Color-Coded Beads Help Women Avoid Unwanted Pregnancies

Georgetown University

Women who are poorly informed about pregnancy prevention — especially in poor or developing nations — are at much higher risk for unplanned births. Large numbers of children can create additional economic and emotional hardships for struggling families.

To help women prevent unplanned pregnancies, researchers at the Institute for Reproductive Health at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., invented CycleBeads®, a string of color-coded beads that represent different days of the menstrual cycle, according to the Standard Days Method™ of family planning.

Victoria Jennings, Ph.D., and Marcos Arevalo, M.D., developed the system in 2000-2002, which was successfully field-tested in Bolivia, Peru and the Philippines. About $200,000 in funding was provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development and Georgetown University to develop and test the beads.

> *Field testing showed that, when CycleBeads were combined with the Standard Days Method, women were 95 percent effective in preventing unplanned pregnancies.*

With CycleBeads a woman can track the days of her menstrual cycle, identify which days are her most fertile and determine whether her cycle is the appropriate length for using the Standard Days Method.

CycleBeads are ea sy to use and understand, inexpensive, and offer a contraceptive/family planning option for women who prefer not to use hormonal or invasive birth control methods. Because they are a visual tool, CycleBeads also facilitate communication between women and their partners regarding fertility and sexual matters. More than half a million women around the world use CycleBeads many of them in some of the world's poorest countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Rwanda, Madagascar, Benin, India, the Philippines, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Guatemala and Honduras. In addition, many women in developed countries, including the United States, use CycleBeads as part of their birth control planning.

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