

# ADDING IT UP:

## The MEDICAL Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health Care

### CONTRACEPTIVE SERVICES

- Help space births, resulting in
  - lower rates of infant and child mortality
  - decreased risk of anemia for mothers
  - more time to breastfeed, improving infant health and survival
- Prevent high-risk pregnancies among
  - very young adolescents
  - women in their late 30s and 40s
  - women who have had many births
  - women with preexisting medical conditions
- Prevent unsafe abortion resulting from unwanted pregnancies, thereby reducing
  - maternal deaths
  - ill health
  - infertility
- Prevent maternal and infant deaths and ill health resulting from unwanted births
- Facilitate screening for STIs and other health concerns

### MATERNAL SERVICES

- Prenatal care provides
  - education and counseling on healthy behaviors, diet and nutrition
  - opportunity for prompt intervention in case of complications
  - opportunity for management of ongoing conditions such as hypertension, anemia, malaria, hepatitis, tuberculosis and cardiovascular disease
- Obstetric care reduces probability and severity of
  - hemorrhage
  - infection
  - obstetric fistula
  - urinary or fecal incontinence
  - pelvic inflammatory disease
- Postpartum visits help
  - reduce infection
  - increase breastfeeding
  - improve nutrition
- Care for complications of unsafe abortion reduces mortality and severity of subsequent ill health and promotes subsequent contraceptive use

### STI-RELATED SERVICES AND GYNECOLOGIC AND UROLOGIC CARE

- Prevention and treatment of STIs, including HIV/AIDS
  - save lives and prevent ill health
  - reduce transmission among sexual partners and from mothers to infants
  - lower infertility
- Prevention and treatment of gonorrhea reduce
  - septicemia, arthritis and endocarditis in men
  - pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility among women
  - eye infections and blindness among infants
- Prevention and treatment of human papillomavirus (HPV) reduce prevalence of genital warts and cervical cancer
- Gynecologic and urologic care can prevent and reduce ill health and death from
  - cervical, breast and prostate cancer
  - endometriosis
  - fibroids and ovarian tumors
  - reproductive tract infections
  - sexual dysfunction

**Source:** Singh S et al., *Adding It Up: The Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health Care*, New York: The Alan Guttmacher Institute (AGI) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2003, p.24–27.