

IPPF Glossary of terms related to sexual and reproductive health



Who we are

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) is a global service provider and a leading advocate of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. We are a worldwide movement of national organizations working with and for communities and individuals.

IPPF works towards a world where women, men and young people everywhere have control over their own bodies, and therefore their destinies. A world where they are free to choose parenthood or not; free to decide how many children they will have and when; free to pursue healthy sexual lives without fear of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. A world where gender or sexuality are no longer a source of inequality or stigma. We will not retreat from doing everything we can to safeguard these important choices and rights for current and future generations.

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Introduction

The vocabulary of sexual and reproductive health is not only medical and technical; it is also sensitive, complex, political and emotive. For those working in sexual and reproductive health – which concerns the most intimate part of people’s lives – it is vital to understand, choose and use these words with care.

Words matter. For example, abortion, adolescent sexuality, and HIV and AIDS evoke responses from each of us, on individual and institutional levels. The stigma attached to abortion, adolescent sexuality, or HIV and AIDS necessitates an exceptional response. The way we describe, discuss and portray sexual and reproductive health issues is instrumental to our success in dealing effectively with the challenges while also fully respecting IPPF’s mission. The harmonized use of language and content in IPPF materials should reflect an approach to the problems that is comprehensive and inclusive, and that is also sensitive to the needs and issues of all people.

This is a living document that will be updated regularly to reflect our evolving understanding of sexual and reproductive health terms. It is important to note that this glossary was developed specifically to assist in revising, editing and developing sexual and reproductive health-related materials and for understanding the vocabulary used in sexual and reproductive health.

It is also essential to use the language of sexual and reproductive health carefully and conscientiously in the face of growing attacks from conservative quarters. Much of this terminology is appropriated by those in opposition to sexual and reproductive rights and choices, who employ a strategy of manipulating and misusing the language of modern sexual and reproductive health services and rights, in order to mislead.

This glossary aims to provide IPPF Member Associations, and other sexual and reproductive health organizations and concerned individuals, with an easy reference to clear and consistent international definitions of key terms, phrases and words that are commonly used in our work. It is by no means exhaustive, but seeks to cover the main terminology used in our field today.

It is part of IPPF’s efforts to use language that is unambiguous and unequivocal – especially to people who do not work in this field.

This glossary is also available online at www.ippf.org and on CD-ROM.

Aa

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| abortifacient | A substance or medication that induces an abortion. A contraceptive that prevents implantation is often incorrectly described as an 'abortifacient' by anti-choice groups. |
| abortion | The termination of a pregnancy before the fetus has become viable. It entails the premature expulsion from the uterus of the products of conception: fetus, fetal membranes and placenta. |
| abortion rate | The estimated number of abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–49 years in a given year. |
| abortion ratio | The estimated number of abortions per 1,000 live births in a given year. |
| abortion tourism | Travel to another jurisdiction to obtain an abortion. |
| accidental abortion | An abortion that occurs spontaneously or naturally, without medical intervention or any other interference. <i>Syn:</i> miscarriage, spontaneous abortion. |
| age-specific abortion rate | The average number of abortions per woman per five-year age group for a given country or area. |
| complete abortion | All products of conception have been expelled. |
| criminal abortion | Illegal abortion. |
| drug-induced abortion | See MEDICAL ABORTION. |
| habitual abortion | The loss of three or more consecutive pregnancies. <i>Syn:</i> recurrent pregnancy loss, recurrent abortion. |
| illegal abortion | Induced abortion without legal justification, often unsafe. |
| incomplete abortion | Some products of conception remain in the uterus. |
| induced abortion | Voluntarily caused abortion (abortion is often used for induced abortion). <i>Syn:</i> pregnancy interruption, termination. |
| inevitable abortion | Intra-uterine bleeding accompanied by cramping and cervical dilatation before the 20th week of pregnancy, while the products remain in situ. There is never an attempt to stop this process medically, thus the products are invariably expelled. |

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| legal abortion | Induced abortion permitted by law. |
| legally restricted abortion | Abortion allowed only under specific conditions, such as rape or fetal abnormality. Consequently, women are more likely to seek illegal or unsafe abortions. |
| medical (or medication) abortion | Abortion induced by drugs (e.g. mifepristone followed by misoprostol or gemeprost, or misoprostol alone). |
| miscarriage | <i>Syn:</i> spontaneous abortion. |
| missed abortion | Failed pregnancy without bleeding or cramping; the products of conception are retained in the uterus and the signs and symptoms of pregnancy disappear. <i>Syn:</i> silent abortion. |
| natural abortion | A spontaneous abortion. |
| partial birth abortion | An abortion procedure that includes the extraction from the uterus of the fetal body, partial evacuation of the intracranial contents to decrease the fetal skull size, and vaginal delivery of the fetus. |
| recurrent abortion | See HABITUAL ABORTION. |
| silent abortion | See MISSED ABORTION. |
| spontaneous abortion | Abortion that occurs naturally, without medical intervention, usually before the 13th week of pregnancy. After 20 weeks it is called 'premature delivery'. Spontaneously, 80 per cent of fertilized eggs do not implant; 15–25 per cent of all implanted embryos miscarry (often before a woman knows of the pregnancy). <i>Syn:</i> miscarriage, accidental abortion, natural abortion. |
| sporadic abortions | Non-consecutive spontaneous abortions. |
| surgical abortion | Abortion performed using vacuum aspiration – manual or electrical – or dilatation and curettage, or dilatation and extraction/evacuation. Also, an abortion in late pregnancy in which the fetus is removed through an incision into the uterus. |
| therapeutic abortion | Abortion induced for medical reasons. Sometimes also defined as a legal termination of pregnancy by a skilled provider. |
| threatened abortion | Bleeding during the first trimester of pregnancy without cramping or contractions. The symptoms may disappear or result in spontaneous abortion. |

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| unsafe abortion | One performed by persons lacking the necessary skills or in an environment lacking the minimal medical standards, or both. (Note: both legal and illegal abortions can be safe or unsafe.) |
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| abscess | A pocket of pus surrounded by inflammation, caused by a bacterial infection and marked by persistent pain. |
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| abstinence | Abstinence is a conscious decision to avoid certain activities or behaviours. Definitions of sexual abstinence vary. They can mean no sexual contact, or no penetration (oral, anal or vaginal). |
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| abstinence-only education | Education that promotes abstinence from all sexual activity until marriage, and abstinence as the only prophylaxis against HIV infection and unwanted pregnancies. This ignores the issues of contraception, sexuality, and sexual and reproductive health. Abstinence is often included as a safer sex option in comprehensive sexuality education programmes. See also COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION . |
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| acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) | The advanced stage of infections caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). |
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| adherence to medication | Extent to which the patient continues the agreed mode of treatment under limited supervision. This includes taking the correct dose of a drug at the correct time, exactly as prescribed. Failure to adhere to an appropriate treatment regimen can lead to drug resistance. |
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| adhesions | Scar tissues joining body parts. Can occur in the abdominal cavity or inside the uterus and cause impaired fertility or sterility. See also ASHERMAN'S SYNDROME . |
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| adnexae | The inner (intra-abdominal) female genital parts surrounding the uterus: ovaries, fallopian tubes and ligaments containing blood vessels and nerves. |
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| adolescence | The period during which an individual progresses from dependence on adults to responsible adulthood. The World Health Organization and UN define adolescence as the period from 10–19 years of age. See also PUBERTY , TEENAGER , YOUNG PEOPLE , YOUTH . |
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| adult mortality rate | The probability that someone aged 15 years of age will die before reaching his or her 60th birthday, per 1,000 people in the population. The level of adult mortality is an important indicator for the comprehensive assessment of the mortality pattern in a population. |
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| advocacy | A campaign, strategy or other activity to build support for a cause or issue. Advocacy is directed towards creating a favourable environment, by trying to gain support, and influence attitudes and behaviour, or change legislation. |
| ageing population | The ageing of a population takes place gradually, as a result of increased life expectancy and a decline in fertility. The proportion of children and young people in the population falls, leading to a rise in the proportion of elderly people. |
| age of consent | The age at which a person is considered legally competent to give valid consent for any contract or behaviour, regulated by law, with another person. |
| age-sex structure | The composition of a population according to the number or proportion of males and females in each age group. The age-sex structure is the cumulative result of past mortality, fertility and migration. |
| age-specific fertility rate | The number of births occurring during a given year or reference period per 1,000 women of reproductive age, classified in single- or five-year age groups. |
| AIDS | See ACQUIRED IMMUNODEFICIENCY SYNDROME. |
| amenorrhoea | Absence of menstruation for at least three months. |
| primary amenorrhoea | Menstruation has never occurred. |
| secondary amenorrhoea | In a woman who has previously menstruated. |
| amniocentesis | A diagnostic procedure in which a needle is inserted through the abdominal wall to aspirate a small amount of amniotic fluid from the amniotic cavity to determine the presence of genetic abnormalities or other abnormal fetal conditions. |
| amniotic fluid | The fluid that surrounds the fetus. |
| anaemia | A condition in which the body lacks adequate haemoglobin, commonly due to iron deficiency or excessive blood loss. As a result, tissues do not receive adequate oxygen. |
| androgen | Androgens are a group of hormones that mainly influence the development of the male reproductive system. The main and most active androgen is testosterone, produced by cells in the testes. See also TESTOSTERONE. |

anti-abortion A term sometimes used as a synonym for pro-life, anti-choice, pro-forced childbearing or pro-forced motherhood, or to refer to individuals and groups who take violent action against abortion providers or clinics, or women requesting an abortion.

anti-choice Opposed to a woman’s right to choose abortion. Sometimes used as a synonym for anti-abortion, pro-life, pro-forced childbearing or pro-forced motherhood, implying that the prime motivation is to restrict the woman’s freedom. See also PRO-LIFE, ANTI-ABORTION.

antiprogestogens Compounds that block the action of the hormone progesterone, which is essential for the maintenance of a pregnancy. Antiprogestogens (e.g. RU486 = mifepristone) cause the termination of a pregnancy.

antiretroviral therapy Antiretroviral therapy is the course of medications or drugs to control HIV infection and slow progression to AIDS. Other terms are HAART (highly active antiretroviral therapy), anti-retroviral drugs, HIV treatment, HIV medications, HIV drug regimen and HIV drugs.

ART See ANTIRETROVIRAL THERAPY.

ARVs Antiretrovirals. See ANTIRETROVIRAL THERAPY.

Asherman’s syndrome A condition in which the inner uterine walls adhere partially or totally to each other. Results from uterine inflammation or infection and is one cause of infertility.

aspiration The process of using a suction device to remove fluids or tissue from the body. In the context of abortion, it is the removal of ovular material (embryo or fetus, fetal membranes, placenta, amniotic fluid) from the uterine cavity with a manually controlled syringe, i.e. manual vacuum aspiration (MVA) or an electric pump.

Bb

baby In popular language, a very young child aged from birth to about one year. More scientific language is infant. The term baby is wrongly used when referring to an embryo or a fetus. See also INFANT.

