

SUMMER 2016

Pathways

**Contraception
Is My Right**



Pathfinder
INTERNATIONAL

To my fellow Pathfinders,

I recently ran into a friend who had 13 children. Two of his children had died. He told me, "I'm having trouble taking care of the ones who are still alive." No parent should have to say those words.

My friend never knew about contraception. He wishes he had. Things would be different. He told me he would have had fewer children, and all of them would be educated, even the girls. "Like yours," he said.



Take 30 seconds to tell us why Pathfinder's work matters to you. We will share your inspiring messages of support with our staff around the world.

 [VISIT PATHFINDER.ORG/WHY](https://www.pathfinder.org/why)

I have three daughters and a son. All have finished school. All are grown and doing well. Pathfinder's work is personal for me, because the Democratic Republic of the Congo is my home.

I was born here, grew up here, and now I am proud to lead Pathfinder's work in my country. I am deeply committed to creating a brighter future for the people of the DRC, and I am thankful to have you by my side.

As Pathfinders around the globe, you and I have a lot in common...

We have seen the power of contraception.

In the DRC, we have one of the highest fertility rates in the world. More than 90 percent of married women (ages 15–49) in my country do not use a modern method of contraception. Many people here still believe that having a lot of children is a sign of wealth. Breaking this harmful belief is not easy, but with your support, we are reaching tens of thousands of people with information and access to contraception that can change their lives.

We refuse to sit by and watch girls and women die.

Abortion is illegal in the DRC, no matter what, even in cases of rape or incest. Unsafe abortion is common. Many desperate young women, facing unintended pregnancies, put their lives at risk. This is an urgent problem. Everyone knows it. Pathfinder is among the few taking action.

We are working with local partners to train health care providers in youth-friendly postabortion care—treating complications of unsafe abortions, saving young women's lives, and helping them protect themselves from unintended pregnancies. I am proud to be part of an organization on the cutting edge of this issue.

We know there is much more to do.

The DRC is a huge country, and the need is enormous. Despite our progress, sometimes it feels like we are just putting a drop of water into the ocean. In these moments, we need you with us the most.

That's why I am asking you to please raise your voice. Speak out and share why you believe Pathfinder's work—and the people we serve—are so important.

Your support means more than you know.

Sincerely,



Aben Ngay, PhD
Pathfinder Country Representative
Democratic Republic of the Congo

Change You're Making Possible

Defending Sarah's Right to Decide

In Tanzania, 42 percent of young women with no education have given birth.* You know it doesn't have to be this way.

"My auntie searched our home and found my pills," says Sarah.

Growing up in a community where women are valued for their fertility, Sarah valued school. She was not ready to have a baby. She wanted to use contraceptive pills, but had no support. Sarah's parents died when she was very young, and her guardian, like many adults in rural Shinyanga, believed contraception should be off limits to unmarried girls.

"She threw my pills away," Sarah says.

In high school, Sarah discovered she was pregnant while studying for exams. She was shocked. "I ran away from school," she says. By 17, Sarah had left school completely to raise her son, Dixon, all alone.

As a Pathfinder supporter you know that is not the end of Sarah's story. You have seen how our work ensures people can exercise their sexual and reproductive rights, regardless of their age.

Around the globe, Pathfinder trains health workers to deliver quality contraceptive services—including a full range of contraceptive methods—to young people without judgment. We engage communities to transform harmful thinking and support young people's right to contraception.

None of this would be possible without you. By making sure young people like Sarah have the power to prevent unintended pregnancy, you are changing lives: helping reduce maternal death, keeping girls in school, and improving their economic opportunities.

"I don't want to have any more children," Sarah says. Now 20 years old, Sarah participates in a support group for young mothers—an approach Pathfinder uses in many countries where we work.

These days, she decides what happens to her body and her future.

"It's my decision...I want an implant." At a Pathfinder-supported health center, Sarah smiles and waits for a nurse appear. "I want to take care of my child and to study. My pregnancy is why I left school, now I want to go back."

