

***Geneva, Switzerland, October 26 (Infosplusgabon) - Around two-thirds of sexually active women surveyed in a new UN study said although they wished to avoid or postpone having children, they had stopped relying on contraception out of concern for their health, resulting in around a quarter of unplanned pregnancies.***

This was contained in a World Health Organization (WHO) report published here Friday.

A UN statement said the family planning study of more than 10,000 women aged 15 to 49 across 36 low and middle-income countries confirmed that 65 per cent of women with an unintended pregnancy were either not using contraception or relied on traditional methods (such as withdrawal or calendar-based methods).

According to the report, more than half of all women who became unintentionally pregnant had not used a contraceptive in the five years prior to conceiving, with nearly 10 per cent reporting that the last method they had used was traditional.

It also said just over three per cent indicated they used short-acting modern contraceptives (pills and condoms), with under three per cent saying they relied on long-acting prevention (intrauterine device and implants).

The statement said the report authors made it clear that “unintended pregnancy does not necessarily equate to unwanted pregnancies”.

However, without proper planning, they may lead to a range of health risks and complications for the expecting child and mother, from malnutrition, illness, and neglect to even death.

Issues and concerns regarding birth control could be addressed through effective family planning, counselling, and support, the health agency explained.

The “important public health issue” of unplanned pregnancies, WHO says, is at such a scale that 74 million women in low and middle-income countries have unintended pregnancies each year, leading to some 25 million unsafe abortions and 47,000 maternal deaths annually.

Moreover, around the world, complicated pregnancies and childbirth are the leading killers of adolescent girls aged 15 to 19, according to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA). Yet these young women and girls face enormous barriers when it comes to accessing essential reproductive

health information and services.

The study findings spotlight a gap in health system support, its authors noted, calling for a need to scale up availability of suitable contraceptive options, reduce switching failure, and identify early when women are having concerns about the method they are using.

A key component of overcoming legal, policy, social, and cultural challenges to enable people to benefit from effective contraceptive services will be to first identify the women who are living with concerns, and follow up with high-quality counselling of skilled professionals to ensure the women receive effective support, the WHO recommended.

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