Female condoms are the only woman-initiated, dual STI/HIV and pregnancy protection method available today. As such, female condoms occupy a unique position in the global marketplace where high unmet need for protection methods drives cooperation between governments, donors, and the private sector to reach new consumer groups.

Female condoms have been available for over 20 years, yet new product innovations and a strengthened global focus on women’s health has led to a renewed interest in the method. Efforts are being championed by national governments, donors, and global health advocates including the Universal Access to Female Condoms Joint Programme (UAFC), a consortium of Rutgers WPF, Oxfam Novib, I+ Solutions, and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, working to decrease HIV prevalence and unintended pregnancies and promote women’s empowerment.

At the same time, the global health community is thinking more strategically and shrewdly about investments in health. Needs greatly outweigh available resources, creating the impetus for careful evaluation of expected returns on investment in the form of immediate results and sustained impact. As such, this business case for female condoms critically examines the evidence for investment in female condoms, offering new analysis of return on investment, cost effectiveness, and wider economic implications. Using peer-reviewed, open-source modeling tools developed by leading international health organizations, this business case demonstrates that the economic gains to be realized from investment in female condoms far outweigh the costs of programming, especially in high HIV prevalence countries. Further, female condoms offer a competitive cost per DALY against WHO-CHOICE thresholds and in comparison with alternative interventions. Recognizing that the economic implications of female condom utilization are wider than the results of a single investment, this business case also reveals linkages with key social outcomes that spur growth, income equality, and economic development.

The global health community has coalesced around the business goal of reducing unmet need and increasing utilization of family planning and HIV prevention methods. Female condoms offer the means to achieve this goal through efficient, market-based solutions. Current market dynamics present a window of opportunity to invest in female condom programming, thereby unleashing a virtuous cycle of increased utilization, sustained demand, better health outcomes, and stronger economies. The future of the marketplace for products that address vast unmet need is being shaped by current decisions and actions. Investment in female condoms at this point in time offers a strategic opportunity to meet the needs of today’s women and the needs of future generations. The analysis presented in this business case points to important takeaways and recommendations for the global health community:

- Investment in female condoms is strategic. Female condoms offer excellent value for money and bring unquantifiable benefits to users and their wider communities.
- Understand the gains made from female condom programming. Experiences need to be documented and disseminated in order to replicate success in new contexts and bring pilot programs to scale.
- Keep costs down by leveraging existing distribution channels that currently bring other health products to last-mile consumers. Add female condoms into this product mix to vastly increase access.
- Develop and communicate key messages to each target group, covering broad STI/HIV prevention and family planning topics alongside the unique product attributes of female condoms.
- Expand the female condom market through focus on product innovations and the registration and prequalification processes that are essential to bringing new products to market. A broader mix of female condom products increases consumer choice and competition in the marketplace.

Unmet need for protection is vast, and sales of female condoms are steadily rising. Meeting this high demand requires effective solutions to complex challenges. Female condoms have an important role to play in delivering these solutions, offering critical economic and social benefits for individual users and their wider economies.