*Among ages 15–19, from TDHS 2010



THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR WORK IN TANZANIA!

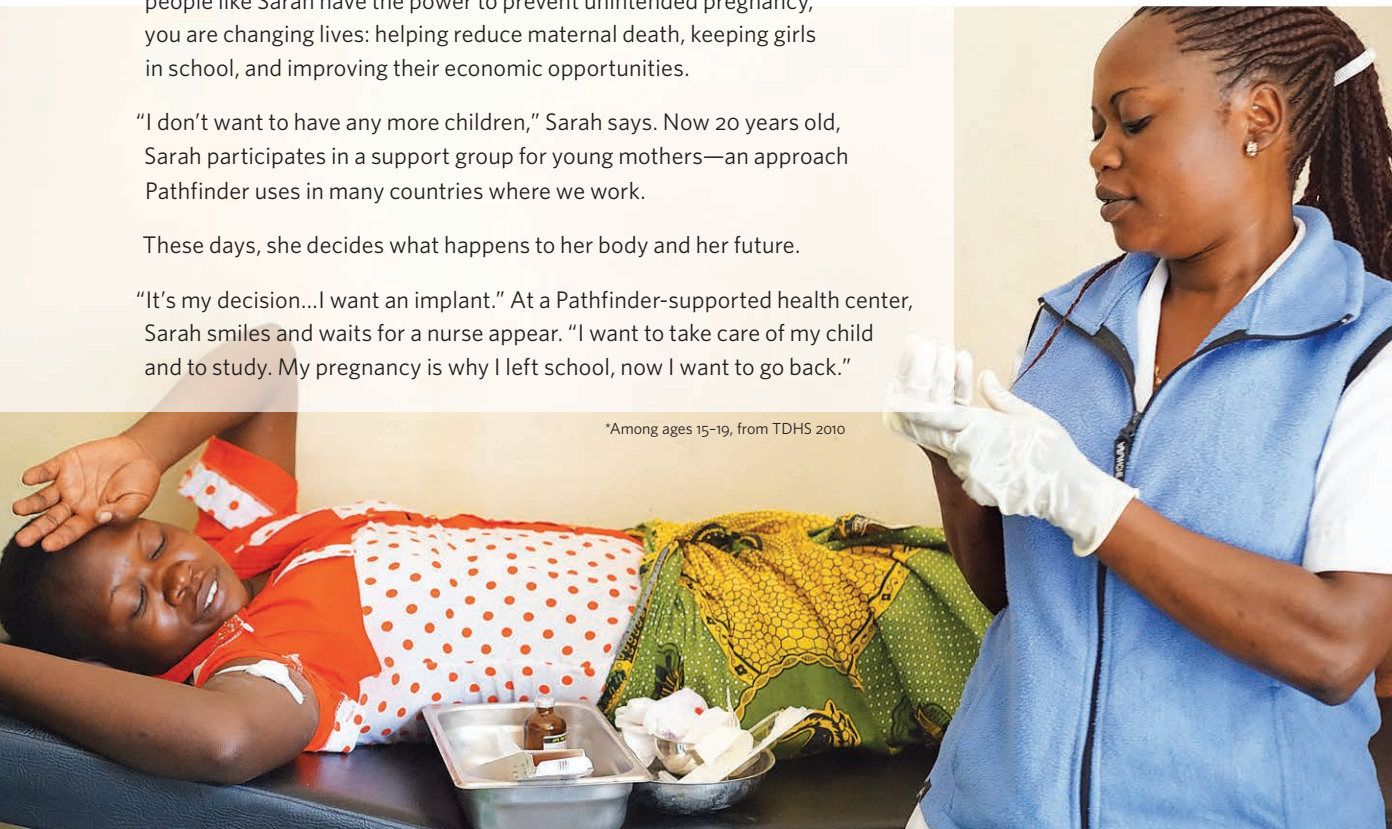
230,300+ individuals received contraceptive services for the first time