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| back-up method | A contraceptive method employed when mistakes have been made in the use of a continuous method, or to help ensure that a woman does not become pregnant when she first starts to use a contraceptive method. It includes abstinence, male or female condoms, spermicides and withdrawal. |
| bacterial vaginosis | Inflammation of the vagina caused by a change in the balance of vaginal bacteria. Suspected association with low fertility or miscarriage. |
| balanitis | Inflammation of the tip of the penis. |
| barrier methods of contraception | Contraceptives that block the entry of spermatozoa into the uterus: male and female condoms, diaphragm, cervical cap, spermicides. Diaphragms and cervical caps are normally used with spermicides. |
| basal body temperature method | A method for predicting fertility, in which a woman charts when ovulation occurs by taking her temperature every morning before getting up. See also PERIODIC ABSTINENCE. |
| baseline survey | A survey that is conducted at the start of a project, to determine the level of key indicators against which future results will be compared. |
| behaviour change communication (BCC) | Behaviour change communication is an interactive process aimed at changing social and individual behaviour, which uses targeted and specific messages, different communication approaches, and is linked to services for effective outcomes. |
| benchmarking | A technique in which indicators (benchmarks) are established, against which performance or progress towards objectives can be measured. |
| benign breast disease | Growth of abnormal but non-cancerous breast tissue. |
| Billings method | Also known as cervical mucus or ovulation method. See also PERIODIC ABSTINENCE, RHYTHM METHOD. |
| birth | The emergence and separation of offspring from the body of the mother. See also DELIVERY. |
| live birth | Complete expulsion or extraction from its mother of an infant which, after such separation, breathes or shows evidence of life (beating of the heart, pulsation of the umbilical cord, or voluntary movement of the muscles). |

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| birth control | Control of the number of children born, especially by preventing or reducing the number of conceptions. It is not a synonym for family planning or contraception. It refers to all methods of preventing births, including abstinence, contraceptives, male and female sterilization and abortion. |
| birth rate | The number of live births per 1,000 population in a given year. |
| births averted | The number of births that have not occurred because of sexual and reproductive health interventions. It involves a number of assumptions about several aspects of the reproductive process, so is not a precise figure. |
| blastocyst | The pre-implantation embryo of mammals consisting of a spherical cavitory formation of 30–150 cells with an outer layer that will form the placenta, and an interior cluster (inner cell mass) that will form the embryo. At this stage, five to eight days after fertilization, the blastocyst is approximately 0.15mm. See also EMBRYO, MORULA. |
| blood pressure | The force of the blood against the walls of blood vessels. Normal systolic (pumping) blood pressure is less than 140mmHg (millimeters of mercury), and diastolic (resting) blood pressure less than 90mmHg. See also HYPERTENSION. |
| Braxton Hicks contractions | Intermittent contractions that occur throughout pregnancy. When these contractions do not cause cervical changes they are called 'false labour' contractions. |
| breastfeeding | Feeding an infant with milk produced by the breasts. Breastfeeding patterns include: |
| exclusive breastfeeding | Giving the infant only breast milk with no supplementation of any type. |
| fully breastfeeding | Giving the infant breast milk almost exclusively but also water, juice, vitamins or other nutrients from time to time. |
| nearly fully breastfeeding | Giving the infant some liquid or food in addition to breast milk, but more than three-quarters of feedings are breast feeds. |
| partially breastfeeding | Any breastfeeding less than nearly fully breastfeeding, giving the infant more supplementation with other liquids or food. Less than three-quarters of feedings are breast feeds. |

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| calendar method | Also known as the rhythm method. See also PERIODIC ABSTINENCE. |
| candidiasis | A common vaginal infection caused by a yeast-like fungus. Also known as yeast infection or thrush. Not a sexually transmitted infection. |
| CBCT | See COMMUNITY-BASED CLINICAL TRIAL. |
| CBD | See COMMUNITY-BASED DISTRIBUTION. |
| CBR | See CRUDE BIRTH RATE. |
| CD4 count | The number of T-helper lymphocytes (CD4 cells) per cubic millimetre of blood. The CD4 count is a good predictor of immune system health. The ‘number’ of white cells is one medical indicator of the strength of the immune system. A CD4 count lower than 200, or an accompanying HIV-related illness, qualify for an AIDS diagnosis. |
| CD4 (lymphocyte) cell | A white blood cell also known as a T-4 cell (T-helper lymphocytes). These cells coordinate the immune system’s response to infection and are the cells mainly targeted by HIV. |
| cerclage | Surgical suture to keep the uterine cervix closed, as a treatment during pregnancy for incompetent cervix, to avoid miscarriage or premature delivery. |
| cervical cancer | Abnormal, uncontrolled growth (malignancy) of the cervix, usually due to persistent infection with certain types of human papilloma virus (HPV), a very common sexually transmitted virus. Effective cervical screening can detect early cancerous changes, to avoid a progression to advanced stage cancer. |
| cervical intra-epithelial neoplasia (CIN) | Abnormal, precancerous cells in the cervix. Mild forms may resolve spontaneously, but more severe abnormalities may progress to cervical cancer if not treated. <i>Syn:</i> cervical dysplasia, precancer. |
| cervicitis | Inflammation or infection of the uterine cervix. |
| cervix (uterine) | The lower, narrow part of the uterus, that protrudes deep into the vagina; the ‘mouth’ or opening of the uterus. |
| cervical canal | The canal through the cervix, from vagina to uterine cavity. |

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| cervical ectropion | A condition in which the mucus-producing cells found in the cervical canal begin to grow on the area around the opening of the cervix. |
| cervical mucus | Viscous fluid plugging the opening of the cervix. It protects the uterus against infection and lets spermatozooids pass through during ovulation. |
| cervical os | The small opening of the uterine cervix, deep in the vagina. |
| cervical smear | A sample of secretions and superficial cervix cells spread on a glass slide for microscopic observation, used to detect infection or, after staining, abnormal cells (e.g. for early diagnosis of uterine cancer). See also PAPANICOLAOU SMEAR. |
| cervical stenosis | The cervical opening is narrower than normal. |
| incompetent cervix | An abnormally short cervix, incapable of maintaining pregnancy to term. |
| chancroid | A sexually transmitted infection caused by a bacterium, which causes an ulcerous growth on the genitals. |
| chemical pregnancy | A chemical pregnancy is the clinical term used for a very early miscarriage. In many cases, the positive pregnancy test was achieved before the woman's period was due but a miscarriage occurred before a heartbeat was detectable by ultrasound. |
| child | The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) definition: <i>"Every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."</i> Child (as well as baby) is sometimes erroneously used to refer to an unborn fetus. |
| childbearing years | See REPRODUCTIVE AGE. |
| child marriage or early marriage | Any marriage entered into under the age of 18 years, before the girl is physically, physiologically and psychologically ready for the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing. |
| child mortality rate (CMR) | Deaths of children under five years of age per 1,000 live births in a specific time period. Technically, it is the probability that a child will die before his or her fifth birthday. |
| chlamydia | A common sexually transmitted bacterial infection that can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease in women, as well as decreased fertility or sterility in both men and women. The infection is often asymptomatic. |

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| choriocarcinoma | A rare type of cancer. Cells from a molar pregnancy, abortion or placental tissue of a normal pregnancy, or genital tumour, become cancerous and spread rapidly. Can occur, rarely, in men. Can develop years after a pregnancy. Chemotherapy cures 90 per cent of cases. See also MOLAR PREGNANCY. |
| chorionic villus sampling | A diagnostic procedure in which a small amount of tissue from the placenta is removed through the cervix or through the abdominal wall and used to detect fetal genetic abnormalities. |
| chromosomes | Separate strands of genes, contained in the nucleus of a cell. A human has 46 chromosomes, 23 from an egg/oocyte and 23 from a spermatozoon. |
| client flow analysis | The process of determining the efficiency of service delivery in a health facility. It is based on observations of the movement of clients through the facility and tracks the time a client waits to be seen, and spends with each service provider. Also known as patient flow analysis. |
| client profile | The main characteristics of the clients of a programme or clinic, expressed numerically. It assists managers to understand the types, and sometimes high-priority needs, of a programme's current or potential clients. |
| client satisfaction | The benefits or value of the services provided by a programme or clinic (as perceived by clients), often measured by the quality of provider interaction, range of services, efficiency and responsiveness to individual client needs. |
| clinical trial | A scientifically designed and executed investigation of the effects of an intervention (drug, vaccine, biological or behavioural) administered to human subjects. |
| clitoridectomy | See FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION. |
| COC | See COMBINED ORAL CONTRACEPTIVE. |
| coitus interruptus | See WITHDRAWAL METHOD. |
| combined oral contraceptive | See HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION. |
| community-based clinical trial | A clinical trial conducted primarily through primary care physicians rather than academic research facilities. |

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| community-based distribution (CBD) | Delivering contraceptives and other sexual and reproductive health services which do not require a clinic setting. Community members are trained to provide health education, advice and supplies, and to make referrals. |
| community-based services | Sexual and reproductive health information and services provided to women, men and young people where they live, using specially trained members of the community (community-based volunteers) who refer clients to clinics when appropriate. |
| community participation | A critical component of sexual and reproductive health programmes. It occurs when members of the community and local government play a significant role in managing the local sexual and reproductive health programme, including contributing money, materials or volunteer time, thus deriving a sense of ownership of the programme and accepting responsibility for achieving stated objectives. |
| complete abortion | When all products of conception have been expelled. |
| compliance | A medical term describing whether people adhere to a treatment regimen, e.g. taking a drug in the quantities, and at the times, prescribed. The woman's ability to comply is an important factor when considering the provision of daily oral contraceptives. |
| comprehensive sexuality education | Education about sexuality and its expressions. It seeks to equip young people with the knowledge, skills, positive attitudes and values they need to determine and enjoy their sexuality – physically, individually and emotionally. Topics include relationships, love and emotions, individual and societal attitudes towards sexuality, sexual roles, gender relations, social pressures, sexual and reproductive rights, information about sexual and reproductive health, services and communication skills training. |
| conception | The fusion of the spermatozoon and the ovum. <i>Syn:</i> fertilization, but not implantation (the moment when the fertilized egg attaches to the internal uterine lining and the pregnancy begins). |
| concordance | The presence of any given condition, such as HIV, in both members of a couple. |
| condom distribution | The handing out of condoms as part of an HIV prevention strategy as well as prevention of unplanned pregnancy. Leaflets with specific guidance on the correct use of condoms form part of the distribution strategy. |

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| confidentiality | The client's right that personal, identifiable medical information, which is given to a health care provider, is not disclosed to others without the client's specific permission. Such information is accessible only to the health provider and, where legally appropriate, insurance personnel may be granted access. |
| congenital disorder | Any medical condition that is present at birth. It can be recognized during pregnancy, at birth, years later or never. The term does not imply or exclude a genetic cause. It can be a result of genetic abnormalities, the intra-uterine environment, a mixture of both, or unknown causes. |
| consensual sex | Sexual activity that has been agreed by both (or all) parties. Verbal consent should be sought, not assumed. |
| continuation rate | The number of users who continue to use any method of contraception, measured in a designated population (community, district or programme area), covering a specific period of time (month, quarter or year). It can also be measured for one specific method. |
| contraceptive effectiveness | The extent to which a contraceptive method reduces the chance of conception. |
| Pearl Index | The number of contraceptive failures and months of risk exposure per 100 woman-years. |
| theoretical effectiveness (perfect use) | The efficacy of the method in ideal conditions. |
| use effectiveness (typical use) | Measures practical protection, including incorrect use. |
| contraceptive prevalence rate | The percentage of women of reproductive age or married women of reproductive age, typically aged 15–49, who themselves, or their sexual partners, are using any form of contraception. |
| contraceptives | Any practices, methods or devices that can be used to prevent pregnancy in a sexually active woman. Contraceptives are not abortifacients. |
| COPE | Client-orientated, provider efficient. A low technology technique to improve services for clients. COPE enables local service delivery teams to assess their own work in order to identify and find solutions to problems in their facility. |
| corpus luteum | A yellow ovarian tissue that forms from the follicle after ovulation. Secretes progesterone. See also LUTEAL PHASE. |

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| cost-effectiveness | Ratio comparing the results of a health care programme or procedure against the cost of the programme or procedure. |
| counselling | A process of communication by which someone is helped to identify her or his sexual and reproductive health needs and to make the most appropriate decisions about how to meet them. Counselling is characterized by an exchange of information and ideas, discussion and deliberation. |
| mandatory counselling | Obliges the client to attend a counselling session before being offered treatment. |
| couple-years of protection (CYP) | The estimated protection provided by contraceptive methods during a one-year period based on the volume of all contraceptives sold or distributed to clients. |
| CPR | See CONTRACEPTIVE PREVALENCE RATE. |
| criminalization of onward transmission of HIV | Application of law to the forward sexual transmission of HIV, arguing that individual and moral responsibility underlies the claim for criminal responsibility. Criminal law cannot adequately capture the complexity of the contexts in which HIV transmission occurs, nor deal with the relative probability of transmission. |
| crude birth rate | The number of live births per 1,000 of the population in a given year. |
| cryptorchidism | Failure of one or both testes to descend into the scrotum after birth. |
| curette | A surgical instrument shaped like a scoop to remove tissue from a bodily cavity, by curettage (dilatation and curettage). Used in abortion procedures. |
| CYP | See COUPLE-YEARS OF PROTECTION. |
| cytomegalovirus | A virus that can cause fetal or newborn diseases, malformations or death. |

Dd

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| delivery | <i>Syn:</i> birth. |
| premature delivery | Preterm or premature birth is “ <i>the delivery of an infant before 37 completed weeks of gestation</i> ” (World Health Organization definition). The widely accepted lower limit is 23–24 weeks of gestation, with a fetal weight of about 500g. |

