

# Expanding Women's Contraceptive Choices



## Promoting women's reproductive rights in Kenya

Access to family planning information and services is an internationally recognised right of all women and men. The government of Kenya is committed to providing quality reproductive health information and services, including access to a full range of safe and reliable family planning methods through the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the private sector.

To exercise their reproductive health rights, Kenyans must have comprehensive and accurate information about all available family planning methods. Choosing a contraceptive method is a very personal decision based on several factors, including an individual's health and family planning needs, the method's potential side effects, and the method's level of convenience, to name a few. And ensuring women access to the family planning methods that best meet their needs will increase client satisfaction and overall method continuation rates.

## A new look at IUCDs

Although many contraceptive methods are available in Kenya, over the years the MOH has noticed that the national mix of modern family planning methods has become dominated by contraceptive pills and injectables. While the percentage of Kenyan women using any modern contraceptive has more than tripled since 1984, the proportion of contraceptive users choosing the IUCD has decreased significantly. Underrepresentation of the IUCD suggests that the full message

about its advantages — including safety, effectiveness, low cost, convenience, and possibility of long-term use — is not getting through.

The MOH recognises that the IUCD is extremely safe and effective. It can be used for medium- to long-term contraception, and it is immediately reversible. Also, it does not need daily or monthly attention. However, the IUCD will not meet the needs of all women; therefore, comprehensive counselling that describes the IUCD as well as all other available contraceptive options is essential.

### *The IUCD is:*

- **safe, effective, and reversible.**
- **a low-cost option.**
- **a low-maintenance method with no daily upkeep and few clinic visits.**

### KEY POINTS FOR CLIENTS:

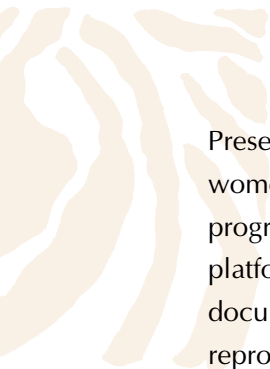
- **The MOH is committed to ensuring that family planning clients have information on and access to a range of contraceptives so that they can choose the method that best meets their needs.**

### KEY POINTS FOR PROVIDERS:

- **These briefs will be useful when counselling clients, as they present accurate and up-to-date information on the IUCD.**

### KEY POINTS FOR POLICY-MAKERS:

- **Promoting a balanced method mix helps ensure a sustainable national family planning programme and maximises women's contraceptive choice.**



Presenting the IUCD as a safe, effective, and economical contraceptive option not only expands women's choices but also promotes women's reproductive health rights in accordance with the programme of action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development and the platform for action of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women. Many other international documents, including the International Planned Parenthood Federation's charter on sexual and reproductive rights, also discuss these issues.

## Reintroduction in Kenya

To ensure that women have proper access to a range of contraceptive options and to present a more balanced and sustainable method mix to Kenyans, the MOH has increased its efforts to promote sustainable and underused family planning methods. As part of this effort, the MOH established a task force\* in 2002 to develop a strategy for rehabilitating the IUCD. Using this strategy, the MOH — in collaboration with the private sector, professional organisations, national and international reproductive health organisations, and international donors — has launched an IUCD reintroduction programme.

To provide accurate and up-to-date information on the IUCD, the MOH and its partners have produced this series of information briefs, entitled *Expanding Women's Choices through a Balanced and Sustainable Contraceptive Method Mix: A New Look at the IUCD*. These IUCD method briefs address IUCD safety, effectiveness, cost, and convenience, and examine the particular case of IUCD use and HIV. Policy-makers, health care administrators, programme managers, and service providers can use these briefs to familiarise themselves with the latest IUCD research and the MOH's IUCD reintroduction programme.

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\* The task force includes: AMKENI Project; United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID); Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH/MOH; Family Planning Association of Kenya (FPAK); Johns Hopkins Program for International Education in Reproductive Health (JHPIEGO); Division of Reproductive Health, Kenya MOH; Population Council; PRIME/Intrah; and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Family Health International (FHI) facilitated the task force.

Worldwide, the most common IUCD is the copper IUCD. Several types — all comparable in safety and effectiveness — are available in Kenya. The Copper T 380A, which is effective for at least 10 years, is the most prevalent. Because nearly all IUCDs in Kenya are copper IUCDs, all mention of the device in the following briefs will refer to the copper IUCD.

These briefs were produced by the Kenya Ministry of Health and its collaborating partners.

This work is supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents do not necessarily reflect USAID policy.

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February 2003

