

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH PROGRAM: FROM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT TO SERVICE DELIVERY

Founded in 1952, the Population Council is an international, nonprofit, nongovernmental organization that seeks to improve the well-being and reproductive health of current and future generations. The Council has a staff of more than 500 who work in three areas—reproductive health; HIV and AIDS; and poverty, gender, and youth—to:

- produce reliable scientific evidence to improve policies and programs;
- strengthen the capacity of individuals and institutions to address population and health issues through training and technical assistance;
- develop, test, and introduce new and improved health technologies, including contraceptives and microbicides; and
- synthesize and communicate evidence to guide practitioners, policymakers, and donors toward better decisions and allocation of resources.

In addition to our headquarters in New York and an interregional office in Washington, DC, the Population Council has offices in 18 countries in the developing world with programs in more than 50 countries. Our global presence allows us to establish effective and enduring collaborations in both the public and private sectors to carry out innovative research and programs.

Program priorities

Partnering with key stakeholders in the field, the Population Council has a distinct, comprehensive approach to improving global sexual and reproductive health, especially in developing countries. Our work runs the gamut from basic science and exploration of new technologies in the laboratory, to the delivery of priority reproductive health services at the community level.

We address interrelated issues such as male and female reproductive physiology and contraceptives, family planning, sexually transmitted infections, reproductive cancers, sexuality, abortion, sexual violence, female genital cutting, and male reproductive health.



The Reproductive Health program draws from a broad range of expertise to provide global leadership in:

- biomedical research on human reproduction to pursue leads for contraceptive development;
- research, development, and introduction of male and female contraceptives and other reproductive health products;
- social science research to identify the causes of poor sexual and reproductive health;
- operations research on the development, scale-up, financing, and sustainability of effective service-delivery models;
- technical assistance to develop and strengthen reproductive health policies and programs, nationally and internationally; and
- organizational and individual capacity-building to conduct and to apply research that informs decisionmaking.

Strategic objectives include: Making pregnancy and childbirth safer

Maternal mortality remains high in many developing countries, for such reasons as inequalities in wealth, residence, and gender. We aim to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity with a focus on achieving universal access to all reproductive health services. Program goals include:

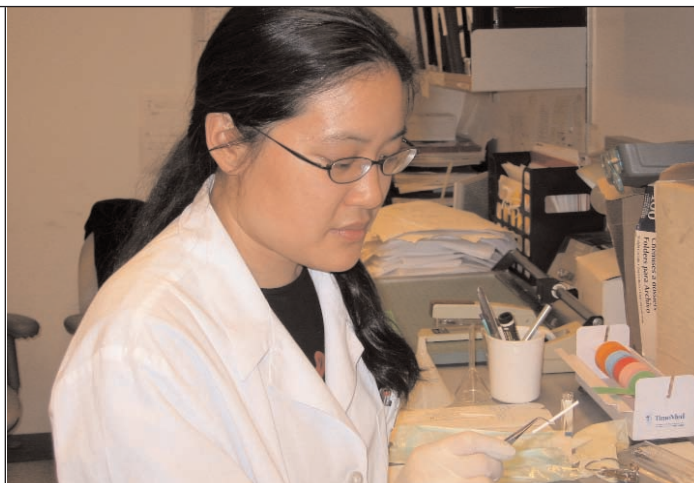
- improving the coverage and quality of skilled attendants at childbirth;
- delaying first and/or second births;

- increasing birth spacing especially for women in locations with poor obstetric care;
- ensuring access, where legal, to safe abortion services; and
- addressing gender inequalities in access to and use of technologies and services.

Ensuring that new technologies respond to clients' evolving needs

In addition to improving existing reproductive health products, there is an urgent need to develop new ones suitable for delivery through the public and private health systems available in resource-poor settings. One quarter of all pregnancies in developing countries are ill-timed or unwanted, and levels of morbidity and mortality that could be avoided with improved technologies are unacceptably high.

For these reasons, the Population Council develops and tests the effectiveness and acceptability of new reproductive health technologies designed to benefit women and men in developing countries. We conduct research to understand the potential role of new products in markets, health systems, and clients' lives and work to increase equity in access to affordable, appropriate, and effective products.



Mobilizing the private sector to make reproductive health commodities more readily available

The private sector plays an important role in the manufacturing, registration, and distribution of contraceptives and other reproductive health technologies, through both commercial and social marketing of branded products. We collaborate with the private sector and encourage companies to register and manufacture licensed Council-developed technologies to increase access and choice in reproductive health programs. These relationships provide affordable technologies and improved health care for people living in the world's poorest regions.

Completing the unfinished reproductive health agenda

Population growth will continue in the coming decades, largely because of the young age structure in many developing countries and the inadequate access to quality family planning and other reproductive health services. Increasing access to these and other services, with a focus on reducing inequities for individuals who are unable to achieve their reproductive health goals, is central to ensuring the well-being of women and men worldwide.

The Population Council's global Reproductive Health program is directed by John Townsend. Regine Sitruk-Ware leads our biomedical research and development, and Ian Askew manages reproductive health services and research.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE POPULATION COUNCIL'S REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH PROGRAM, VISIT WWW.POPCOUNCIL.ORG/RH