25,000+ visits by young people for **sexual and reproductive health services**, including contraception

441,600+ packets of contraceptive pills distributed

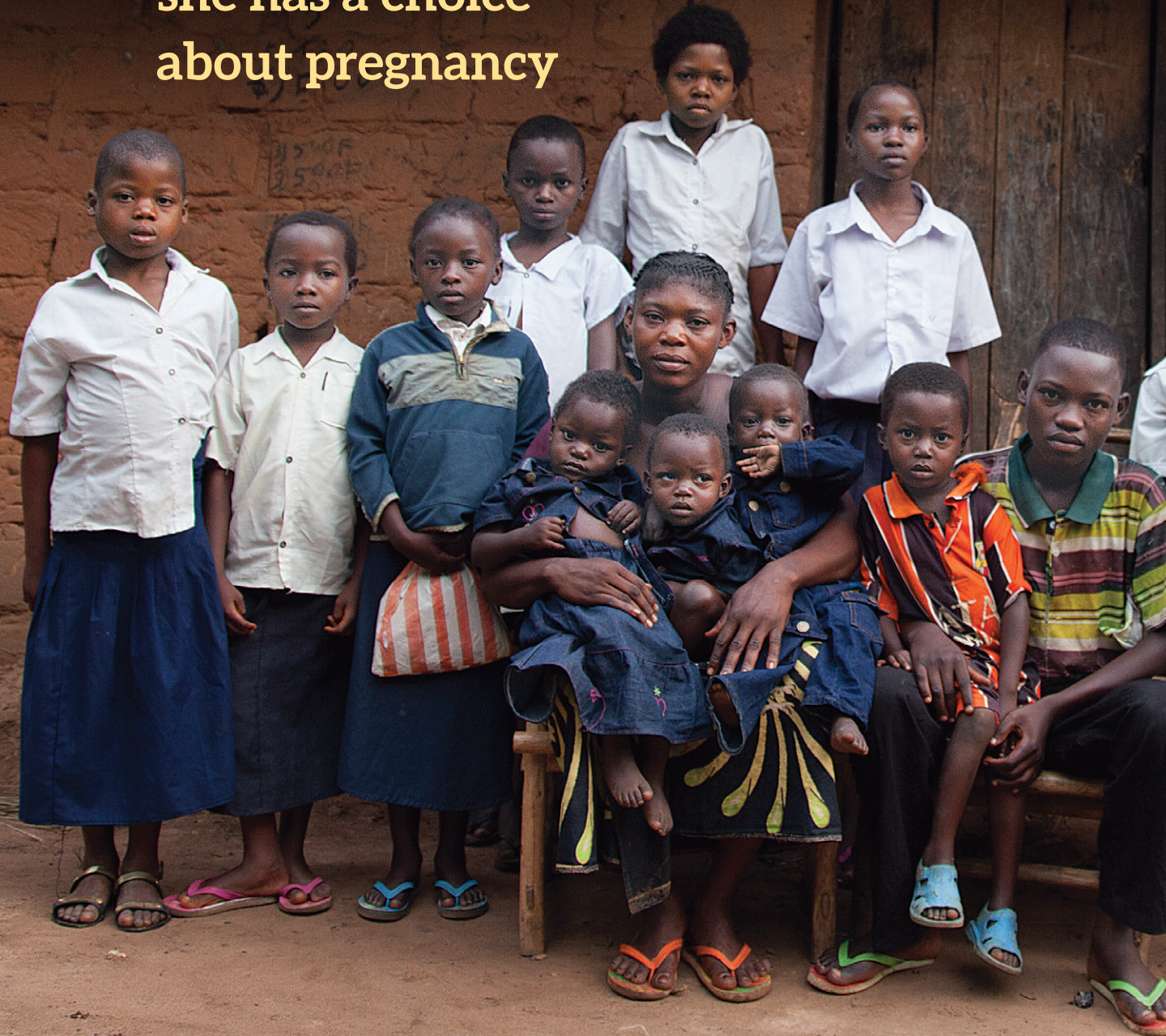
Key performance data from Pathfinder programs in Tanzania since 2009

