

# MOMENTUM POLICY BRIEF N° 3

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## Effects of the Momentum Project on Postpartum Family Planning Among First-time Mothers Aged 15-24 years in Kinshasa, DRC

### KEY FINDINGS

- Our research shows that the Momentum project helped clear up personal misunderstandings and false beliefs about using contraception.
- First-time mothers in intervention health zones felt more capable of finding ways to use family planning after giving birth, even when facing challenges.
- Momentum increased the probability that first-time mothers talked to their partner and a health worker about family planning.
- The project increased the use of a modern contraceptive method within 12 months of delivery.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our research shows that the Momentum package of interventions leads to significantly improved postpartum family planning outcomes among first-time mothers in the intervention than the comparison health zones in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

### INTRODUCTION

Although modern contraceptive use has been increasing in the DRC, more than half of young Congolese women have an unmet need for family planning and report their pregnancies as unintended. Closely spaced pregnancies are common, increasing the risk of premature birth, low birth weight, infant mortality, and maternal anemia. This study evaluates the effects of the Momentum Project on postpartum FP-related beliefs and behaviors. We also examine whether these effects increase among first-time mothers who have greater exposure to the project's interventions.

### RESEARCH APPROACH

The analysis is based on 1924 first-time mothers aged 15-24 years who were six-months pregnant at enrollment and were successfully interviewed in both the Momentum baseline and endline surveys, conducted in 2018 and 2020, respectively. The surveys collected data on family planning attitudes, beliefs, perceived norms, personal agency, discussion, and use. They also collected sociodemographic characteristics such as age, marital status, level of education, ethnicity, parent's education, household wealth, gender-role attitudes, frequency of watching television, perceived power, and exposure to different components of the Momentum intervention.

The study was conducted in three intervention health zones and three comparison health zones of Kinshasa. In the intervention health zones, 3rd and 4th-year nursing students conducted home visits to provide family planning counseling, commodities, and referrals, as well as group education sessions. The sessions were based on the Program M curriculum, which is designed to promote young women’s knowledge and awareness of gender inequities and sexual and reproductive health and rights; empowerment; and knowledge about motherhood and caregiving. The comparison group did not get the intervention. We analyze the results based on the groups to which first-time mothers were originally assigned (intervention or comparison), even if they did not participate in Momentum home visits and/or group education sessions. This brief presents findings from the research to inform policy makers and program managers.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

The study was conducted in three intervention health zones and three comparison health zones of Kinshasa. In the intervention health zones, 3rd and 4th-year nursing students conducted home visits to provide family planning counseling, commodities, and referrals, as well as group education sessions. The sessions were based on the Program M curriculum, which is designed to promote young women’s knowledge and awareness of gender inequities and sexual and reproductive health and rights; empowerment; and knowledge about motherhood and caregiving. The comparison group did not get the intervention. We analyze the results based on the groups to which first-time mothers were originally assigned (intervention or comparison), even if they did not participate in Momentum home visits and/or group education sessions. This brief presents findings from the research to inform policy makers and program managers.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nursing students delivering community-based services may enhance postpartum family planning outcomes among urban young first-time mothers in the DRC and other African countries. This service delivery model can be institutionalized in the nursing education curriculum to increase first-time mothers’ access to modern methods of contraception and their use in the postpartum period.

**Table 1. Average treatment effects (ATE) of Momentum on postpartum family planning indicators, first-time mothers aged 15-24, Kinshasa, 2020**

Indicator	ATE	P-value
Mean number of family planning myths first-time mother believed	-0.846	< 0.01
Mean personal agency score	0.601	< 0.01
Discussed FP use with partner after delivery	0.091	0.01
Discussed FP use in the six weeks after childbirth with a health worker	0.234	< 0.01
Used modern contraceptive within 12 months of delivery	0.133	< 0.01

Source: Gage, A. J., et al. (2023). Evaluation of the effect of the Momentum project on family planning outcomes among first-time mothers aged 15-24 years in Kinshasa, DRC. *Contraception*, 125, 110088. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.contraception.2023.110088>

### Use of a modern method of contraception within 12 months of delivery, Kinshasa, 2020