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| full-term delivery | Birth at 37–42 weeks. |
| post-term delivery | Birth after 42 weeks. |
| demographic and health surveys | A programme of nationally representative surveys with large sample sizes (usually 5,000–30,000 households) conducted by or on behalf of governments. Data for monitoring and impact evaluation indicators include population, health and nutrition. They are the largest source of information on fertility, family planning, maternal and child health, and household living conditions. |
| demographic momentum | The phenomenon of continued population increase despite reduced reproductive rates. Despite measures to lower the reproductive rates, the population continues growing because a large proportion is entering the reproductive years. Demographic momentum shows the effect of age structure on growth rates. |
| demographic transition model | Describes population transition over time. A country developing from a pre-industrial to industrialized economy moves from high to low fertility and mortality rates. There are four or five stages, with rapid population growth during the transition period. Causes may include social or economic factors, and the model may not apply to all countries. |
| dependency ratio | The ratio of the economically dependent part of the population (individuals under 15 and over 65 years of age) to the productive part (ages 15–64). Any increase to this ratio augments the pressure on the productive part to support the upbringing and pensions of the economically dependent part. |
| depot medroxyprogesterone acetate | See HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION. |
| DHS | See DEMOGRAPHIC AND HEALTH SURVEYS. |
| dilatation and curettage (or curettage) (D&C) | A surgical procedure usually performed under local anaesthesia. The cervix is dilated and the uterine cavity scraped with a curette. D&C is performed to obtain tissue samples, stop prolonged bleeding, remove small tumours or fragments of placenta after childbirth, or as a method of abortion. <i>Syn:</i> sharp curettage. |
| dilatation and evacuation (D&E) | A second trimester abortion procedure in which the cervix is dilated and the fetus removed by a combination of forceps and vacuum aspiration. |

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| dilatation and extraction (D&X) | An abortion procedure which includes the extraction from the uterus of the fetal body, the partial evacuation of the intracranial contents to decrease the fetal skull size, and the vaginal delivery of the fetus. See also PARTIAL BIRTH ABORTION. |
| dilator | Thin metal rods of different widths, used in succession to dilate the cervical os gradually. See also OSMOTIC DILATOR. |
| discordance | The presence of any given condition, such as HIV, in only one member of a couple. |
| DMPA | See DEPOT MEDROXYPROGESTERONE ACETATE. |
| double standards | An unequal set of moral standards, rules or expectations, allowing one social group to have more privileges than another. A sexual double standard usually places more restrictions on women than on men. |
| doubling time | The number of years required for a specified population to double its size at the current rate of population growth. It is used as an easy and vivid way of depicting the implications of a particular rate of growth. |
| drug interactions | Modification of the effect of a drug when administered with another drug. The effect may be an increase or decrease in the action of either substance, or an adverse side-effect that is not normally associated with either drug. |
| drug resistance | Can occur when a virus, or any bacterium or microbe such as HIV, goes through genetic changes as it replicates. This allows the virus to escape the control of a drug, or a class of drugs, making them ineffective. Resistance usually develops when medications are not used appropriately or when there is no compliance to treatment. |
| dual protection | The simultaneous prevention of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and unwanted pregnancy. It can be achieved by the correct and consistent use of condoms alone, or by simultaneously using two methods, which must include condoms. Avoiding penetrative sex, particularly in high-risk situations, also provides dual protection. |
| dysmenorrhoea | Pain during menstrual bleeding, commonly known as menstrual cramps. |

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| EC | See EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION. |
| echography | See ULTRASOUND. |
| eclampsia | A serious complication of pregnancy, characterized by convulsions. It usually follows pre-eclampsia, which may be asymptomatic. The convulsions may appear before, during or after labour, with rare cases of eclampsia at 20 weeks of pregnancy. Some cases result in coma and death. See also PRE-ECLAMPSIA. |
| ectopic pregnancy | Pregnancy in which the fertilized egg implants outside the uterine cavity, usually in the fallopian tube, sometimes elsewhere in the pelvic or abdominal cavity. It is a life-threatening condition, due to rupture and bleeding, if not detected and managed early. <i>Syn:</i> extra-uterine pregnancy. |
| egg | See OVUM. |
| ejaculation | The release of semen from the penis at orgasm. |
| elective caesarean section | Also known as planned caesarean section. Usually carried out after 39 weeks of pregnancy, it is a way of delivering the baby through a cut in the lower abdomen, known as a 'bikini line' incision. |
| ELISA test (Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay) | A technique used in clinical immunology to screen for infection. It is used to detect the presence of an antibody or an antigen. It requires a sophisticated laboratory and thus it is not accessible in resource-limited settings. |
| emancipated minor | A minor freed from the custody and control of his or her parents or guardian before reaching the age of majority. An emancipated minor has legal autonomy. |
| embryo | A stage of prenatal development. Just after fertilization, the fertilized egg/ovum is called a zygote. The next pre-embryo stages are morula and blastocyst. The embryo stage is from eight to 56 days after fertilization, followed by fetus. |

emergency contraception Prevention of pregnancy after unprotected intercourse, using hormonal contraception (emergency contraception pills) or intra-uterine device (IUD). Emergency contraception pills prevent ovulation (probably their only mechanism of action); they are more effective the sooner they are taken but have some effectiveness up to five days after unprotected intercourse. The IUD prevents fertilization or implantation and is highly effective in preventing pregnancy; it can be inserted up to five days after unprotected intercourse. Neither prevents infections, including HIV.

emergency obstetric care

basic care Includes intravenous antibiotics, oxytocics and sedatives; manual removal of the placenta; manual removal of retained products of conception; and assisted (vaginal) delivery.

comprehensive care Can also include obstetric surgery and blood transfusions.

empowerment Developing the ability to achieve full potential by changing existing power relationships and the forces that marginalize women and disadvantaged social groups. Goals include challenging and transforming behaviour, structures and institutions that perpetuate discrimination and inequality (such as family, religion and patriarchy), and improving decision making and access to resources.

endometriosis A condition in which tissue of the endometrium grows outside the uterus. The tissue may attach itself to the reproductive organs or other organs in the abdominal cavity. It can cause pelvic pain and impair fertility.

endometrium The tissue lining the inner cavity of the uterus. This layer thickens every month, in preparation for pregnancy. The lining is shed during menstruation if no fertilized egg/zygote implants.

engorgement (breast engorgement) A condition during breastfeeding that occurs when more milk accumulates in the breasts than the infant consumes. May make breasts feel full, hard, tender and warm. It can be prevented (or relieved) by breastfeeding often and on demand.

EOC See EMERGENCY OBSTETRIC CARE.

epidemiology The study of diseases within a population; includes the causes and means of prevention.

estrogen See OESTROGEN.

evaluation A time-bound, periodic assessment of the relevance and performance of a continuing or completed intervention, and documentation of lessons learned.

extra-uterine pregnancy See ECTOPIC PREGNANCY.

Ff

family planning The conscious effort of couples or individuals to plan for, and attain, their desired number of children and to regulate the spacing and timing of the births. Family planning is achieved through abstinence, contraception, male or female sterilization, or the treatment of infertility.

fallopian tubes Part of the female reproductive system. Two ducts, each with one end opening into the uterus, the other into the peritoneal cavity, above the ovary. Through either tube the ovum (egg) is carried to the uterus and spermatozoa move towards the ovary. See also OVARY, UTERUS.

fecundability The probability of conception in one menstrual cycle among women who menstruate regularly, have sexual intercourse, but do not use contraception.

fecundity The physiological capacity of a woman or man to produce or beget a live child. See also FERTILITY, which is actual reproductive performance.

female genital mutilation (FGM) All procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. Previous terminology, such as female genital cutting and female circumcision, should not be used.

UN interagency 2007 classification:

Type I: Partial or total removal of the clitoris and/or the prepuce (clitoridectomy).

Type II: Partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora (excision).

Type III: Narrowing of the vaginal orifice by creating a covering seal through the cutting and apposition of the labia minora and/or labia majora, with or without excision of the clitoris (infibulation).

Type IV: Unclassified: All other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g. pricking, piercing, incision, cauterization and scraping.

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| fertile age | See REPRODUCTIVE AGE. |
| fertility | The condition, quality or degree of being fertile. |
| adolescent fertility | Studies usually address the 15–19 age group, but differences between older and younger pregnant teenagers may be critical for health. Studies on abortion in young people should use small age intervals, starting before 15 years. See also YOUTH, ADOLESCENCE, PERIODIC ABSTINENCE, TOTAL FERTILITY RATE. |
| fertility rates | Measures that relate the number of births in a given period to the number of women of reproductive age (unlike the crude birth rate, which relates births to the whole population). |
| age-specific fertility rates | Relate births to women in specific reproductive age groups, e.g. 15–19, 20–24. These rates are usually expressed per 1,000 women. |
| general fertility rate | Relates births in a particular period, usually a year, to women aged 15–49 at that time. |
| total fertility rate | The theoretical average number of children that would be born alive to a woman during her lifetime if the age-specific fertility rates, of a given year for a given country or specified area, applied throughout her childbearing years. |
| fertility regulation | The process by which individuals and couples regulate their fertility. Methods include delaying childbearing, using contraception, seeking treatment for infertility, interrupting unwanted pregnancies and, in the case of mothers with an infant or a small child, breastfeeding. |
| fertilization | The joining of an egg and a spermatozoon. The result is a zygote, often referred to as a fertilized ovum. <i>Syn:</i> conception. |
| fetus | A fertilized egg in the uterus that has developed beyond eight weeks (from day 57 to birth). A fetus is considered 'viable' – able to sustain life independently outside the uterus – at around 23–25 weeks of gestation. Also known as foetus. |
| fistula | See OBSTETRIC FISTULA. |
| forceps | An instrument resembling a pair of pincers or tongs, used for grasping, manipulating and extracting. |
| FP | See FAMILY PLANNING. |

Gg

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| gag rule | A rule limiting debate on an issue. See also GLOBAL GAG RULE. |
| gamete | The reproductive cell, capable of initiating the formation of a new organism by fusion with a gamete from the other sex. |
| GBV | See GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE. |
| gender | Refers to the biological, legal, economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female. |
| gender identity | Feelings about one's gender and gender role. |
| gender norms/ roles/attributes | Social standards of appropriate feminine and masculine behaviour. |
| gender-based violence | All forms of violence targeted at an individual because of his or her gender, including, but not limited to, domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, community violence, and emotional or psychological abuse. |
| gender equality | The measurable equal representation of women and men. Gender equality does not imply that women and men are the same, but that they have equal value and should be accorded equal treatment. |
| gender equity | The application of fairness or justice in all gender issues, including both the composition of power structures and the social divisions of labour. In reproductive health, for example, women bear the larger share of costs, dangers and burdens. |
| gender mainstreaming | A new term that is similar to gender perspective or gender-sensitive focus. It is the reorganization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies, at all levels and at all stages, by those normally involved in policy making. |
| genital herpes | Genital ulcer infection caused by herpes simplex virus 1 and 2, spread by sexual contact. Asymptomatic and atypical presentation is common. Typically it presents as pain, itching and burning at the lesion with papules or blisters over the genital area; these are the most common symptoms associated with painful urination, fever, headache and muscular pain. |

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| genitals | External sex and reproductive organs – the penis and scrotum in men, the vulva in women. Internal reproductive organs are sometimes called genitals. |
| genital tract | All internal and external sex organs in men and women, except the breasts. |
| genital warts | Growths on the vulva, the vaginal wall and the cervix in women, and on the penis in men. Caused by certain types of human papilloma virus (HPV). |
| gestation | The carrying of an embryo or fetus. <i>Syn:</i> pregnancy. Sometimes used for 'gestation duration' (in days, weeks or months). |
| gestational age | During pregnancy, the time from day one of the last menstrual period to the present. |
| gestational diabetes | Diabetes occurring during pregnancy, when the woman's body is unable to process glucose, a form of sugar, adequately. |
| gestational trophoblastic disease | Disease during pregnancy involving abnormal cell growth of the trophoblast, the outermost layer of cells of the developing embryo, which develops into the placenta. |
| GIPA | The Greater Involvement of People Living with or Affected by HIV/AIDS (GIPA) principle aims to realize the rights and responsibilities of people living with HIV, including their right to self-determination and participation in decision making processes that affect their lives. In total, 42 countries adopted the GIPA principle at the Paris AIDS Summit, 1994. |
| GLBTQ | Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning. |
| global gag rule | US policy (Mexico City policy) forbidding foreign non-governmental organizations in receipt of US funds from using their own money to provide abortion information, services and care, discussing abortion or criticizing unsafe abortion or addressing these issues at the request of their own governments. Rescinded 23 January 2009. See also GAG RULE. |
| GNP+ | UN Global Network of People Living with HIV. |
| gold standard | A method, procedure or measurement that is widely accepted as being the best available. |
| gonadotrophins | Hormones secreted by the pituitary gland which stimulate the gonads. See also HCG. |

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| gonads | The organs which produce reproductive cells: the ovaries in women, the testes in men. |
| gonorrhoea | A sexually transmitted infection caused by a bacterium. If not treated, it can cause infertility. |
| gravidity | The number of times a woman has been pregnant. |
| guidelines for care | A systematically developed tool that describes aspects of a client's condition and the care to be given. The recommendations for treatment and care are based on the best research available, rather than opinion. It assists decision making for both service providers and clients. |

