List and reproductive health guidelines, but women’s awareness of EC in Sierra Leone is very low; fewer than one in 10 women know it exists.

## ABOUT SIERRA LEONE

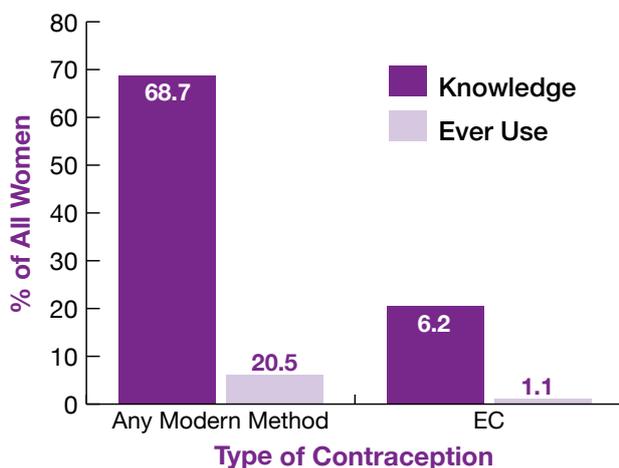
Sierra Leone is a country in West Africa with a population of 5,612,685.<sup>1</sup> 39.2% of the population lives in urban areas.<sup>1</sup> The country is restoring peace and rebuilding its infrastructure and economy after a civil war from 1991 to 2002, which resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the displacement of more than 2 million people. Only 2.3% of women have completed the secondary level of education.<sup>2</sup>

## CONTRACEPTIVE & EC KNOWLEDGE AND USE

- **Total fertility rate:** 5.1 children per woman (5.8 rural, 3.8 urban)
- **Unmet need for contraception (among currently married women):** 27.6%
- **Current contraceptive modern method use (among currently married women):** 6.7%

Source: Demographic and Health Survey, Sierra Leone 2008

## KNOWLEDGE AND EVER USE OF MODERN CONTRACEPTION AND EC



Source: Demographic and Health Survey, Sierra Leone 2008

## POLICIES

**Essential Drug List:** Emergency contraceptive pills are included in the 2012 national Essential Medicines List.<sup>3</sup>

**National norms and guidelines:** EC is incorporated into the Reproductive, Newborn and Child Health Policy, 2011-2015. It includes a strategy to “ensure the availability, access to, and utilization of quality FP services using a wide range of contraceptive methods at both facility and community level including emergency contraception.”<sup>4</sup>

**Prescription status and who is authorized to dispense:** EC is available by prescription only. It is available in public sector clinics, pharmacies, NGO-led clinics and social marketing programs.

**Post-rape care:** The Guidelines on Sexual and Gender Based Violence Case Management for the Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police (2010) recommend that victims be referred to a hospital within 72 hours of the occurrence of the offense and provided with medical services, including EC.<sup>5</sup>

## PRODUCT AVAILABILITY

**Registered Products:** One levonorgestrel EC pill (ECP) product is registered and distributed: Pregon (FamyCare).

**Locally manufactured products:** None available.

## Poor quality or counterfeit EC products:

While not specific to EC, counterfeit and sub-standard medicines sold on the street and in

markets are a problem, although media reports suggest that drug quality at pharmacies has improved substantially in recent years.<sup>6</sup>

### WHERE WOMEN CAN ACCESS EC

**EC in the commercial sector:** 38.9% of users get their contraceptive methods from the private medical sector.<sup>2</sup> The proportion of women using EC who obtain it in the private sector is not known. The lowest level of health care providers allowed to sell or dispense ECPs in the private sector is auxiliary nurses.<sup>3</sup>

**EC in the public sector:** More than half of modern contraceptive users (50.4%) get their contraceptive methods from the public sector.<sup>2</sup> The proportion of women using EC who obtain it in the public sector is not known. The lowest level of health care providers allowed to sell or dispense ECPs in the public sector is auxiliary nurses.<sup>3</sup>

**EC in the NGO, social marketing and social franchising sectors:** Marie Stopes Sierra Leone offers family planning services in the country, including emergency contraception.<sup>7</sup>

**Community-based distribution of EC:** Sierra Leone has many different cadres of community health workers, including Community Based Distributors of Contraceptives (CBDs). However, given that the lowest level of public health care providers who can distribute ECPs is auxiliary nurses, it is unlikely that community health workers can distribute ECPs.<sup>8</sup>

### MEDIA COVERAGE OF EC

According to the 2008 DHS, fewer than half of all women (47%) were exposed to family planning messages in the past six months.<sup>2</sup> It is not known whether this coverage was ever specific to EC.

### DONOR SUPPORT

Donors have purchased EC for Sierra Leone's family planning programs. According to RHInterchange, 109,916 units of EC were sent in nine shipments between 2004 and 2012. Funding sources for these shipments included IPPF, MSI and UNFPA.<sup>9</sup>

### REFERENCES

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This fact sheet has been prepared by the International Consortium for Emergency Contraception and represents the best information we have been able to gather. We welcome your input for future revisions. Please contact us at [info@cecinfo.org](mailto:info@cecinfo.org). Visit our website at [www.emergencycontraception.org](http://www.emergencycontraception.org) for more information on EC.