

Growth of contraceptive use highest in African countries: report

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The number of women and girls in poor countries embracing modern contraception has leapt by tens of millions with Africa recording the biggest gains, the organisation Family Planning 2020 (FP2020) said Monday.

A new report shows that 314 million women and girls in 69 countries—out of 926 million of child-bearing age—now use contraceptive methods like condoms, pills and birth control implants.

The figures represent a gain of 2 percent globally since 2012, while gains of 7 percent were recorded in East and Southern Africa.

"The use of modern contraception is growing fastest here in Africa," FP2020 director Beth Schlachter told a press conference in Nairobi, ahead of a global conference on population and development set to begin Tuesday.

FP2020, a self-described "global movement" founded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the British government, works with governmental and nongovernmental partners to promote goals set at a conference in London in 2012.

Specifically it has been striving for 120 million new contraception users by 2020.

"Family planning is a basic right," said Benoit Kalasa, a representative of

the United Nations Population Fund, citing the dangers posed by pregnancies that are too close together or that occur at a young age.

"It gives women the means to plan their life. They can stay in school when they avoid unplanned pregnancies. Women can space pregnancies to participate in [economic activities](#)."

Of the 69 countries covered in the report, 41 are in Africa, 21 are in Asia and Oceania, four are in Latin America and the Caribbean and three are in the Middle East.

Schlachter told AFP that governments seem increasingly focused on integrating family planning into [health policy](#) with an eye toward overcoming logistical challenges and cultural and religious barriers.

"In many places, even if you resolve things like funding of [family planning](#) or [supply chain](#), unless you also work with communities and women to actually understand what contraception is, there will be a barrier to uptake."

This week's International Conference on Population and Development in Nairobi is not without controversy.

On Monday around 100 supporters of a Catholic organisation demonstrated against the conference, which will focus on demographics and reproductive rights.

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