Hh

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| HAART | See HIGHLY ACTIVE ANTIRETROVIRAL THERAPY. |
| haematocrit | The percentage of whole blood that consists of red blood cells. It is used as a measurement of anaemia. |
| haematoma | A bruise or area of skin discolouration, caused by broken blood vessels beneath the skin. |
| haematometra | An accumulation of blood in the uterus, which may occur following spontaneous or induced abortion. |
| haemoglobin | The iron-containing material in red blood cells that carries oxygen from the lungs to the tissues of the body. |
| HCG (human chorionic gonadotrophin)/ beta-HCG | HCG is a hormone secreted by the placenta. It is used in pregnancy tests and to evaluate embryonic development. Beta-HCG is a part of HCG found only in pregnancy. HCG cross-reacts with luteinizing hormone, a hormone secreted by the pituitary. |
| health sector reform | A process to change health sector policies, financing, organization of services and the role of government, to reach national health objectives. It affects more than one service, supply or clinical policy, and more than one provider, institution or location. |

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| healthy life expectancy (HALE) at birth (years) | The average number of years that someone can expect to live in ‘full health’ by taking into account years lived in less than full health due to disease and/or injury. |
| hepatitis B | Hepatitis caused by a virus and transmitted by exposure to blood or blood products, or during sexual intercourse. It causes acute and chronic hepatitis. Chronic hepatitis B can cause liver disease, cirrhosis and liver cancer. |
| hepatitis C | Hepatitis caused by a virus and transmitted by exposure to blood or blood products. It is usually chronic and can cause cirrhosis or primary liver cancer. |
| hernia | The projection of an organ, part of an organ or any bodily structure through the tissue wall that normally contains it. |
| herpes simplex virus (HSV) | A virus (there are two types) that can be sexually transmitted, and cause a recurring rash with clusters of blistering sores on the vagina, cervix, penis, mouth, anus, buttocks or elsewhere. |
| high-level disinfection (medical instruments) | Destroys all living micro-organisms, except some forms of bacteria. Compare with STERILIZE. |
| highly active antiretroviral therapy | The treatment regimens recommended by leading HIV experts for the aggressive suppression of viral replication and the progress of HIV disease. See also HAART. |
| high-risk pregnancy | A pregnancy in which some condition puts the mother, the developing fetus, or both, at higher-than-normal risk for complications during, or after, the pregnancy and birth. |
| HIV | See HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS. |
| HIV-associated lipodystrophy/lipoatrophy | HIV-associated lipodystrophy is a side-effect of some antiretroviral drugs. It is a disruption to the production, use and distribution of fat, causing an increase of fatty tissue, especially in the neck, breasts and stomach. The opposite, lipoatrophy, is a loss of body fat from the face, arms, legs and buttocks. |
| HIV incidence | The number of new HIV infections that occur in a population during a specified period of time. |
| HIV prevalence | The percentage in a population who have HIV at a specific point in time. It is the number of people living with HIV divided by the number of people in the population. |

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| HIV-related discrimination | Any act, measure or omission that results in less favourable treatment because an individual has, or is believed to have, HIV. HIV-related discrimination can extend to personal, family or professional associates of people living with HIV. |
| HIV-related stigma | A negative attitude towards people living with HIV on the basis of their perceived HIV status. It reinforces prejudices against marginalized and stigmatized groups. Stigma can be enacted (external): community members express fear or judgement; and/or perceived (internal): people living with HIV experience fear, hopelessness, blame or guilt. See also STIGMA . |
| HIV risk | The probability that an individual will become infected with HIV. Certain behaviours can increase the risk of HIV infection, e.g. injecting drugs through contaminated needles or having unprotected sex with multiple partners. |
| holistic | A term describing philosophical, religious, social or scientific views, in which the individual elements of a system are determined by their relationships to all other elements of that system and, in some interpretations, cannot exist outside the system. |
| hormonal contraception | Contraceptive method based on the use of hormones: progestogen and oestrogen combined, or progestogen alone. The methods of delivery include pills (oral contraceptives), injectables and implants for subdermal use. All are reversible (i.e. not permanent). |
| injectables | Last longer than oral contraceptives. The first were composed of progestogen only, usually depot medroxyprogesterone acetate (DMPA) with a duration of three months, and norethisterone oenanthate (NET-EN) lasting two months. Newer, monthly injectables contain oestrogen and progestogen. |
| intra-uterine device (IUD) | See INTRA-UTERINE (CONTRACEPTIVE) DEVICE . |
| implants for subdermal use | Last for years and contain low doses of a progestogen. One, two or six thin silicone capsules are inserted subdermally in the woman's arm by a minor surgical procedure under local anaesthesia. They may be removed at any time. |
| patch | A small, thin square of flexible plastic worn on the body. Continuously releases a progestogen and an oestrogen. Hormones are absorbed through the skin into the bloodstream. |
| pills (two types) | Combined oral contraceptives (COCs) contain synthetic oestrogen and synthetic progestogen. Progestogen-only pills (POPs) contain only a progestogen, in a smaller dose than in combined oral contraceptives. |

vaginal ring A flexible ring placed in the vagina. Continuously releases a progestogen and an oestrogen from inside the ring. Hormones are absorbed through the vaginal wall into the bloodstream.

hormonal contraceptives Methods of birth control that use hormones to prevent pregnancy: pills, implants for subdermal use, injectables, intra-uterine devices, vaginal rings and patches.

hormones Chemicals produced by the endocrine (internally secreting) glands, or administered as medications, which regulate bodily functions.

human chorionic gonadotrophin See HCG.

human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) The virus that causes AIDS. HIV-1 (the most common) and HIV-2 can be transmitted by sexual contact, blood and from mother to child during gestation, birth or breastfeeding. Most people remain well for years, especially with HIV-2, but opportunistic infections can evade the increasingly damaged immune system. See also OPPORTUNISTIC INFECTIONS.

human life Spermatozoa and ova are living entities, but before fertilization there is no 'new' human life. Taking conception (fertilization) as the beginning of a 'new' life is controversial because the fertilized egg may be lost through resorption/disappearance, non-implantation resulting in spontaneous miscarriage, ectopic or molar pregnancy. Most laws define the beginning of life as occurring at birth.

human rights approach Human rights are the minimum standards that people require to live in freedom and dignity. The human rights approach to programming is based on applying the principles of participation, empowerment, interdependence, equality, mutual respect and non-discrimination.

hydati(di)form mole See MOLAR PREGNANCY.

hydrocele The collection of fluid in a body cavity, especially in the testes or along the spermatic cord.

hymen A thin, fleshy tissue that stretches across part of the vaginal opening, usually, but not always, ruptured at first sexual intercourse.

hyperlipidaemia High levels of fats in the blood that increase the risk of heart disease.

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| hypertension | Higher blood pressure than normal: 140mmHg or above (systolic), or 90mmHg or above (diastolic). |
| hypophysis | The master gland of the endocrine (hormonal) system, located at the base of the brain. The front (anterior) and back (posterior) parts are separate organs. <i>Syn:</i> pituitary (gland). |
| hysterotomy | An incision in the uterus commonly combined with opening the abdomen during a caesarean section to deliver the baby. Also performed during fetal surgery. |

li

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| ICPD | International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, 1994. Its Programme of Action is the steering document for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Delegates (government, UN, non-governmental organizations and media) discussed immigration, infant mortality, birth control, family planning, women's education and unsafe abortion. See also INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT. |
| IDP | See INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS. |
| IDU | Injecting drug user. |
| IEC | See INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION. |
| immune deficiency | A breakdown or inability of certain parts of the immune system to function, thus making someone susceptible to certain diseases that he or she would not ordinarily develop. |
| immune system | The body's complicated natural defence against infection caused by invading foreign agents (e.g. microbes, viruses). |
| immunodeficiency | See IMMUNE DEFICIENCY. |
| implant, implant for subdermal use | See HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION. |

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| implantation | The attachment of the fertilized egg/zygote to the inner wall of the uterus where it establishes contact with the woman’s blood supply for nourishment. This is generally regarded as the start of pregnancy, by medical professionals and the ‘pro-choice’ movement. <i>Syn:</i> nidation. |
| impotence | Inability of a man to have, or sustain, an erection. |
| IMR | See INFANT MORTALITY RATE. |
| IMS | See INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT SYSTEM. |
| incest | Sexual intercourse between two people who, for legal or cultural reasons, are too closely related to marry – for example father and daughter, or brother and sister. |
| incidence | The number of new occurrences of a condition (or disease) in a population over a period of time. |
| incompetent cervix | Abnormally short cervix, incapable of maintaining pregnancy to term. See also CERVIX, CERCLAGE. |
| indicators | A condition, capability or numerical measure that makes concepts measurable and allows the comparison of actual with expected programme results. |
| infant | A child from birth to 12 months of age. Sometimes defined as aged from birth to seven years; in some legal applications, until aged 18 or 21 years. |
| infant mortality rate | The probability of a child born in a specific year or period dying before reaching the age of one, subject to the relevant age-specific mortality rates. The infant mortality and under-five mortality rates are leading indicators of a country’s level of child health and overall development. They are also Millennium Development Goal indicators. |
| infection control | Activities designed to prevent the spread of pathogens between patients and health care workers. |
| infertility | |
| primary infertility | Failure to conceive after regular unprotected sexual intercourse for two years in the absence of known reproductive pathology (World Health Organization definition). |

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| secondary infertility | Failure to conceive after two years of unprotected intercourse (in the absence of breastfeeding or post-partum amenorrhoea), in a woman who has previously been pregnant. |
| infibulation | See FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION. |
| information, education and communication | A programme to ensure that clients or potential clients of sexual and reproductive health services are given the means (general and technical information, facilitated learning and communication opportunities) to make responsible decisions about childbearing and other issues related to sexual and reproductive health. |
| informed choice | Voluntary decision by a client to use, or not use, a contraceptive method (or accept any sexual and reproductive health service) after receiving adequate information regarding the options, risks, advantages and disadvantages of all available methods. |
| informed consent | Consent by a client to a medical procedure/treatment or to participation in a clinical study by a client/patient, after achieving an understanding of the medical facts and the risks involved. |
| injectables | Hormonal contraceptives administered by injection, containing a progestogen or progestogen-oestrogen combination. See also HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION. |
| integrated management system | A system that integrates the mutually dependent and interactive components of the management process. They include mission statement, defining strategically planned goals and objectives; strategies; structures of the organization; systems, describing the planning, programming, budgeting and reporting mechanisms; and monitoring and evaluation based on objective-related indicators. |
| integration, integrated HIV and AIDS services | Refers to integrating HIV and AIDS services with sexual and reproductive health services or operational programmes; to be joined together to ensure collective outcomes. This includes referrals. It is based on the need to offer comprehensive services. |
| intercourse | Sexual activity between two people in which insertion of the penis occurs. This includes vaginal, oral and anal intercourse. |
| internal or self-stigma | The negative way someone feels about himself or herself, which can lead to low self-esteem, depression or withdrawing from social and intimate contact. See also STIGMA. |

internally displaced persons Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee, or to leave, their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of armed conflict, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border. Their health needs, including sexual, are often neglected.

International Conference on Population and Development Led by the United Nations in Cairo in 1994. This landmark conference succeeded in moving away from setting demographic targets, towards emphasizing people’s rights to sexual and reproductive health. See also ICPD.

intra-uterine (contraceptive) device (IUD) A device inserted into the uterus to prevent pregnancy. Intra-uterine devices are made of plastic or copper and may be inert or contain slow-release hormones. They prevent fertilization and, occasionally, implantation, for at least three years. They are effective for emergency contraception within five days of unprotected intercourse.

introitus The tissue at the external opening of the vagina.

in vitro fertilization The mixing of eggs with spermatozoa in a laboratory dish to achieve fertilization and obtain an embryo.

ischaemia Reduced blood flow to body tissues. When the reduced blood flow is in the arteries of the heart, it is called ischaemic heart disease.

IUD See INTRA-UTERINE (CONTRACEPTIVE) DEVICE.

IVF See IN VITRO FERTILIZATION.

Jj

jaundice Abnormal yellowing of the skin and eyes. Usually a symptom of liver disease.

