



Achieving the MDGs

The contribution of family planning

Cameroon



Millennium Development Goals

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)—a set of eight important, time-bound goals ranging from reducing poverty by half to providing universal primary education—represent a blueprint for global development agreed to by member states of the United Nations and international development institutions. However, achieving them will be a major challenge for Cameroon and many other developing countries that are not “on track” to meet the goals by the target date of 2015. As stated by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, it will take time and commitment to mobilize the necessary resources, train the required personnel, and establish the needed infrastructure to meet the MDGs.

In Cameroon and other African countries, one major factor contributing to the challenge is the continued rapid growth of the population. The number of people in need of health, education, economic, and other services is large and increasing, which, in turn, means that the amount of resources, personnel, and infrastructure required to meet the MDGs is also increasing. In light of this fact, development efforts in support of the MDGs should not overlook the importance and benefits of slowing population growth.

This brief, based on a multi-country study titled “Achieving the Millennium Development Goals: The Contribution of Family Planning,” looks at how one strategy—*meeting the need for family planning*—can reduce population growth and make achieving the MDGs more affordable in Cameroon, in addition to directly contributing to the goals of reducing child mortality and improving maternal health.

Reducing MDG Costs

High rates of population growth are largely the result of frequent childbearing or high fertility—often corresponding with a large unmet need for family planning (FP). In Cameroon, women still have, on average, 5 children each, and surveys show that the unmet need for FP services is high (about 20 percent of married women of reproductive age want to space or limit births but are not currently using any method of family planning). If access to family planning services was increased, this unmet need could be met, therefore slowing population

Meeting unmet need for family planning not only allows families to space and limit their births when desired; it can also reduce the costs of meeting the MDGs and directly contribute to the reduction of maternal and child mortality.

growth and reducing the costs of meeting the MDGs.

The study estimated the extent of the cost savings for five of the eight MDGs.

Costs were calculated under two scenarios: when unmet need for family planning remains constant and when all unmet need is gradually met by 2015. Although it may take Cameroon longer than 10 years to satisfy all unmet need—and this question is addressed in the larger study—what is clear is that reducing the unmet need for FP services can help Cameroon significantly reduce the costs of meeting the five selected MDGs, including:

- Achieve universal primary education
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

For example, the cost of achieving the MDG for universal primary education is influenced by the number of children

