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# Time to Invest: The case for contraception as an investment for the future

Summary Document



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# Contraception changes lives

We at Marie Stopes International know that in doing so, it also drives social and economic development.

We see it every day through our clients in 37 countries. As a client-focused, results-driven social business, we want to measure this impact.

There have been few attempts to quantify what the particular social and economic benefits might be, or high-profile estimates of the potential cost of realising them.

So while every country on earth is debating how and where to spend finite resources – particularly in the year in which the world will adopt the Sustainable Development Goals – there is an urgent need to prove, and cost, the investment case for contraception.

Building the case requires consensus on what can and should be measured, using data that do not put additional burdens on those evaluating the return on investment.

Here, we set out our three part approach to meeting the challenge.

# Building the case for contraception as the foundation of development

Welcome to Contraceptia



Increased GDP per capita



Decline in Fragile State Index score



Foreign aid as a % of government revenue falling



Increased girl's primary school completion rate



Improved Gender Equity Index score



## Our approach:

**First**, we selected five social and economic indicators for which data are widespread and robust: increase in GDP per capita; primary school completion rate for girls; gender equity index score; foreign aid as percentage of government revenue; and position in the Fragile State Index.

**Second**, we imagined the hypothetical sub-Saharan nation of *Contraceptia*. *Contraceptia* is a small country with 2.2m women of reproductive age, with about a third wanting to use contraception, but unable to. We estimated what improvements might be seen in our selected indicators if 5% more of those women used contraception.<sup>1</sup>

The results in *Contraceptia*<sup>†</sup> would be dramatic:



An increase in GDP per capita of US \$1,700



A 3.4% increase in girls' primary school completion rate, from 69.9% to 73.3%



An improvement of 2.5 points to *Contraceptia*'s Gender Equity Index score



Foreign aid as a % of government revenue falling from 32% to 29%



A four point decline in its Fragile State Index score, from 91 to 87, moving it out of the "Alert" category

**Finally**, we used internal costing data from 11 of our own country programmes to estimate the cost of providing an additional 1% of women of reproductive age (WRA) with contraception across lower income countries. We found that the estimated average cost per woman was US\$16.05 (£10.20).<sup>2</sup>

This means that for the women of *Contraceptia* an investment in contraception of just US\$1.58m (£1.13m) would be needed to see their equality and position improve, their nation's economy improve, and their country's financial independence and stability increase.

**The approach does not suggest such uniform advances across countries which commit resources to improve access to contraception.**

Rather, it suggests a framework to measure consistently, and provide comparisons. We acknowledge the challenges inherent in drawing conclusions from *Contraceptia* and this approach. We propose, however, that it is worth considering the potential benefits of, for example, increased GDP per capita and improved primary education rates in Afghanistan or a more stable, less fragile future for a country in the Sahel like Mali.

<sup>†</sup> In producing the above estimates we have made a number of assumptions. A linear relationship between CPR and the indicators was assumed, correlation does

not indicate causal direction, and confounding factors affecting the relationship between CPR and outcomes were not controlled for.

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## Call to action

As a service provider, we see every day the value women and girls place on being able to get access to contraception.

But no one has yet produced a definitive approach to costing and measuring its wider impact.

In this important year of 2015, as every nation on earth looks to 2030 and at how to invest in its future, there has never been a better time to build a strong global investment case for getting contraception to every woman who wants it.

For the case to be as strong as possible, for it to persuade governments, donors and funders who may have not considered the transformative potential of contraception, it must be a collective, collaborative effort.

We invite others to join us in making our case stronger, and the conclusion inescapable.



Our aim is to make a global case for contraception as the cornerstone of social and economic development.  
**Join us.**

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This publication contains information from the technical document:

**Time to Invest: Building the case for investment in contraception**, which can be downloaded from our website: [mariestopes.org/data-research/time-to-invest](http://mariestopes.org/data-research/time-to-invest)

If you'd like to find out more about this work you can contact the Impact Analysis team by emailing: [impactanalysis@mariestopes.org](mailto:impactanalysis@mariestopes.org)

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<sup>1</sup> i.e., the contraceptive prevalence rate went from 20% to 25%.

<sup>2</sup> As an average across low income countries, this equates to investing US\$252m (£160m) to reach each additional 1% of WRA.