Kk

KAP survey See KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICE SURVEY.

karyotype A picture of the full set of chromosomes in a cell (to check for abnormalities).

key populations People both vulnerable and at risk of HIV. They usually include sex workers, men who have sex with men, injecting drug users, and in some areas girls and young women. They are often stigmatized and marginalized, with limited access to HIV and sexual and reproductive health services and information.

knowledge The interpretation of information, providing context and understanding. The integration of experience, lessons learned and contextual information that provides the potential for informing decisions and improving actions.

knowledge, attitudes and practice (KAP) survey A knowledge, attitudes and practice survey collects information about cultural beliefs by asking a structured and predetermined set of questions. The survey produces qualitative information to enable identification and analysis of what individuals or groups know, pretend to do, and actually do.

knowledge management This can encompass a range of practices used to identify, create, capture, store and allow people to access knowledge.

knowledge sharing Methodologies for exchanging and utilizing knowledge. Storage, process and communication of knowledge from one person to another.

L

labia majora, minora Respectively, the larger outer and the smaller inner lips of the vagina, which protect the internal female organs.

labour The physical, emotional and psychological process of childbirth.

laceration A wound or irregular tear of the flesh anywhere on the body, including the cervix and vagina.

lactational amenorrhoea method (LAM) Exclusive, or near-exclusive breastfeeding used as a contraceptive method for up to six months after childbirth, as long as the mother remains amenorrhoeic, i.e. does not menstruate.

laminaria See OSMOTIC DILATOR.

laparoscope A device consisting of a tube with lenses for viewing the inside of an organ or body cavity. Used in diagnosis and in some female sterilization procedures.

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| laparoscopy | The examination of the intra-abdominal pelvic organs through a small telescope – the laparoscope – inserted through a tiny hole made just below the navel. |
| laparotomy | A surgical intervention during which the abdominal wall is opened. |
| last menstrual period (LMP) | The first day of the last menstrual period. Used in determining gestational age. |
| learning | The process by which knowledge and experience directly influence changes in behaviour. Both monitoring and evaluation will be ineffective if they do not lead to learning. |
| LH | See LUTEINIZING HORMONE. |
| libido | A term used by psychoanalysts, particularly Freud, to describe psychic energy or drive, and especially the sexual instinct. Libidinous (meaning lustful) is a much older term. |
| life | The period from birth to death. More comprehensively, the quality that characterizes a functional body; a principle that underlies the distinctive quality of animate beings. See also HUMAN LIFE. |
| life expectancy at birth | The average likely age at death for a population group. It is an indicator of mortality conditions, and has increased steadily since the 20th century. The range is wide: about 45 years in poor countries and over 75 years in rich countries. |
| lifetime risk of maternal death | A woman's chance of dying due to complications and illnesses related to pregnancy and childbirth. |
| linkages | The bi-directional synergies in policy, programmes, services and advocacy between sexual and reproductive health and HIV. It refers to a broader human rights-based approach, of which service integration is a subset. |
| liquid-based cytology (LBC) | Cervical cytology method for high-resource settings. The specimen is transferred to a preservative solution and sent to a laboratory where the slide is prepared. It is more expensive than conventional cytology and laboratory staff need special training. The World Health Organization recommends it for large-scale cervical cancer screening programmes. |

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| live birth | Complete expulsion or extraction from its mother of a product of conception, irrespective of the duration of the pregnancy, which, after such separation, breathes or shows any other evidence of life – e.g. heartbeat, umbilical cord pulsation or definite movement of voluntary muscles – whether or not the umbilical cord has been cut or the placenta is attached. Each product of such a birth is considered live born. |
| low birth weight (LBW) | Infants born at weights under 2.5 kilograms (about 5.5 pounds) are classified as having low birth weight. They are at increased risk of short- and long-term illnesses or disabilities. The mothers are often underweight or undernourished. |
| low-dose pill | A combined contraceptive pill that contains 35 micrograms of oestrogen, or less. |
| luteal phase | The part of the menstrual cycle that follows ovulation: in regular cycles, from day 15 until day one of the next menstruation. Around ovulation, the follicle that produces the egg/oocyte releases the hormone progesterone, which thickens the uterine lining, enabling it to support the implantation of a fertilized egg. See also CORPUS LUTEUM. |
| luteal phase defect | A condition in which an insufficient progesterone secretion by the corpus luteum results in an inadequate uterine inner lining. This can prevent the implantation of a fertilized egg or cause an early miscarriage. |
| luteinizing hormone (LH) | A hormone secreted by the pituitary, which stimulates the gonads (ovaries and testicles). |

Mm

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| mainstreaming HIV and AIDS | The process of raising awareness of, and commitment to, HIV issues in every workplace. All sectors and organizations determine how they cause or contribute to the HIV epidemic, the potential effects on their goals and their comparative advantage to mitigate the impact of the epidemic. |
| male circumcision | The removal of some or all of the foreskin from the head of the penis. Globally, about 30 per cent of males undergo this procedure for reasons including religion, tradition and hygiene. Studies have shown some protective effect against HIV infection among heterosexual circumcised men. |

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| malnutrition | Lack of the nutrients that are necessary for appropriate growth and development, and adequate for the body's energy demands. Malnourished children can be underweight (consuming insufficient calories) or overweight (consuming excessive calories). Malnutrition results from an unbalanced or inadequate diet, or medical conditions that affect the digestion or absorption of food. |
| mandatory counselling | As opposed to voluntary counselling, this obliges the client/patient to attend a counselling session before being offered treatment. Mandatory approaches do not ensure access to a professional service. |
| manual vacuum aspiration | See MENSTRUAL REGULATION, VACUUM ASPIRATION. |
| marginalized people | Those groups in society who – because of poverty, geographic inaccessibility, culture, language, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability, gender, education, migration, HIV or marital status – do not have access to, and therefore do not benefit from, health, education and employment opportunities, and whose sexual and reproductive health needs remain largely unsatisfied. |
| market analysis | Examining the environment in which services are provided, to gain or maintain advantage over competitors. It typically includes a survey of the clients, the community and other providers. This collects critical information about under-served populations in their area, access to services, clients' satisfaction and ability to pay. |
| married women of reproductive age | Married women used to be equated, in surveys of fertility and reproductive intentions, with women who were sexually active and therefore at risk of becoming pregnant. Marital fertility rates could therefore be compared with overall fertility rates. Current fertility statistics usually include women who are in a consensual union. |
| mastitis | Inflammation of the breast tissue due to infection, which may cause fever, redness and pain. |
| maternal and child health programmes | Health care aimed at improving the health of mothers and children, including ensuring safe motherhood, eliminating unsafe abortion, and helping women to plan and space their births. |
| maternal death | The death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of birth or termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to, or aggravated by, the pregnancy or its management, but not from accidental or incidental causes. |

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| late maternal death | Death of a woman from direct or indirect obstetric causes between 42 days and one year after termination of pregnancy. |
| pregnancy-related death | Death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the cause of death. |
| maternal morbidity | Disease, disability or injury related to pregnancy or childbirth. See also MORBIDITY. |
| maternal mortality rate | The number of maternal deaths in a given period per 100,000 women aged 15–45 or 15–49 years. This rate reflects a woman's lifetime risk of death associated with reproduction. It is influenced by the risks of pregnancy and dying in childbirth. |
| maternal mortality ratio (MMR) | The number of maternal deaths in a specific period of time per 100,000 live births that occur within the same time period. |
| MCH | See MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH PROGRAMMES. |
| MDG | See MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS. |
| medical (or medicated, or medication) abortion | Abortion induced by drugs (e.g. mifepristone followed by misoprostol or gemeprost; or misoprostol alone). <i>Syn:</i> drug-induced abortion. |
| menarche | The beginning of monthly bleeding cycles in females. Occurs after puberty with the production of oestrogen and progesterone: the first menstruation. |
| menopause | The period of natural cessation of menstruation, usually between ages 40 to 55 years. See also PERIMENOPAUSE. |
| premature (or early) menopause | Menopause before age 40, whether natural or induced, e.g. when the ovaries are removed or damaged by radiation or drugs. |
| surgical menopause | Results from the removal of the ovaries. |
| menstrual cycle | The recurring female reproductive cycle of physiological changes in the uterus, ovaries and other sexual organs, which occur between the beginning of one menstrual period and the beginning of the next. |
| menstrual regulation | Evacuation of a woman's uterus, if within 14 days of a missed menstruation in a previously regular cycle, and following exposure to the risk of conception. Trained personnel perform manual vacuum aspiration (MVA), using a hand-held syringe, without confirming pregnancy. |

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| menstruation | Discharge of blood, secretions and tissue debris from the uterus which recurs at mean intervals of 29 days in non-pregnant females. |
| method effectiveness | The reliability of a contraceptive method when it is always used consistently and correctly (as opposed to user-effectiveness, which refers to the user's ability to use the method properly). |
| method mix | A summary, usually expressed in percentages, of the proportion of users of each contraceptive method in a specific population. |
| Mexico City policy | See GLOBAL GAG RULE. |
| microbicide | One of a range of products that could prevent the sexual transmission of HIV and/or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) when applied topically. A microbicide can be produced as gels, creams, suppositories and films, or as a sponge or ring that releases the active ingredient over time. |
| mifepristone | An antiprogestogen. Brand names: RU 486, Mifegyne®, Mifeprex®, MT Pill®. See also ANTIPROGESTOGENS. |
| Millennium Development Goals | An agenda for reducing poverty and improving lives by 2015 (announced at the UN Millennium Summit 2000): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 and AIDS, malaria and other diseases 7. Ensure environmental sustainability 8. Develop a global partnership for development |
| mini-laparotomy | A female sterilization technique performed by bringing the fallopian tubes to a small incision in the abdomen, then tying and cutting them. |
| mini-pill | Hormonal contraceptive that contains a progestogen only. |
| miscarriage | See ABORTION (SPONTANEOUS ABORTION). |
| misoprostol | A synthetic analogue of natural prostaglandin E1, which also has oxytocic properties. It is used to treat some digestive ulcers. Misoprostol is also an abortifacient, that can be used alone or after mifepristone has been administered (the combination of both drugs is more effective). Brand names: Cytotec®, Misoprost®. |

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| MMR | See MATERNAL MORTALITY RATE. |
| molar pregnancy | A condition in which, after implantation, the ovular tissue develops an abnormal, fast-growing tissue called a hydati(di)form mole. There is usually no fetus. Can degenerate into a cancer. See also CHORIOCARCINOMA. |
| monitoring | A continuous process of surveillance. |
| morbidity | The incidence and/or prevalence of certain diseases or disabilities, usually expressed as cases per 1,000 persons at risk, and most accurately assessed through epidemiological surveys. Health systems surveillance indicates the relevant magnitude of disease incidence, trends in control or prevention, and regional morbidity patterns. |
| morning-after pill | See EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION. |
| morula | A homogeneous mass of around 16 dividing zygotic cells. This stage starts around day three after fertilization; around day five it transforms into a blastocyst. See also BLASTOCYST, ZYGOTE, EMBRYO. |
| mother | A woman who has given birth to a child. A pregnant woman is a mother only if she has previously given birth. |
| mother-to-child transmission | The transmission of HIV from women to their infants during pregnancy, delivery and/or breastfeeding. |
| MR | See MENSTRUAL REGULATION. |
| MSM (men who have sex with men) | This term is useful, as it includes not only men who identify themselves as 'gay' or homosexual and have sex only with other men, but also bisexual men, and heterosexual men who may occasionally have sex with other men. |
| MTCT | See MOTHER-TO-CHILD TRANSMISSION. |
| MVA | Manual vacuum aspiration. See VACUUM ASPIRATION. |
| MWRA | See MARRIED WOMEN OF REPRODUCTIVE AGE. |
| myometrium | The smooth muscle forming the wall of the uterus. |
| myth | Unfounded or false stories or ideas. Or a traditional story accepted as history, serving to explain the world view of a people. |

Nn

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| natural abortion | A synonym for spontaneous abortion. |
| neonatal mortality rate (NMR) | Number of deaths within the first 28 days of life per 1,000 live births, in a specific time period. |
| neonatal period | The first 28 days of life. |
| neonate | A newborn infant up to 28 days old. |
| nephropathy | Kidney disease, including damage to the small blood vessels in the kidneys from long-standing diabetes. |
| neuropathy | Disorders of the nerves of the peripheral nervous system involving either the entire neuron or selected levels. This can be due to a variety of medical conditions. |
| newborn | An infant in its first 28 days of life. |
| new user | Someone who chooses to use contraception for the first time. Some programmes include only those people using contraception for the first time; others include those using a particular method for the first time. |
| nidation | See IMPLANTATION. |
| Norethisterone oenanthate | See HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION (INJECTABLES). |
| Norplant | A reversible contraceptive system, containing the progestogen levonorgestrel, inserted under the skin, usually of the upper arm. See HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION (IMPLANTS FOR SUBDERMAL USE). |
| NSEP | Needle and syringe exchange programme. |
| nulligravida | A woman who has never been pregnant. |
| nullipara | A woman who has never given birth to a liveborn infant. |

