

# IMPLANT ACCESS PROGRAM: EXPANDING FAMILY PLANNING OPTIONS FOR WOMEN

The global family planning community is working to ensure that more women around the world have access to contraceptive options and family planning services and information. As part of this global effort, a group of organizations collaborated to make contraceptive implants—a previously less accessible family planning option—more available to women in the world’s poorest countries.

Since the launch of the Implant Access Program (IAP) in 2013, tremendous progress has been made toward expanding contraceptive access and options and strengthening global family planning systems overall.



Akulu Suzan removing an implant from a client in Uganda © Jhpiego

## THE FAMILY PLANNING LANDSCAPE

For the first time, more than 317 million women in emerging economies are using a modern method of contraception. Yet, 214 million women who say they want to prevent or delay pregnancy still are not. At the 2012 London Summit on Family Planning, global leaders set an ambitious goal to ensure 120 million additional women and girls in the poorest countries would have access to and use modern contraception by 2020. Today, nearly 46 million more girls and women are using contraception than in 2012—30% above the historic trend—but the data show that we are not on track to keep our promise. Achieving the FP2020 goal remains a critical milestone on the path to achieving universal access to contraceptives by 2030. We can deliver faster on our promise if we commit to providing women with more contraceptive options, so they can voluntarily choose a method that best meets their needs.<sup>1</sup>

There is high demand for long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs), including implants, in developing countries, where access to health clinics is often limited and stock-outs are common. When LARCs are consistently available and supported by strong counseling and clinical services, we see demand increasing significantly.<sup>2</sup>

## THE IMPLANTS

Three prequalified implants are now available:

- **Jadelle®** is a two-rod, progestin-only implant that provides effective contraception for women for up to five years.
- **Implanon NXT®**, which replaced **Implanon®**, is a single-rod, progestin-only implant that provides effective contraception for up to three years.
- **Levonplant®** is a two-rod, progestin-only implant that provides effective contraception for women for up to three years

Proper insertion – subcutaneously in the upper arm – and removal of contraceptive implants requires trained healthcare providers.

## THE IMPLANT ACCESS PROGRAM

A group of public and private organizations collaborated to make Bayer’s Jadelle® and MSD’s Implanon NXT® available to women in the world’s poorest countries at price reductions of approximately 50% through 2018 (price reductions subsequently extended to 2023).

Other organizations involved in the agreement include: the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI); the governments of Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States; and the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The IAP supports the recommendations of the UN Commission on Life-Saving Commodities to increase the availability of quality, life-saving commodities for women’s and children’s health.

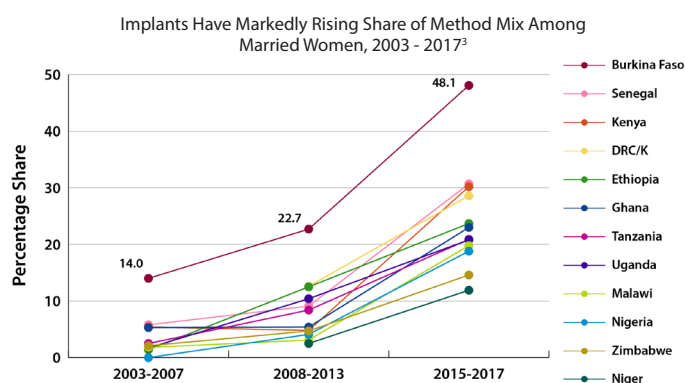
The price reductions were just the first step. The IAP organizations also worked closely with a number of other international organizations to reduce policy barriers to implant access; train health workers on counseling and proper implant insertion and removal; reduce supply chain disruptions; increase service delivery quality and availability; and raise awareness about implants at the community level. Donors and governments are working together to ensure adequate funding is available in all FP2020 countries to take these critical next steps.

<sup>1</sup> <http://progress.familyplanning2020.org>

<sup>2</sup> For additional information on the demand for LARCs see: Three Successful Sub-Saharan Africa Family Planning Programs: Lessons for Meeting the MDGs (Ethiopia, Malawi, Rwanda), USAID/Africa Bureau, 2012.

## KEY PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Access:** Since the inception of the IAP in 2013, almost **53 million implants** have been distributed in the world's poorest countries. Implant procurement in 2018 is double 2012 procurement.
- **Cost Savings:** Implant price reductions led to more than **US\$500 million** in savings for donors and developing country governments since the program's inception in 2013.
- **Forecasting and Supply Planning:** Applying collaborative tools and processes to improve coordination between partners, the Coordinated Supply Planning (CSP) group has helped suppliers to better meet country demand first for implants, and subsequently for all FP products. In 2018 year-to-date (as of Oct 2018), across all products, CSP has made data-driven recommendations for shipment actions that provided countries with an additional 13 million couple-years of protection and worked to identify funding and prioritize additional orders worth \$12.2M to avert shortages and stockouts in 18 countries.
- **Training & Service Delivery:** IAP partners collaborated to disseminate best practices and mobilize resources to dramatically expand the number of providers trained to provide implants and to improve quality of service delivery, including not only insertions but also implant removals. Partners also supported the revision of service delivery guidance to promote task shifting and to expand client eligibility to include immediate post-partum women, nulliparous women, adolescents and young women, irrespective of marital status.
- **Use:** Survey data show dramatic increases in implant use and implant share of the method mix since the inception of the IAP in 2013. A recent article by Roy Jacobstein that examines data on implant use and contraceptive prevalence in 12 countries identifies implants as the main driver of CPR growth in 11 of the 12 countries.<sup>3</sup>



## CASE STUDY

### Jhpiego: Expanding Access to Implant Removals

For 27-year-old Akulu Suzan, one thing is certain: she wants to be a star nurse, one that everybody is proud of. So it is not surprising that she reports having done more than 100 implant removals in her two years of service.

Suzan is a nursing officer at Muko Health Centre IV and was trained by Jhpiego's Best Practices in Implant Removal project. Thanks to this training, Suzan has gained more confidence and needs less time for each removal, meaning that she is able to serve more patients in a single day.

When asked how she has benefited from the training program, Suzan explains that her confidence has increased tremendously. "I was removing implants before the training. However, this training has helped build my confidence. Also, smaller incisions compared to those I used to make before."

Suzan's competence has also expanded to counselling and supporting clients to manage implant side effects. She adds, "I receive many clients telling me that they are experiencing side effects. Some are distressed to the point of wanting to remove the implant. The training we received prepares me for these kinds of cases. Now, when clients experiencing side effects come in, I counsel them and offer them the appropriate medication."

<sup>3</sup> Liftoff: The Blossoming of Contraceptive Implant Use in Africa. *Glob Health Sci Pract.* 2018;6(1):17-39. Published 2018 Mar 21. doi:10.9745/GHSP-D-17-00396

## SUSTAINABILITY

- **Coordinated supply planning:** The best practices developed by the CSP group have been extended to additional products and are now being institutionalized in the Global FP Visibility and Analytics Network, hosted by the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition, that will benefit all FP commodities.
- **Supply:** Overall manufacturing capacity has increased since the inception of the program, and is expected to continue increasing. In 2017, a third supplier, Dahua, received WHO pre-qualification. In 2016, Merck and Bayer announced plans to maintain access pricing for contraceptive implants in the world's poorest countries for an additional five years, through 2023.
- **Operations:** The function of the IAP Operations group, which monitored and supported resolution for service delivery issues, will be continued into 2019 until a long-term home has been identified for this function.