

Empowering young people to make informed choices about their sexual health

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One cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of freedom of choice, especially when it comes to young people and the range of options they are facing in this period of life. The annual World Contraception Day (WCD) on September 26th aims to raise awareness regarding sexual and reproductive health. Bayer, through its WCD initiatives around the world, aims to provide young people with access to scientifically accurate information about contraception, and remind them of their power of options to make conscious decisions in planning for their future.

The WHO states that an estimated 33 million unintended pregnancies occur each year, and many may be due to contraceptive method failure or ineffective use. This emphasizes the importance that everyone, specifically young people, should be well-informed about the different methods of contraception..

According to the NFHS 4 survey in India, the unmet need for family planning among young married women (15-24) remains high at 22%. The survey also showed an overall decline in the use of contraceptives. 47% of the married women between 15-49 years did not use any method of contraception

“With half of the country’s population younger than 25 years of age, there is a need to raise awareness on the use of contraception among the youth, and better family planning amongst young couples,” says **Dr Kalpana Apte, Secretary-General, Family Planning Association of India (FPAI)**.

Only when everyone who is sexually active can make conscious decisions based on the awareness of their contraceptive options, can they live a self-determined life and create a desirable future for themselves. Therefore, one important priority of the challenge to empower young couples is spreading knowledge about contraceptive methods and their effective use.

Bayer's commitment to women's health dates back more than 90 years. “Now in its 12th year, World Contraception Day is an important event for Bayer the world over, as we commemorate this occasion to raise awareness among the youth about contraception and encouraging them to know their options. We engage with key stakeholders like the FPAI and the medical fraternity to work towards a world where every pregnancy is planned and women are empowered with the necessary tools and knowledge to take control of their sexual health and family planning, says **Manoj Saxena, Managing Director – Bayer Zydus Pharma**.

The global WCD Coalition consists of 16 organizations and is supported by Bayer. The partners are dedicated to increasing access to and availability of family planning services and education. They have united to create and enhance awareness, and to underline the importance of empowering young people to take their sexual and reproductive health into their own hands, as well as to have informed discussions with healthcare providers and partners on their contraceptive options.

The partners of the World Contraception Day Coalition are:

- Asia Pacific Council on Contraception (APCOC)
- Centro Latinoamericano Salud y Mujer (CELSAM)
- DSW (Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung)
- EngenderHealth (EH)
- European Society of Contraception and Reproductive Health (ESC)
- Family Planning 2020 (FP2020)
- International Federation of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology (FIGIJ)
- International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)
- Marie Stopes International (MSI)
- Pathfinder International
- Population Council
- Population Services International (PSI)
- The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- Women Deliver (WD)