Oo

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| objective | A specific, measurable, time-bound change to be brought about in order to reach a goal. Objectives specify the kind of change that will contribute to the goal, and are stated in terms of desired outcome. Objectives should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-orientated and Time-bound). |
| obstetric fistula | A rupture that results in an abnormal passage linking two areas such as the vagina, rectum, bladder or abdominal cavity. Obstetric fistulae are caused by difficult/prolonged, obstructed labour, unsafe abortion, traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, and various forms of sexual violence on women. |
| OC | Oral contraception. See HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION. |
| oestrogen(s), estrogen(s) | A general term for female sex hormones that are secreted by the ovary and responsible for typical female sexual characteristics. The main ovarian oestrogen is oestradiol; the most common synthetic oestrogen used as a contraceptive is ethinyloestradiol. |
| oocyte, ovocyte, ova | See OVUM. |
| operations research | A process of programme evaluation to help managers and decision makers to improve existing programmes and activities, and find practical solutions to problem situations. |
| opportunistic infections | Infections by organisms that do not normally cause infection in people with intact immune systems. The weakness may be due to AIDS, cancer or immunosuppressive drugs such as corticosteroids or chemotherapy. Some of the most common opportunistic infections, indicators of AIDS, are pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (PCP) and oesophageal candidiasis. |
| oral contraception | See HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION. |
| oral rehydration therapy | Increased intake of acceptable fluids in order to rehydrate. It includes synthetic oral rehydration solutions. |
| oral sex | Sexual activity involving the mouth and sex organs. |
| orchitis | Inflammation of a testis. |
| orgasm | The peak of sexual arousal. In men, orgasm is almost always accompanied by ejaculation. |

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| ORT | See ORAL REHYDRATION THERAPY. |
| osmotic dilator | A dilator that absorbs moisture, used to cause the cervical canal to dilate gradually (e.g. laminaria). The procedure is also known as cervical ripening. |
| OTC | See OVER-THE-COUNTER. |
| ovarian cyst | Fluid-filled sac that develops in the ovary or on its surface. Usually disappears spontaneously, but may rupture and cause pain and complications. |
| ovary, ovaries | The two organs that contain a woman's eggs/ova, situated in the lower part of the inner abdomen. Ovaries produce hormones, including oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone. |
| OVC | Orphans and vulnerable children. |
| over-the-counter | Refers to a drug that is available without a doctor's prescription. |
| ovocyte | See OVUM. |
| ovulation | The rupture of an ovarian follicle with the release of an egg. Also: the time when an ovary releases an egg. |
| ovulation method | Also known as the Billings method. See PERIODIC ABSTINENCE. |
| ovum, oocyte, ovocyte, egg | The female reproductive cell or gamete expelled by the ovary. The unfertilized ovum can survive only one or two days in the female genital tract. Plural: ova. See GAMETE. |
| oxytocin | A hormone secreted by the pituitary, which causes the uterine muscles to contract (and can reduce bleeding). Oxytocin has other properties, e.g. promoting lactation. |

Pp

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| Pap smear (and test) | Cells obtained from the uterine cervix are spread in a thin layer on a glass slide, coloured, and examined under a microscope to detect abnormal cervical cells (precancerous changes). The word 'Pap' is derived from Papanicolaou, the man who invented the test. |
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| (para)cervical block | A method of local anaesthesia for the cervix and uterus administered by injection into the cervix. There is usually little discomfort (the cervix has few nerve endings), although pinching, stinging or pain may occur. |
| parental consent | The requirement that minors must involve one or both parents in their abortion decision (or any medical/surgical intervention). This can force the child of an unsupportive, potentially abusive parent to disclose a pregnancy, or seek an illegal, unsafe service provider. Most young people choose to involve at least one parent. |
| parental notification for legal abortion services | A legal requirement that a parent is notified before his or her minor daughter can receive abortion services. This can force the child of an unsupportive, potentially abusive parent to disclose a pregnancy, or seek an illegal, unsafe service provider. Most young people choose to involve at least one parent. |
| parity | The number of pregnancies a woman has had which have resulted in a birth beyond 20 weeks' gestational age or an infant weighing over 500g. |
| partial birth abortion | See ABORTION. |
| paternity | The biological and/or legal state of being a father; fatherhood. |
| patient flow analysis | See CLIENT FLOW ANALYSIS. |
| peer pressure | The efforts of a group of equals (e.g. same age group) to maintain conformity to the group's norms. |
| pelvic examination | A procedure in which the female genitalia (vulva, vagina, cervix, uterus, ovaries, pelvic organs) are physically examined. |
| pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) | Inflammation of the pelvic organs, especially the uterus and fallopian tubes. Pelvic inflammatory disease is a major complication for women with a sexually transmitted infection, and is associated with long-term morbidity, such as chronic abdominal pain, menstrual disturbances, ectopic pregnancy and infertility. |
| perimenopause | The period of change leading to, and following, menopause (no formally specified period of time). |
| perinatal death | Death of a fetus after 28 weeks of pregnancy or of an infant within the first week of life. |
| perinatal mortality rate | The number of perinatal deaths per 1,000 total births. |

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| periodic abstinence | Not having vaginal intercourse during the woman’s fertile days, to prevent pregnancy. |
| basal body temperature (BBT) method | After ovulation, body temperature rises and remains high until the next menstruation. The couple is advised to refrain from sexual intercourse between the first day of menstruation and the third consecutive day of elevated temperature. |
| calendar or rhythm (Ogino-Klaus) method | The fertile period is predicted using menstrual records. The first fertile day is calculated by subtracting 18 days from the first day of menstruation of the shortest menstrual cycle; the last fertile day by subtracting 11 days from the longest cycle. |
| cervical mucus or ovulation method (Billings method) | Cervical mucus changes in response to changing oestrogen levels during a menstrual cycle. Sexual intercourse during both pre- and post-ovulatory phases is possible because the infertile phase in both parts of the cycle can be identified by monitoring the mucus pattern. |
| standard days method (SDM) | Unprotected intercourse is avoided from day eight to day 19 of the menstrual cycle in women who have a regular menstrual cycle of between 26 and 32 days. |
| sympto-thermal method (STM) | Basal body temperature and cervical mucus are used as criteria to foresee or detect ovulation. |
| PHC | See PRIMARY HEALTH CARE. |
| PID | See PELVIC INFLAMMATORY DISEASE. |
| pilot study | A small-scale test of a research instrument, such as piloting a new questionnaire with people who are similar to the population of the study. This reveals any problems or areas of concern, which can then be addressed before the full-scale study begins. |
| placebo | Inactive treatment received by participants in the control group of a clinical trial. It is indistinguishable from the active treatment given to the experimental group. The participants cannot know their allocation, so the effect of the experimental treatment can be distinguished from the effects of receiving care or attention. |
| placenta | Organ that nourishes a growing fetus. The placenta (afterbirth) is formed during pregnancy, and is expelled from the uterus within a few minutes of the birth of the baby. |

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| PLHIV | Person or people living with HIV. |
| policy | A set of decisions to pursue courses of action for achieving goals; a goal being an aim towards which to strive. |
| population distribution | The geographical arrangement of a population over a defined area, such as community, district, capital city, country or region. Knowing the distribution of a population is important to managers when they plan new programmes and the locations of service facilities. |
| population growth rate (PGR) | Population increase during a period, usually one year, expressed as a percentage at the start of that period. It reflects births, deaths and migrations. At four per cent growth rate, a country's population doubles in 18 years; at one per cent growth rate, in 70 years. The world population growth rate is 1.167. |
| population projection | The computation of future population size and characteristics, based on assumptions about future trends in fertility, mortality and migration. |
| population pyramid | Shows the age-sex structure of a population using horizontal bar graphs for both sexes, with the youngest at the bottom. Figures for fast-growing populations resemble pyramids, as each new birth cohort is larger than the one before, but slow-growing populations are more evenly distributed. |
| positive prevention | A set of actions that help people living with HIV to protect their sexual health, avoid sexually transmitted infections, delay HIV and AIDS disease progression and avoid passing infection to others, including their children. |
| post-abortion | The period of time, of no fixed duration, immediately after abortion. |
| post-coital contraception | See EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION. |
| post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) | The administration of antiretroviral drugs after high-risk exposure, including unprotected sex, needle sharing or occupational needle-stick injury, to prevent HIV infection. To be effective, the treatment must start within 72 hours of exposure and continue for four weeks. |
| post-partum | Occurring in the period immediately after childbirth. Often used to describe temporary conditions that appear as a result of childbirth. Also used to characterize the first six weeks after delivery. |

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| poverty reduction strategy paper | A national economic and social multi-sectoral programme that promotes economic growth and reduces poverty. Poverty reduction strategy papers are prepared by governments through a participatory process involving civil society and development partners, including the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). |
| pre-eclampsia | Hypertension with either excess protein in the urine, or local or generalized swelling, or both (but without convulsions) after 20 weeks of pregnancy. May progress to eclampsia. See also ECLAMPSIA. |
| pre-embryo | A fertilized egg/oocyte during the first few days of its development. |
| pregnancy | The period from implantation (or, according to 'anti-choice' groups, from fertilization) to birth; the period when a woman carries a fetus. |
| extra-uterine pregnancy | See ECTOPIC PREGNANCY, MOLAR PREGNANCY. |
| trimesters in pregnancy | First trimester: up to 14 weeks of gestation. Second trimester: 14–28 weeks. Third trimester: 28 weeks to delivery. |
| pregnancy wastage | Loss of fetus at any stage during the pregnancy. Pregnancy wastage includes spontaneous abortions (miscarriages) and stillbirths. It excludes intentional loss through induced abortion. |
| premature birth, prematurity | The birth of a baby before 37 completed weeks of pregnancy. This is associated with breathing, feeding and other difficulties. Premature birth is linked to many factors. Premature birth is the cause of about 27 per cent of newborn deaths. |
| prenatal sex selection | The decision to abort a fetus, having discovered its sex in early pregnancy. This practice usually occurs in societies with a strong son preference, in which female fetuses are aborted if one or more sons are desired. |
| pre-term infant | Synonymous with premature infant. See PREMATURETY. |
| prevalence | The measure of a condition in a population at a given point in time; also known as point prevalence. Prevalence can also be measured over a period of time (e.g. a year) and is called period prevalence, which is a combination of point prevalence and incidence. |

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| preventive measures | Actions taken to prevent infection or disease, such as washing hands, or providing drugs or other therapy. |
| pre-viable infant | An infant delivered between 20 and 24 weeks, before the fetus achieves the ability to survive outside the uterus. |
| primary health care (PHC) | Essential health care, accessible to all. It is the first level of contact of individuals, the family and the community with the national health system, bringing health care as close as possible to people's homes and workplaces, and constituting the first element of the continuing health care process. (Based on the Alma Ata Declaration, September 1978) |
| pro-abortion | A derogatory term for 'pro-choice', implying the promotion of abortion. The pro-choice stand is that a woman should be able to control her own body; not that abortion is to be recommended in any systematic way. |
| pro-choice | A belief that women should have the right to choose to have an abortion, and to access affordable, safe, legal abortion. |
| products of conception | A medical catch-all term for the tissues derived from the fertilized egg: zygote, embryo, fetus, amniotic membranes and amniotic fluid, and placenta. |
| retained products of conception | Tissues derived from the fertilized egg and retained inside the uterus after a spontaneous or induced abortion, or after birth. Can cause (excessive) blood loss or infection. |
| progesterone | The hormone released by the ovary after ovulation, and during pregnancy. Progesterone prepares the uterine lining for the implantation of a fertilized egg, causes an elevation in basal body temperature after ovulation, enhances the development of the placenta, and helps prepare the breasts for breastfeeding. |
| progestogen | Synthetic substances with pharmacological properties similar to those of progesterone. Progestogens are used for hormonal contraception, including emergency contraception. |
| pro-life | Ideology motivated by the belief that a fertilized egg (at conception) is a human being who should be protected by law, and abortion cannot be performed for any reason. |
| prolonged rupture of membranes | This occurs when the fluid-filled sac surrounding a pregnant woman's fetus breaks 24 hours or more before delivery of the infant. |

prostaglandins A group of potent, multi-function substances produced in various mammalian tissues. Some are produced in the uterus, and stimulate contractions. Prostaglandins can be administered as drugs and may cause uterine cramps, abortion, premature delivery or term delivery.

provider-initiated testing and counselling An opt-out approach to HIV testing, in which the test is recommended to all clients whose illness may result from underlying HIV infection, or as a standard part of medical care for all clients attending health facilities in areas with a generalized HIV epidemic.

