Family planning

The challenge
There are currently more than 220 million women around the world who want to use contraception, but can’t. As a result, some 358,000 women die every year during pregnancy and childbirth, most of them in developing countries. Even if women avoid complications, the impact of having several pregnancies in quick succession can lock them into a life of ill health and extreme poverty. They can struggle to keep all their children healthy, fed and schooled and may be unable to pursue their own education or career.

Choice
Marie Stopes International is driven by the mission that people should be able to have children by choice, not chance, regardless of where they live, how old they may be, their marital status or economic means. From our work on the ground in nearly 40 countries we know that for many women in the developing world, being able to plan for their family can transform their lives and ultimately mean the difference between life and death.

We offer both short-term methods such as condoms, and long-term and permanent methods, such as IUDs and sterilisation, along with counselling about each option so women who want to prevent falling pregnant unintentionally can make an informed choice that’s right for them.

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Our approach
We are proud of our record in making family planning available to the women who need it most: the poorest and hardest to reach in remote rural areas or urban slums, young people under 25 and socially excluded groups. We prioritise those who have not been able to access contraception and those using a method that does not suit their needs and provide them with sustainable and affordable family planning.

We have pioneered innovative ways to reach the most remote and difficult corners of the world. As of 2012, we had 370 mobile teams working in 30,000 locations across 26 countries, who do whatever it takes to reach women who need help, walking long distances, using 4x4 vehicles, motorbikes, autorickshaws and boats and working with local health authorities to transform rural health centres, schools or tents into safe environments for consultations.

In addition, we run 600 of our own health centres and support networks of nearly 4,000 private healthcare providers including clinics, pharmacies and midwives, who we train and monitor to ensure they provide consistently high quality family planning services.

Expanding access
In 2012, we reached 13.6 million women, preventing 5.3 million unintended pregnancies, 2.1 million unsafe abortions, and 11,300 maternal deaths but there are still many women who want contraception but can't access it. So in July 2012, we stood up alongside international donors, governments, the private sector and civil society organisations and pledged to deliver family planning services to 20 million girls and women by 2020, ultimately preventing 55 million unintended pregnancies, 7 million unsafe abortions and 72 thousand maternal deaths.

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