

# UNDERSTANDING FACTORS INFLUENCING USE OF FEMALE CONDOMS AMONG YOUNG BASOTHO WOMEN: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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# Overview

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- Context
- Research questions
- Methodology
- Key findings
- Implications
- The *Silkee* Program

# Lesotho

- Location: Surrounded by South Africa
- Population: 1,876,633
- CPR:
  - Married women – 47%
  - Unmarried women – 57.8%
  - Lower among younger women
- HIV: 23%
- PSI: Communication, condom distribution, HCT since 2001



Source: 2006 Census; 2009 Lesotho Demographic Health Survey



# Context

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- Unintended pregnancy common among young women
- Greatest period of HIV risk for women occurs during transition from adolescence to young adulthood:
  - 15 – 19 : 8%
  - 25 – 29 : 40%
- Youth sexual health programming limited and historically focused on abstinence
- Cultural taboos against discussion of sex with parents, educators and peers



# Research questions

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- What are current trends in knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) around the FC and sexuality among young Basotho women?
- What are the primary contributing factors of FC use among young Basotho women, including perceived benefits of the FC and barriers to FC use?



# Methodology

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- Mixed methods: researcher-administered, intercept survey and focus group discussions (FGDs)
- Sample population and size:
  - Female students at five institutions of higher learning in and around Maseru
  - 140 survey respondents, 40 FGD participants
- Recruitment criteria:
  - Female
  - 18 – 29 years of age
  - Sexually active within the past six months
  - Enrolled in university for at least nine months prior to study



# Methodology (cont.)

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- Surveys analyzed using SPSS Statistics Version 19
- FGDs recorded, transcribed and translated from Sesotho into English
  - Hand-coded and analyzed using detailed codebook
- Preliminary results from quantitative and qualitative activities compared to generate complete response



# Key findings

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## **Use of modern FP methods:**

- Consistent use low and unintended pregnancy perceived as common
- Attitudes/norms around gender and relationships impact nonuse more than lack of knowledge or access
- Partner trust, alcohol use, and concerns about reputation cited as reasons for not using male condoms

## **Attitudes toward modern FP methods:**

- Condoms more likely to be used to prevent pregnancy than HIV infection
  - Concerns about side effects, including future fertility and weight gain, limit use of hormonal methods
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# Key findings (cont.)

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## **Other risk behaviors:**

- Transactional sex reportedly common and accepted as means to improve social standing (access to fancy restaurants, cell phone/air time, higher grades, transport, etc.)
- Power dynamics with older partners prevents young women from negotiating male condom use
- Concurrent sexual partnerships and cross-generational sex reportedly common among students



## Key findings (cont.)

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### **Perceived risks:**

- Nearly all reported that pregnancy (and subsequent abandonment) was greater risk than HIV of both concurrent and cross-generational partnerships
- HIV/STI risk perception low, except in context of cross-generational sex



# Key findings (cont.)

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## **Female condom use:**

- Prior use low due to: a) limited availability on campus; b) low self-efficacy to use; and, c) inaccurate beliefs
- Many respondents interested in trying FC if it was available and they knew how to use it

## **Beliefs and attitudes about female condom:**

- Confusion over how long prior to sex one can/must insert FC
- Belief that inserted too long prior to sexual intercourse would decrease efficacy
- Belief that FC needed to be held in place during sex



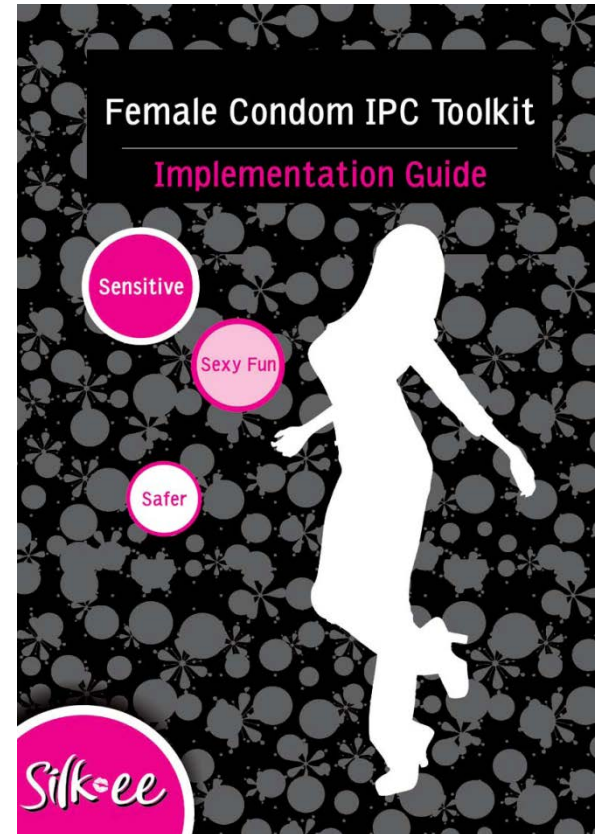
# Implications

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- Need for comprehensive sexual health programming targeting university students
- Opportunity to position FC for pregnancy prevention
- FC should be positioned as a woman-controlled method
- Programming should include: product distribution; opportunities to “practice” correct use; and, communication addressing misconceptions
- Need to address norms around gender and relationships that drive risky sexual behaviors

# The *Silkee* Program

- Female condom initiative targeting female university students aged 18-29
- Empowers young women to prevent both unplanned pregnancy and HIV
- Promotes female-controlled alternative to male condom
- Uses peer education, user-driven media, distribution of free, branded FCs (*Silkee*)





Thank you!

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## For more information:

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