

BIGMUN 2023

ECOSOC3

Research Report

Topic 2: Increasing the accessibility of contraceptives and safe alternatives to BCP's



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Introduction:

Globally the world is pacing to become more modern. There is a rapid growth in population, standards of living are improving, technology is steadily modernizing, despite the world's development in modernity, women and men around the world still do not have enough access to contraceptives. It is crucial to make contraceptives more accessible and affordable to everyone, especially for people living in low-income countries (LICs), as couples in those regions have the highest fertility but the lowest contraceptive use. In addition to providing contraception access, providing them with the needed education about the different contraceptives and stating their advantages and disadvantages is imperative as they get a clearer idea on the various contraceptives and can accordingly make decisions on which contraceptive suits them the best. This report will go deeper into the history of contraceptives and will cover possible solutions that would help make contraceptives easily accessible.

Definition of Key Terms:

- **Contraceptive**- A birth control, which can range from different methods or devices to prevent pregnancy.
- **Low-Income Countries (LICs)**- Countries that have a low economic development.
- **Birth Control Pill (BCP)**- A contraceptive which is in a form of a pill that prevents the release of an egg from the ovaries. It is a method to prevent pregnancy.
- **Condom**- A contraceptive, which is a thin, rubber sheath worn during a sexual intercourse to prevent pregnancy or to prevent the transfer of infections.
- **Intrauterine Device (IUD)**- A contraceptive device, which is placed inside the uterus, it prevents the implantation of a fertilised ova.
- **Venous thromboembolism (VTE)**- Blood clotting in the veins.
- **United Nations (UN)**- is an intergovernmental organization aiming to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations, achieve international cooperation, and be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations. It is the world's largest and most familiar international organization¹.
- **United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA)**- is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency. Our mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled².

Background Information:

The use of contraception is a major factor that contributes to a women's ability to be able to control their reproductive life and most importantly their health and the health of her children. Due to an improvement in the quality of education, more people have started to become aware of the various contraceptives and have gradually started to become more accessible. However, there are still many countries, especially those in the (LICs), who do not have access to contraceptives or (and) are not affordable.

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¹“About Us.” *United Nations*, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us>.

²“About Us.” *United Nations Population Fund*, 2022, www.unfpa.org/about-us

The contraception development has known to be a rapid development, as by 1900 all the contraceptives used at the moment were available in Europe and North America, with an exception being oral contraceptives³.

The first known documentation of condoms was in 3000 B.C⁴. Condoms then were used to be made by animal intestines and their sole purpose was to prevent the transfer of infections. In 1858 rubber condoms were invented, and from then different innovations of condoms appeared ranging from sizes to materials. During this period the innovation of condoms flourished, and the condom industry was on a rise until they were hit by an obstacle. Anti-vice activist Anthony Comstock passed the Comstock Law in 1873. The Comstock Law banned people from selling condoms, other contraceptives, and sex toys. Despite the law being passed, the condom business did not vanish, the business continued, but illegally. Many companies started to not refer condoms as ‘condoms’ but with other terms like rubber safes, caps, and gentlemen’s rubber goods⁵. The Comstock Law ended in 1965.

The first known documentation of IUDs (intrauterine device) was made in 1909. IUDs were not as popular as condoms but eventually they started emerging in the United States in the 1950s. However, women quickly started to get afraid of them due to the many cases of incorrect placement, infections, and pregnancy. In 1974 the Department of Health, Education and Welfare ordered family-planning clinics to stop prescribing IUDs until it was considered properly effective and safe⁶. It was during the 1970’s and early 1980’s the IUD usage had a significant decrease⁷. Eventually new and better developed versions of IUDs entered the

³“Birth Control - Methods | Britannica.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2023, www.britannica.com/science/birth-control/Methods.

⁴ Khan, Fahd, et al. “The Story of the Condom.” *Indian Journal of Urology*, Medknow Publications, 3 Apr. 2013, <https://doi.org/10.4103/0970-1591.109976>.

⁵ Lieberman, Hallie. “A Short History of the Condom.” *JSTOR DAILY*, 8 June 2017, <https://daily.jstor.org/short-history-of-the-condom/>.

⁶ Rankin ME. “Planning the Family.” *Nursing*, vol. 2, no. 19, Nursing (Lond), 2023, pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/6557401/.

⁷“A History: the IUD.” *Reproductive Health Access Project*, 17 Jan. 2013, <http://www.reproductiveaccess.org/2013/01/a-history-the-iud/>.

⁸ Liao, Pamela Verma, and Janet Dollin. “Half a Century of the Oral Contraceptive Pill: Historical Review and View to the Future.” *National Library of Medicine*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Dec. 2012, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3520685/>.

