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Unprecedented Number of Women, Girls Using Modern Contraceptives in World's Poorest Countries

Despite great momentum, immediate acceleration needed to reach Family Planning 2020 goal

Washington, D.C., 12 November 2015: According to a new report released today by Family Planning 2020 (FP2020), more women and girls than ever who want to avoid or delay a pregnancy —290.6 million—are voluntarily using modern contraceptives in the world's poorest countries, an increase of 24.4 million from 2012. While significant strides have been made to reach the ambitious goal of enabling 120 million additional women and girls to access rights-based family planning by 2020, the report shows that FP2020 and its partners must take immediate action to speed up progress.

The FP2020 progress report, *Commitment to Action 2014-2015*, details achievements since the landmark 2012 London Summit on Family Planning. The additional 24.4 million women using effective contraceptives, in the past year alone, have averted 80 million unintended pregnancies, 26.8 million unsafe abortions and 111,000 maternal deaths.

Countries, donors and organizations continue to join the global family planning movement, stepping forward with financial, policy or programmatic commitments. The Governments of Madagascar, Mali, Nepal and Somalia joined this year, as did private sector partners Bayer, Merck—known as MSD outside of the United States and Canada—and Pfizer; the global nonprofit, Management Sciences for Health; and the International Contraceptive Access Foundation. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation pledged to increase its commitment to family planning by 25 percent over the next three years. Marie Stopes International committed to doubling its FP2020 goal, while the International Planned Parenthood Federation, Pathfinder International and Jhpiego renewed their commitments. More new and renewed commitments are expected in the coming months.

The report also reveals that family planning is increasingly a global development priority: donor governments have increased bilateral funding for family planning by one-third since 2012. The United States was the largest bilateral donor in 2014, providing \$636.6 million—almost half (44%) of total bilateral funding. The United Kingdom was the second-largest bilateral donor, accounting for nearly one-quarter of all funding, at \$327.6 million.

Despite progress, there are still millions of women who want to avoid or delay a pregnancy, but cannot access the information and tools to do it. Overall, the report shows that the effort to reach more women and girls is behind by 10 million in its 2015 projections.

The need to close the gap has implications, not just for 2020, but for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by world leaders in September.

“This is a pivotal year in global development. With the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals, the new Global Strategy for Women’s Children’s and Adolescent’s Health and expanded financing

mechanisms, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to chart the course for the world we want,” said Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, and Co-Chair of FP2020’s Reference Group. “Access to voluntary family planning saves and transforms lives. It empowers women and offers a pathway out of poverty. When millions more women have access to the modern contraceptives they need to choose whether, when and how many children to have, we will all be closer to achieving our common goals.”

The lessons learned, thus far, point to three areas where strengthening efforts will help accelerate progress: better understanding and meeting the reproductive health needs of adolescents, increasing the quality of services women receive and placing a greater focus on reaching the urban and rural poor.

“Thanks to the work of FP2020 partners, millions more women now have access to contraceptives, including the poorest, the most marginalized and the hardest to reach,” said Dr. Chris Elias, President of Global Development at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Co-Chair of FP2020’s Reference Group. “Yet our progress, while significant, is not matching our ambition. We need to take a hard look at the data, scale successful programs and invest smartly. I’m confident that we can keep our promise to millions of women, but only if we act now.”

Beth Schlachter, Executive Director of FP2020, added, “Our task is ambitious, but achievable. We know more now than we did three years ago and have data and on-the-ground experience to show what works and what doesn’t work. Through this global partnership, we have learned that we can make an enormous difference, but we must work together to empower women and girls to plan their own lives, families and futures. It’s a promise we made three years ago at the London Summit—and it’s one worth keeping.”

Find the digital edition of *Commitment to Action*, download the full print version or download the companion Measurement Annex for more data and analysis: www.familyplanning2020.org/progress.

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About FP2020

Family Planning 2020 (FP2020) is a global partnership that supports the rights of women and girls to decide—freely and for themselves—whether, when and how many children they want to have. FP2020 works with governments, civil society, multilateral organizations, donors, the private sector and the research and development community to enable 120 million more women and girls to use contraceptives by 2020.

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FP2020 is an outcome of the 2012 London Summit on Family Planning and is based on the principle that all women, no matter where they live, should have access to lifesaving contraceptives. Achieving the FP2020 goal is a critical milestone to ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services by 2030, as laid out in Sustainable Development Goal 3. FP2020 is in support of the UN Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health. For more information, visit www.familyplanning2020.org.