PRSP See POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY PAPER.

puberty The period of physical and psychological changes, denoting development from child to adult. Marked in girls by breast development (thelarche), growth of pubic hair (pubarche) and menstruation (menarche); in boys by facial and pubic hair growth and ejaculation. Puberty terminates when the capacity to reproduce is reached. Not a synonym for adolescence.

puerperal sepsis Infection of the reproductive organs during the first 42 days post-partum (puerperum).

purulent cervicitis Inflammation of the cervix accompanied by a pus-like discharge. Often indicates infection with gonorrhoea or chlamydia.

pus A yellowish white fluid formed in infected tissue.

Qq

qualitative research Explores people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviour and interactions. It generates non-numerical data, e.g. a description rather than a measure. In health care, qualitative techniques are commonly used in documenting the experience of chronic illness. Techniques include focus groups and in-depth interviews.

Rr

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| rape | The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia found the objective elements of rape to be: <i>“(i) the sexual penetration...: (a) of the vagina or anus... by the penis of... or any other object used by the perpetrator; or (b) of the mouth... by the penis of the perpetrator; (ii) by coercion... force or threat of force against the victim or a third person.”</i> |
| acquaintance rape | Sexual intercourse coerced by someone known to the victim. |
| date rape | Coerced sexual intercourse during a dating relationship. |
| gang rape | Rape committed by two or more people; also known as party rape. |
| marital rape | Coerced sexual intercourse within marriage. |
| rape trauma syndrome | The emotional and physical consequences of being sexually assaulted. |
| statutory rape | Sexual intercourse between an adult and anyone who is under the legal age of consent, even if voluntary. The legal age of consent can differ for females and males and from country to country. The laws aim to prevent the exploitation of young people by adults. |
| stranger rape | Rape by an assailant unknown to the victim. |
| rapid test for HIV | A high-quality, simple HIV test that provides same-day results and requires little or no equipment. It was designed as a preliminary screening test, and is especially useful in smaller laboratories with a low volume of tests. A positive result should be confirmed by a repeat, or an ELISA test. See also ELISA TEST . |
| refugee | A person with a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a social group, who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence, and unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to seek the protection of that country or return to it. |
| replacement feeding | Providing all the essential nutrients when the child is not able to consume breast milk. |
| replacement-level fertility | This depends on mortality conditions, but in countries where mortality below the age of reproduction is low, it is usually 2.1 children per woman. |

reproductive age Statistically, 15–44 or, more often, 15–49 years are the conventional limits of women’s reproductive age. ‘Couples in reproductive ages’ nearly always means the woman is of childbearing age.

reproductive health IPPF endorses the definition agreed at the International Conference on Population and Development, 1994 (Programme of Action, Paragraph 7.2): *“Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes. Reproductive health therefore implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. Implicit in this last condition are the rights of men and women to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, as well as other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility which are not against the law, and the right of access to appropriate health care services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth and provide couples with the best chance of having a healthy infant.”*

reproductive health care Constellation of methods, techniques and services that contribute to reproductive and sexual health and well-being by preventing and solving reproductive health problems. The purpose of reproductive health care is the enhancement of life and personal relations, not merely counselling and care related to reproduction and sexually transmitted infections.

reproductive health commodity security (RHCS) A secure supply and choice of quality contraceptives, condoms and other essential reproductive health commodities to meet every person’s needs, at the right time and in the right place. Reproductive health commodity security is a prerequisite to achieving the International Conference on Population and Development goal of universal access to reproductive health care by the year 2015.

reproductive rights *“Reproductive rights rest on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. They also include the right of all to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence”* (World Health Organization definition).

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| reproductive tract infection | A general term for infections affecting the reproductive organs. Reproductive tract infections include sexually transmitted infections (STIs), infections that are caused by overgrowth of organisms naturally present in the genital tract, such as bacterial vaginosis and vulvovaginal candidiasis, and infections that are a consequence of medical treatment. |
| RH | See REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH. |
| RHCS | See REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH COMMODITY SECURITY. |
| rhythm method | Also known as the calendar method. See PERIODIC ABSTINENCE. |
| Roe versus Wade | The 1973 Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion in the US. The conclusion held that a woman's right to an abortion falls within the right to privacy protected by the US Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment. Differing state regulations were imposed on the right to abortion in the second and third trimesters. |
| RTI | See REPRODUCTIVE TRACT INFECTION. |
| RU-486 (mifepristone) | See ANTIPROGESTOGENS. |

Ss

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| safe motherhood | Pregnancy and childbirth with a low risk of death or ill health. Necessitates access to contraception, safe delivery, emergency obstetric care, and to safe abortion services. |
| safer sex | Any sexual practice to reduce the risks of unwanted pregnancy and transmitting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections to another person. Examples are non-penetrative sex or intercourse with a condom, to prevent the introduction of semen, vaginal fluid or blood, which can transmit HIV and other sexually transmitted infections into the sex partner's body. |
| sanitary pad | Absorbent napkin made of cotton or similar fibres that is worn against the vulva to absorb menstrual flow or post-abortion or post-partum discharge. |
| scrotum | The pouch of skin that contains the testes, located behind the penis. |

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| sector-wide approaches (SWAPs) | Single sector (such as health or education) plans that have a single programme plan and budget which all stakeholders support in order to achieve improvements through a common financing and management arrangement. |
| self-esteem, self-respect | Pride in oneself. Self-esteem appears, and is enhanced, during infancy and adolescence (and modulated during adulthood). High (but not excessive) self-esteem helps people to cope with difficult situations such as unwanted pregnancy or abortion. |
| semen | The thick, white fluid produced by a man's reproductive organs and released through the penis during ejaculation; the fluid that carries spermatozoa, unless the man has had a vasectomy. |
| seminal vesicles | Male organs where spermatozoa mix with semen. |
| sensitivity of screening tests | The proportion of people who have a condition, and who are identified correctly by a test (true positives). |
| septicaemia | Severe, generalized infection resulting from the dissemination of pathogenic micro-organisms and their toxins. |
| sero-concordant couple | Both partners have the same HIV status – they are both negative or both positive. |
| sero-conversion | The development of a detectable level of antibodies that occurs after someone has been exposed to, and infected by, a virus such as HIV. |
| sero-discordant couple | Has one HIV-positive partner and one HIV-negative partner. |
| sex | The biological characteristics that define humans as female or male. The sets of biological characteristics tend to differentiate, but they are not mutually exclusive, as there are individuals who possess both. See also SEXUAL INTERCOURSE . |
| sexism | Bias against a certain gender – especially against women. |
| sex ratio | The ratio of males to 100 females in a population. Worldwide, the sex ratio at birth is 105; higher mortality rates among males cause the ratio to decline with age. A very high sex ratio may indicate under-reporting of girls' births, excess mortality in females or prenatal sex selection. |

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| sex reassignment surgery | Genital alteration surgery that some transsexuals undergo, in order to change their physical body to match their gender identity. This is sometimes referred to as a 'sex change operation'. |
| sex selection | The decision or activity aimed at obtaining a child of a given sex, including the voluntary abortion of a fetus or infanticide. Globally, boys are preferred, due to the perception that sons contribute more to families through work, maintaining the lineage and family rituals, and providing security for their parents. |
| sexual abuse | Sexual activity that is harmful or not consensual or both. |
| sexual and reproductive health services | See SEXUAL HEALTH , REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH . |
| sexual assault | The use of force or coercion, physical or psychological, to make someone engage in sexual activity. |
| sexual compulsion | An obsession with having very frequent sex, possibly with many different sex partners. |
| sexual dysfunction | Sexual dysfunction disorders are generally classified into four categories: sexual desire disorders, sexual arousal disorders, orgasm disorders and sexual pain disorders. |
| sexual harassment | Unwanted sexual advances with gestures, language or touching. |
| sexual health | A state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. It requires a positive approach to sexuality and safe, pleasurable sexual relationships, and that the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled. |
| sexual identity | Feelings about one's own sexual orientation, gender, gender role and gender identity. |
| sexual intercourse | Penetrative sexual behaviours, including oral sex, anal sex and penile-vaginal sex. |

sexuality

The sexual knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviours of individuals. It includes the anatomy, physiology and biochemistry of the sexual response system; identity, orientation, roles and personality; and thoughts, feelings and relationships. The expression of sexuality is influenced by ethical, spiritual, cultural and moral concerns.

sexuality counselling

Counselling with the aim of creating a climate in which clients can express themselves and their concerns relating to sexual relationships and intimacy without fear of discrimination. See also [SEXUALITY, COUNSELLING](#).

sexuality education

Education, designed to equip young people with the knowledge, skills, positive attitudes and values necessary to determine and enjoy their sexuality – physically and emotionally, individually and in relationships. See also [COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION](#).

sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

Infections that spread primarily through person-to-person sexual contact. There are more than 30 different sexually transmissible bacteria, viruses and parasites. Several, in particular HIV and syphilis, can also be transmitted from mother to child during pregnancy and childbirth, and through blood products and tissue transfer. (Based on World Health Organization definition)

sexual orientation

Refers to the primary sexual attraction to the same or opposite sex, or both sexes. Most societies find it hard to accept that homosexuality or bisexuality is a universal part of human sexuality. Many people who are gay, lesbian or bisexual neither experience nor desire a choice in their sexual orientation.

sexual rights

IPPF endorses the definition agreed at the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995 (Platform for Action, Paragraph 96):
“The human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. Equal relationships between women and men in matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the integrity of the person, require mutual respect, consent and shared responsibility for sexual behaviour and its consequences.”

sex worker

Sex workers are female, male or transgender adults or young people who receive money, shelter or goods in exchange for sexual services, either regularly or occasionally, and who may or may not consciously define those activities as income-generating.

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| side-effects | Frequently used to describe only the ill effects, or unwanted effects, of a contraceptive or a drug. There are also beneficial side-effects to most contraceptives. Both categories should be considered under this overall heading. |
| social marketing | The application of private sector marketing techniques to the sale of products that fulfil a social objective at a cost, such as condoms. |
| son preference | The desire to have male rather than female children. |
| specificity of screening tests | The proportion of people who do not have a condition and who are correctly identified by a test. |
| sperm, spermatozoon, spermatozoid, spermatozoa | The spermatozoon (or spermatozoid) is the mature male reproductive cell (see GAMETE), produced in the testicle. 'Sperm' is used as a synonym of spermatozoon (for 'sperm cell'). 'Spermatozoa' is plural for spermatozoon. Sperm is not a synonym of semen, although the confusion is common. See SEMEN. |
| spermicides | Chemical contraceptives that inactivate and kill spermatozoa and form a barrier over the cervix. Spermicides are more effective when used with condoms or diaphragms. They protect against some sexually transmitted infections, but there is no proof of protection against HIV. Spermicides are available as creams, jellies, foams, suppositories, tablets and films. |
| sporadic abortion | Non-consecutive spontaneous abortions. |
| squamous intra-epithelial lesion (SIL) | Precancer or abnormality of the squamous cells of the lining of the cervix. |
| SRH | See SEXUAL HEALTH, REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH. |
| SRHS | See SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES. |
| statutory rape | The act of sex with a minor under the age of consent. It differs from other types of rape because overt force or threat need not be present. Any sexual activity is assumed to be coercive since the minor is legally incapable of giving consent. See also AGE OF CONSENT, RAPE. |
| STD | Sexually transmitted disease. See SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS. |
| sterility | The state or condition of being unable to reproduce sexually: barrenness, infertility. The inability to conceive (female sterility) or to fertilize (male sterility). |

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| sterilization | See VOLUNTARY SURGICAL CONTRACEPTION. |
| sterilize (medical equipment) | To destroy all micro-organisms, including spores, that are not killed by high-level disinfection. |
| STI | See SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS. |
| stigma | Negative attitudes towards a group of people, on the basis of particular attributes such as their HIV status, gender, sexuality or behaviour, are created and sustained to legitimize dominant groups in society. Often associated with marginalized people, stigma can affect people directly or by association. |
| stillborn | Adjective meaning 'dead at birth'. A newborn infant showing no signs of life at birth; not liveborn. |
| surgical abortion | An abortion performed using surgical techniques: vacuum aspiration (manual or electrical), dilatation and curettage, or dilatation and extraction or evacuation. |
| survival rate | The proportion of all the people in a study with a specific disease who are still alive after a specified time. |
| sustainability | The ability to improve institutional capacity in order to provide quality services. Sustainability may include expanding client bases and generating income through advocacy and local funding mechanisms, while decreasing dependence on funds derived from external donors. |
| SWAps | See SECTOR-WIDE APPROACHES. |
| symptom | Any sensation or change in bodily function that is experienced by a patient in association with a disease. |
| sympto-thermal method | See PERIODIC ABSTINENCE. |
| syndromic approach | Treatment of infection based on knowledge of the principal causes of the presenting symptoms; e.g. cervical infection can be treated with antibiotics against both gonorrhoea and chlamydia, without first performing other tests to diagnose which of these pathogens is present. |