⁹ Kao, Audiey. “History of Oral Contraception.” *Journal of Ethics | American Medical Association*, American Medical Association, June 2000, <https://doi.org/10.1001/virtualmentor.2000.2.6.dykn1-0006>.

market over the years. IUDs are now considered safe and effective.

The birth control pill was first introduced in 1950⁸ but was first approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 1960⁹. However, the pill was only prescribed for the control of the menstrual cycle or (and) was also only prescribed to married women. Within the first 2 years of the production of the first birth control pill, there were 1.2 million American women using the birth control pill since its introduction. The demand for birth control pills grew as many women have preferred using birth control pills over other contraceptives as the pill was seen to be simple, effective, and provided them with reproductive freedom. However, with the use of birth control pills rising, safety concerns also started to rise about bone density side effects and venous thromboembolism (VTE). Though these risks were not verified by actual outcome in actual women but was still and is still considered as a possible risk.

Even today, birth control pills are said to be 99% effective to prevent pregnancy if one is punctual to take it. However, some women mention some side effects they feel when taking the pill. The side effects include breast tenderness, headaches, irritability, nausea and spotting (abnormal menstrual cycle patterns). However, it reported that these side effects improve if taken regularly. However, there are also potential, rare health risks with the consumption of birth control pills. The health risks include:

- Blood clots
- VTE
- Heart attack
- Hypertension
- Stroke¹⁰

With developments of contraceptives. Contraceptives now are safer and effective than before and according to United Nations data booklet 2019, on contraceptives, 922 million women or their partners worldwide are contraceptive users¹¹. Despite the world's population being 7.7 billion in 2019, the access to contraceptives was still low. The Sub-Saharan region in Africa had the lowest access to contraceptives, only 28.5% of the population was using any method of contraception. A country specifically in the Sub-Saharan region in Africa with the lowest access to contraceptives was South Sudan, only 4.6% of the population were using contraception. Countries in Asia, like Oman, Afghanistan and Pakistan have the lowest access to contraceptives as well. Oman having 19.6% of the population using any contraception, Afghanistan having 18.2% of the population using any contraception and Pakistan having 23.6% of the population using any contraception.

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¹⁰“Birth Control Pill: Contraception, the Pill, Effectiveness, Types.” *Cleveland Clinic*, 2020, my.clevelandclinic.org/health/drugs/3977-birth-control-the-pill#:~:text=Birth%20control%20pills%20are%20safe,Blood%20clots.

However, this data is also based on the pandemic. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 during 2019, businesses were inactive, and this also affected the condom industry. Due to this, the supply of condoms was low and thus access to contraceptives was also limited when the demand during this time period was high.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved:

- United Nations Population fund (UNPFA)- The UNPFA is the United Nations’ sexual and health agency. They are an agency where they aim to deliver wanted pregnancies, ensure a safe childbirth, and want to ensure that every young person’s potential is fulfilled¹².
- Gates Foundation- Gates foundation is also another organisation that wants to enable women and their partners about family planning and have access to contraceptives that can meet their needs¹³.

Relevant UN Resolutions:

Below are some UN resolutions that relate to the topic.

[Resolution 2011/1](#) -Fertility, reproductive health and development

[Resolution 2012/1](#) – Adolescents and Youth

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue:

The UNPFA has continuously been working with men and women around the world to ensure that there is enough access to contraceptives worldwide and that people are provided with valid education if needed. For example, UNFPA created a virtual learning platform, Baykin 2. The word ‘Baykin’ translates to ‘being safe’ in English. This app was created to educate people in Myanmar about sexual and reproductive health, different contraceptives, gender equality, gender- based violence. Half of its users are around age 10-24 and has been reported that parents

¹¹ United Nations. *Contraceptive Use by Method 2019 Data Booklet*. 2019, www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2020/Jan/un_2019_contraceptiveusebymethod_databooklet.pdf.

¹²“About Us.” *United Nations Population Fund*, 2022, www.unfpa.org/about-us

¹³“Family Planning & Contraceptives Access | Gates Foundation.” *Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*, 2021, www.gatesfoundation.org/our-work/programs/gender-equality/family-planning

have also made accounts for the child.

In general, many countries have access to contraceptives even in low-income countries, however, there is still a lot of work needed in order to make contraceptives accessible and affordable.

Possible Solutions:

It is imperative that adolescents and adults keep getting education on sexual and reproductive health and contraception. By being taught in school or providing safe and friendly online platforms where they are taught about it. It is important that they are aware of the different types of contraceptives available and their advantages and disadvantages.

Not only organizations, but nations should also work together in order to provide the supply of contraception in low-income countries and ensure that the poorest couple are able to afford it.

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