PHOTOS: Maren Vespia



“I Have the Strength”

Helping a mother of
15 children discover
she has a choice
about pregnancy



Mbuyi must hurry. It's five PM, and she is determined to feed all her children before the sun sets. Deep in the rural countryside of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), there is no electricity. Before long, darkness will force Mbuyi and her 15 children into their one-room, grass-thatched hut to sleep on a single mattress. Most will use the floor.

"We don't have a good place to sleep," Mbuyi says, stirring a pot of cornmeal mash over a fire. Smoke billows off the burning wood and into her face. "We eat one meal a day."

Raising 15 children would be difficult under the best circumstances. Mbuyi and her husband, Kebwe, support their family of 17 on roughly \$2 a day.



Mbuyi and the older children often forgo food so her littlest ones get enough. She sacrifices everything for her children, even when it puts her life at risk.

Pregnancies, One After Another

"I never imagined I would have this many children," Mbuyi says.

While Mbuyi's large family is remarkable, it's not uncommon for women in her village to have ten or eleven children. The DRC has the third highest fertility rate in the world.

"I had twins," says Mbuyi. "Then with my next pregnancy—twins again."

With no access to modern medical equipment like an ultrasound, Mbuyi didn't know how many babies she was having until she had them. (During her pregnancies, a midwife pressed a traditional listening device hard against Mbuyi's abdomen. Only once did she detect multiple heartbeats).

In all, Mbuyi has given birth to four single babies, four sets of twins, and finally triplets.

"My eighth pregnancy was especially difficult," Mbuyi says. "I suffered for four months and had to travel to the hospital [for an emergency C-section]."

Risking death with each new pregnancy, Mbuyi worried how her children would survive if she didn't. She was desperate to protect her family, but what could she do? She

had no knowledge of contraception.

Her Health, Her Rights

For nearly 60 years, one belief has remained at the heart of Pathfinder's work in developing countries: every person should have the right and opportunity to decide whether and when to have children.

Thanks to your support, we are closer than ever to making it happen. Through Pathfinder's contraceptive programs last year, over 2.6 million unintended pregnancies were averted worldwide.

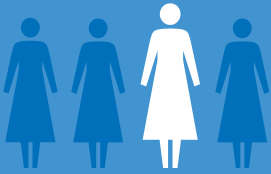


Together with governments and local partners, we strengthened health systems and engaged community and religious leaders around the globe to break down harmful myths and increase support for contraception.

Creating a New Path Forward

Pathfinder is passionate about reaching

SPOTLIGHT ON AFRICA



1 IN EVERY 4
women has an unmet
need for contraception

EACH YEAR...



19.1
MILLION
unintended
pregnancies

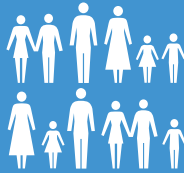
6.2 MILLION
UNSAFE
abortions

180,000+ WOMEN DIE
from pregnancy-related causes



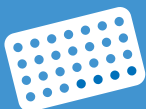
CONTRACEPTION

SAVES
LIVES



& transforms communities

PATHFINDER WORKS IN
14 AFRICAN COUNTRIES



5,000,000
visits for contraception
were made through our programs last year
in Africa

CHANGE LIVES WITH US

her family's future, and the future of her country.

Right now in the DRC people struggling to survive are about to face an unprecedented challenge. In just 34 years, by 2050, the country's population is expected to increase by 165%—from 73 to 194 million people.

Sustainable development for DRC, one of Africa's largest countries and Mbuyi's home, depends on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of its citizens. They need the power to make free and informed decisions about contraception.



