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Abstract

WEAC0301 - Trends in condom use in last sex among young single African women, 1996-2002

M.M. Ali¹, J. Cleland²

¹*World Health Organization, Reproductive Health & Research, Geneva, Switzerland,*

²*London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Centre for Population Studies, London, United Kingdom*

Background: Condom promotion is one of the three pillars of HIV prevention and yet, to date, no clear overall account of trends in condom uptake in Africa, the worst affected region, has been published.

Methods: This paper will document the levels, trends and differentials of condom use in last sex among single women aged 15-24 years in 13 African countries where two or more Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) are available. The paper will examine the relationship between household wealth, and respondent's schooling with condom use, and it will further estimate the net effects of these factors in multivariate analyses.

Results: Between around 1996 and 2002, the standardized percentage of women who used condom in the last coitus rose from a median of 19% to 28%. In all countries use has increased; in seven countries, the increase was significant and in five countries it exceeded 10%. The median rate of annual increase was 2.10 (95% CI: 0.77-3.06) percentage points. Nearly 60% of condom users were motivated, at least in past, by the need for pregnancy prevention. In both earlier and most recent survey round, urban and educated women were more likely to use a condom in the last act than their rural and uneducated counterparts. There was no difference in condom use by age group.

Conclusions: Condom promotion in Africa has had an impact on the behaviour of young single women and the pace of change compares favourably with changes in other behaviour that harms health, such as cigarette smoking. However, sharp socioeconomic disparities in use are apparent that may reflect differential access. A greater emphasis on condom promotion for pregnancy-prevention is justified because it must be more feasible for a young woman to negotiate use for this purpose than for disease prevention.