HIV and maternal mortality are among the greatest obstacles to women’s health and development. They constitute the two leading causes of death among women of reproductive age. New products that simultaneously address both issues could help keep girls and women healthy, and allow them to reach their full potential.

**Overlapping Health Needs**

Women's sexual and reproductive health needs do not exist in isolation, and are an integral part of their overall health.

- **Women are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS due to biology, gender inequities and cultural norms.** In sub-Saharan Africa — where the epidemic's main driver is unprotected heterosexual sex — women carry nearly 60 percent of the HIV burden. Young women in sub-Saharan Africa are at least twice as likely to have HIV as young men.i

- **In developing countries, a lack of access to contraception is a major contributor to maternal and newborn deaths,** largely due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth.

Worldwide, 40 percent of all pregnancies are unintended.ii An estimated 225 million women of reproductive age have an unmet need for contraceptives that would allow them to space their pregnancies, and lead to better health, education and economic outcomes for women and families.iii

- **Women face dual risks.** Women in areas with high rates of HIV often have the greatest unmet need for modern contraception, imposing dual risks for women in developing countries.iv

**Promise of Multipurpose Prevention**

Multipurpose products are now being developed to offer women protection against the overlapping risks associated with HIV and unintended pregnancy. Some products may also prevent other sexually transmitted infections. Although existing methods such as male and female condoms are highly effective when used, it is often difficult for women to negotiate condom use with their partners. Multipurpose products being developed as vaginal rings and new types of barrier devices could give women the range of options they need to protect their health.

**Three-month Dual Protection**

Leveraging our experience developing the monthly dapivirine ring, which has been shown to safely help reduce HIV risk, IPM is developing a vaginal ring to protect women against both HIV and unintended pregnancy.

The three-month ring would slowly release the ARV drug dapivirine and the contraceptive hormone levonorgestrel.

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**Integrated Solutions Make Sense**

The potential benefits of IPM’s multipurpose ring include:

- Discreet, female-initiated protection against both HIV and unintended pregnancy
- Convenient 3-month duration and dual protection to help encourage consistent use
- Fewer clinic visits and greater efficiency, as well as reduced stigma associated with HIV services

Because women’s perceived risk of HIV is low compared to their perceived risk for pregnancy, combined technologies may be widely used. Women in multiple studiesv-vii have shown strong interest in and willingness to use multipurpose rings and other products if proven effective.

The first safety study of IPM’s dapivirine-contraceptive ring began in April 2017 at two sites in the US, and is being led by our partner, the Microbicide Trials Network.

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