By supporting Pathfinder, you are making sure they can.

"I learned about family planning"

It's morning. In a cyclone of activity, 15 small children rise and funnel out the door. The oldest girls get ready for school. Others will follow Mbuyi to the field, harvesting cassava, often yielding little.

A baby in each arm, Mbuyi recalls the day she met Felicien, a community health worker who changed her life. "We learned



Mbuyi recalls the day she met Felicien, a community health worker who changed her life. “We learned about the benefits of family planning and about each method.”

“I learned about family planning.”



about the benefits of family planning and about each method.”

Trained and supported by Pathfinder and our partners*, Felicien counseled the couple on contraception and made sure they knew how to get it.

Mbuyi chose a contraceptive implant—a hormonal rod the size of a matchstick inserted into her arm that prevents pregnancy for up to five years. “With other methods, you have to go back to the health center a lot,”

says Mbuyi. “I could forget. But with the implant, there’s no problem.”

Mbuyi is happy about her choice and wants people to know it.

“I am in good health. I have the strength to work and find food for my children now. And I have not gotten pregnant. My friends asked me how I did that. I told them it’s because I’m using family planning.”

Laughing, six little ones hold

hands and jump around in a circle. Mbuyi, resilient but weary, watches them affectionately.

“I need to feed my children and keep them healthy. I want them all to be educated, so they can have a good life.”

That’s why she is grateful for contraception.

“My husband and I feel good about family planning. We already have a lot of children. Now we are figuring out how to raise them.”

The Percentage Rule

“It’s good to talk with people doing the work. To see how decisions are made,” says Lori.

It was Friday morning when Lori Kenschaft and Randy Smith entered Pathfinder headquarters. As longtime donors, the couple wanted to hear from staff—the experts who design and evaluate our contraception programs.



PHOTO: Linda Suttienfield

“It’s important that our money is used effectively,” says Randy, “so visiting Pathfinder was wonderful. What I was looking for and what I got was a nuanced feel of how staff describe problems they face, the tactics they use, which they discard, and why.” For Randy, a software engineer at Google, Pathfinder’s knack for adapting to difficult conditions on the ground is essential.

Lori agrees. She researched the big organizations doing international family planning and concluded, “Pathfinder is doing an unusually good job—both in terms of its execution and its goals.” A historian, author, and full-time volunteer, Lori is passionate about what she calls “issues of equity.” She recently completed her third book, *Gender Inequality in Our Changing World*.

“The key issue is how much control women have over their lives,” Lori says. “Pregnancy, childbirth,

breastfeeding, caring for children as they grow up, are all very demanding activities. Women who do not have the ability to choose when to have children often struggle with ill health and overwhelming demands on their bodies and time. If we want women to have a degree of autonomy and choose how to live in the world, that starts with contraception.”

Randy and Lori dedicate a percentage of their income to charity. When Lori first shared the idea with Randy, they decided on ten percent. Today, they donate twenty. This approach, they say, allows them to focus on where their gifts will be most effective, rather than how much to give.

“We give to Pathfinder because it effectively addresses three things we care about all at the same time,” says Lori. “It improves the quality of people’s lives greatly, increases gender equality, and addresses climate change—helping people have only the children they want, not the ones they don’t.”

“I want a more sustainable world. I want that badly,” says Randy. “Ultimately, it’s about stronger, more resilient communities. A world where every woman has the power to choose to have fewer children, so she can invest more in them...for health care, education, and economic opportunity.”

“It’s all connected,” says Lori. “People and the environment, health, equity, survival...It’s not that everything comes down to family planning. But without it, the rest cannot be solved.”

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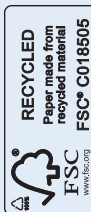
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COVER: Sarah, a young single mother, doesn't want to have another unintended pregnancy. She waits outside a Pathfinder-supported health center for a contraceptive implant.

TANZANIA: Linda Suttienfield