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| syphilis | A sexually transmitted infection caused by a bacterium. If untreated, it may progress to systemic infection, causing general paralysis and dementia; it can be transmitted to the fetus during pregnancy or childbirth. |
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| tampon | A plug of cotton or other absorbent material used to absorb fluids, such as a plug inserted in the vagina to contain blood flow during menstrual bleeding. |
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| target group | A specific population group, or groups, intended as beneficiaries of a programme. This is either all, or a subset, of potential users such as adolescents, pregnant women, rural residents, or the residents of a particular geographic area. |
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| targets | The desired outcomes quantified and specified in time towards the attainment of the ultimate strategic objectives. |
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| aspirational targets | Those to which the strategy aspires, for example the complete elimination of unsafe abortion by 2010. |
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| operational targets | Those towards which practical action is to be undertaken immediately, e.g. the reduction of unsafe abortion by 20 per cent within two years. |
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| TBA | See TRADITIONAL BIRTH ATTENDANT. |
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| teenager | A person in his or her teen years. See ADOLESCENCE, PUBERTY, YOUTH. |
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| tenaculum | An instrument used to grasp and hold the uterine cervix. |
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| term delivery | A birth occurring between 37 and 42 weeks of gestational age. |
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| termination of pregnancy (TOP) | See ABORTION (INDUCED ABORTION). |
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| testicles, testes | The testicles or testes are the male gonads or sex glands. They are located behind the penis in a pouch of skin called the scrotum. They produce spermatozoa and are the chief source of male hormones (mainly testosterone). |
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| testosterone | A naturally-occurring steroid hormone produced by the testes and adrenal glands. Testosterone is required for the production of spermatozoa, the development of the male reproductive organs and the emergence of male secondary sexual characteristics. The hormone is also required for the build-up of lean muscle mass. See also ANDROGEN. |
| TFR | See TOTAL FERTILITY RATE. |
| total fertility rate | The theoretical average number of children that would be born alive to a woman during her lifetime if the age-specific fertility rates of a given year applied throughout her childbearing years. |
| toxic shock syndrome | An acute, rare, but potentially fatal disease caused by a bacterial toxin, during which organ activity is blocked, causing severe shock and hypotension. Symptoms include vomiting, high fever, diarrhoea and a rash. Can complicate sexual and reproductive health events, such as pregnancy, post-partum or abortion. |
| traditional birth attendant | Local community women who provide safe delivery services in the community. They initially acquired their skills by delivering babies themselves or through apprenticeship. (The World Health Organization does not include them in the category of 'skilled attendants' who are allowed to provide/manage deliveries.) |
| traditional methods (of contraception) | Non-supply methods, including periodic and post-partum abstinence, total abstinence if for contraceptive reasons, and withdrawal methods. |
| treatment literacy | A strategy used to help individuals and communities understand antiretroviral treatment (ART), the need for it, and how the drugs work. Effective treatment literacy, developed by or with people living with HIV and AIDS, and those on antiretroviral treatment, can lead to improved health outcomes, better adherence to drug regimes, and higher uptake of voluntary counselling and testing. |
| trichomoniasis | A sexually transmitted infection caused by a protozoon. |
| trophoblastic tumour | See CHORIOCARCINOMA. |
| tubal ligation | See VOLUNTARY SURGICAL CONTRACEPTION. |

tuberculosis (TB) Airborne infection by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, primarily a lung disease. It can spread to other parts of the body and be fatal if the immune system is weakened. Worldwide, tuberculosis accounts for one-third of AIDS deaths. Pelvic tuberculosis can block the fallopian tubes, resulting in infertility.

twins, twinning Twinning is a process by which a fertilized egg divides in half to produce twins with identical genetic make-up. This normally happens before day 15 of fertilization. It may produce conjoined twins. Non-identical twins are produced from separate fertilized eggs.

Uu

ultrasound Diagnostic imaging, using special sound waves to create the image of a body structure or developing fetus. *Syn:* echography.

under-five mortality rate The probability of a child born in a specific year or period dying before reaching the age of five, if subject to age-specific mortality rates of that period.

under-nutrition The result of inadequate food intake and repeated infectious diseases. It includes being underweight for age, too short for age (stunting), dangerously thin for height (wasting), and deficient in vitamins and minerals (micronutrient malnutrition).

under-served groups Groups not normally served, or not well served, by established service delivery programmes. In family planning, some examples of under-served groups are adolescents, men, the urban poor and those who live in remote areas, unmarried people and those from ethnic minorities.

universal precautions Standard infection control practices to be used universally in health care settings to minimize the risk of exposure to blood-borne infections, e.g. HIV and hepatitis. Precautions include protective measures such as the use of sterile gloves, and the correct disposal of contaminated materials exposed to blood, such as needles.

unmet need for family planning Estimates of women who would like to prevent or delay pregnancy but are not using contraception, either because they lack knowledge about family planning or access to services, or because they face cultural, religious and family obstacles.

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| unsafe abortion | An induced abortion conducted either by persons lacking the necessary skills or in an environment lacking the minimal medical and hygienic standards, or both. |
| urethra | The tube from the bladder to the urethral opening, from which men and women urinate. In males, the urethra runs through the penis, and carries semen as well as urine. In females, the urethra is shorter than in the male and emerges above the vaginal opening. |
| user-effectiveness | In contraception, the reliability of a contraceptive method as it is used – not always consistently or correctly (as opposed to method effectiveness). |
| uterine fibroid | Non-cancerous growth in the muscle of the uterus. |
| uterine lining and wall | See ENDOMETRIUM, MYOMETRIUM. |
| uterine perforation | Puncturing of the wall of the uterus, which may occur during an induced abortion, or with the insertion of an intra-uterine device. |
| uterine rupture | A tear in the wall of the uterus, typically during labour or late pregnancy. |
| uterus | The womb: the hollow, pear-shaped, muscular, intra-abdominal organ in which, after implantation of the embryo, the fetus develops during pregnancy. It is divided into the fundus, body and cervix. Menstruation originates in the uterus. See CERVIX, ENDOMETRIUM, MYOMETRIUM. |
| anteflexed uterus | A uterus that bends forward. |
| anteverted uterus | Uterus tipping forward above the bladder. Normal and present in 80 per cent of women. |
| bicornuate uterus | A congenital malformation of the uterus in which the upper part is duplicated. Can cause miscarriage. |
| retroflexed uterus | A uterus that bends backwards. |
| retroverted uterus | Uterus tipping backwards. Normal and present in 20 per cent of women. |
| septate uterus | A uterus completely divided into two (equal or unequal) parts. |
| uterine cavity | The inner cavity of the uterus. Its lining is the endometrium. The uterine cavity is most often potential space, i.e. collapsed so that the opposite walls touch each other. |

Vv

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| vaccine | A substance that contains antigenic components from an infectious micro-organism, which decrease or suppress the risk of a specific disease. |
| vacurette | A hollow tube that is inserted into the pregnant uterus to aspirate the pregnancy or the retained products of pregnancy. |
| vacuum aspiration | A method of pregnancy termination in which the contents of the uterus are removed by suction, using either a hand-held syringe or an electric pump. |
| vagina | The stretchable canal that forms the passageway from the uterus to the outside of the body. The opening is in the middle of the vulva. |
| vaginal bleeding | Any bloody vaginal discharge (pink, red or brown) that requires the use of sanitary protection (pads, cloths or tampons). Different vaginal bleeding patterns include: |
| amenorrhoea | No bleeding at all. |
| breakthrough bleeding | Any bleeding outside expected times (i.e. outside regular monthly bleeding) that requires use of sanitary protection. |
| heavy bleeding (menorrhagia) | Bleeding that is twice as heavy as the woman's usual bleeding. |
| infrequent bleeding | Fewer than two bleeding episodes over three months. |
| irregular bleeding | Spotting and/or breakthrough bleeding that occurs outside expected bleeding times (i.e. outside regular monthly bleeding). |
| menstrual bleeding, monthly bleeding | Bleeding that takes place, on average, for three to seven days about every 28 days. |
| prolonged bleeding | Bleeding that lasts longer than eight days. |
| spotting | Any bloody vaginal discharge outside expected bleeding time that requires no sanitary protection. |
| vaginal mucus | Fluid secreted by glands in the vagina. |
| vaginitis | An inflammation of the vagina. |

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| varicose veins | Enlarged, twisted veins, most commonly seen in veins just beneath the skin of the legs. Sometimes women who have varicose veins are advised not to use hormonal contraceptives. |
| vas deferens | A long, narrow tube that carries spermatozoa from each epididymis (a canal along the testicles) to the intra-abdominal seminal vesicles and prostate. Plural: vasa deferentia. |
| vasectomy | Surgical blocking or removal of a tiny piece of each of the two canals through which the spermatozoa pass upwards from the testicles, for permanent contraception in men. The intervention sites are at the base of the scrotum. See also VOLUNTARY SURGICAL CONTRACEPTION. |
| VCT | See VOLUNTARY COUNSELLING AND TESTING. |
| vertical transmission of HIV | The transmission of HIV from mother to baby before, during or after birth (through breastfeeding). |
| viability | The capacity of a fetus to sustain independent life outside the uterus (23 to 28 weeks from conception, depending on the quality of the neonatal care available). |
| viability defined by law | This can be by time (e.g. starting at 24 weeks), or weight (e.g. starting at 500g). The US Supreme Court defined viability (Roe versus Wade, 1973) as <i>“potentially able to live outside the mother's womb, albeit with artificial aid.”</i> |
| violence against women | See GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE. |
| viral load test | A test that measures the number of viral replications in a blood sample. The HIV viral load indicates the extent to which HIV is reproducing in the body. |
| virginity | The condition characterizing someone who has never had sexual intercourse. |
| virility | The sexual potency of a man, or the sexual appearance typical of a man. |
| vital statistics/events | These are demographic data on births, deaths and stillbirths. Other events such as adoption, marriage, divorce and migration, although not literally vital events, are often included. The registration of vital events is the basic source of information about a population's dynamics. |
| voluntary counselling and testing | A client-initiated form of HIV testing in which people are tested only with their informed, voluntary and specific consent. Counselling is provided both before and after HIV testing, and confidentiality of results can be guaranteed. |

voluntary surgical contraception (VSC) Female and male sterilization by tubal occlusion or tubal ligation or vasectomy are among the most effective contraceptive methods available for people who desire no more children. They are associated with low mortality and complication rates. The procedure blocks the sperm ducts (vasa deferentia) or oviducts (fallopian or uterine tubes).

vulnerability to HIV A measure of an individual's or community's inability to control their risk of infection, or the degree to which those people infected and affected by HIV can access appropriate care and support. Poverty, gender inequality, social norms, stigma, discrimination, and harassment by state officials can increase people's vulnerability to HIV infection.

vulnerable, vulnerability An individual or group lacking the abilities, means or resources to cope in a negative situation, leaving them exposed to, and/or defenceless against, violence, threats and/or suffering. The individual or group may be susceptible to risks and exploitation, and a loss of prospects and rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

vulnerable groups Populations likely to have poor sexual and reproductive health. Women and girls, young people, people living in poverty, migrant labourers, people in conflict and post-conflict situations, refugees and internally displaced people all experience situations in which they have less opportunity than others for good sexual and reproductive health care.

vulva The external female genitalia, including the labia (majora and minora), clitoris, vaginal and urethral openings, and two small Bartholin glands – openings on the inner side of the labia minora.

Ww

window period Time from initial infection with HIV until antibodies can be detected in the blood. With newer technology, laboratory results can be available within a week.

withdrawal method One of the oldest known methods of contraception, in which the man withdraws his penis from the vagina before ejaculation. Also known as coitus interruptus.

womb See UTERUS.

women of reproductive age The total number of women aged 15–44 or 15–49, inhabiting a country, territory or geographic area at a specific point in time.

Yy

yellow body See LUTEAL PHASE.

young people Girls and boys aged between 10 and 24 years.

youth The World Health Organization refers to those in the 15–24 age range as youth.

youth friendly The characteristics of, for instance, policies, programmes, resources, services or activities that attract young people, meet their sexual and reproductive health needs, and are acceptable and accessible to a diversity of young people.

Zz

zygote The cell formed by the union of a male sex cell (a spermatozoon) and a female sex cell (an ovum). The zygote develops into the embryo following the instruction encoded in its genetic material, the DNA.
