Young People’s views & Perceptions regarding female condoms

A qualitative research study

July 2013
# Table of Contents

Background information .................................................................................................................. 5

Objectives .................................................................................................................................. 5

Methodology and study location ................................................................................................. 5

Data Collection ............................................................................................................................ 5

Data management and Analysis .................................................................................................. 6

Findings ...................................................................................................................................... 7

Views about condom use ............................................................................................................ 7

Condoms are good ....................................................................................................................... 7

For Prevention .............................................................................................................................. 7

Views about Female Condoms .................................................................................................... 7

They like them ............................................................................................................................. 7

It is unlikely to break .................................................................................................................. 8

It protects them from tricksters/Makes you much safer ............................................................... 8

They don’t know how to use them ............................................................................................ 8

It is worn in advance .................................................................................................................. 8

While this view was also shared by male respondents, they had questions over how comfortable
the woman is and how they can urinate with the condom on. ....................................................... 9

It protects them from rape .......................................................................................................... 9

Decision making over condom use ............................................................................................. 9

They don’t like it (Female Condom) ............................................................................................ 9

Painful when putting on .............................................................................................................. 9

Boys do not talk about female condoms .................................................................................. 10

Never used it before .................................................................................................................... 10

Myths about the female condom .............................................................................................. 10

Views about using the female condom ...................................................................................... 10
It is easy to use ........................................................................................................................................... 10
It is difficult to use ........................................................................................................................................ 11
The sex is not enjoyable ................................................................................................................................. 11
Preference between male and female condom ................................................................................................ 11
The like the female condom ............................................................................................................................ 11
The female condom is safe ............................................................................................................................. 12
It does not break easily ................................................................................................................................. 12
Some women do not like the female condom .............................................................................................. 12
They like the male condom .......................................................................................................................... 13
Girls are not aware of female condoms ................................................................................................ ...... 13
Reasons for not using the female condom .................................................................................................... 13
Lack of knowledge of the female condom ..................................................................................................... 13
Misconceptions ............................................................................................................................................. 14
Difficult to realise breakage ......................................................................................................................... 14
It can get stuck in the vagina .......................................................................................................................... 14
Not easily accessible .................................................................................................................................... 14
Shyness ........................................................................................................................................................... 14
Difficult to use/Causes pain .......................................................................................................................... 15
Pressure from men ......................................................................................................................................... 15
Fear of losing a boyfriend ............................................................................................................................. 15
Fear of being laughed at ............................................................................................................................... 16
What young men say about female condom ............................................................................................... 16
They think you are infected .......................................................................................................................... 17
Access to Female Condoms ........................................................................................................................... 17
Not easy to access .......................................................................................................................................... 17
Shy to collect condoms ................................................................................................................................ 17
Fear of what others will say .......................................................................................................................... 18
Female condoms are not as common as male condom ................................................................. 18

Suggested ways of accessing Condoms .................................................................................... 18

Hospital ........................................................................................................................................ 18

Distribution agents .................................................................................................................. 19

Youth Clubs .............................................................................................................................. 19

Toilets .......................................................................................................................................... 19

What they want to know about female condoms .................................................................. 19

How it looks .............................................................................................................................. 20

How to put on a female condom ............................................................................................. 20

How long to wear it .................................................................................................................... 20

Side effect .................................................................................................................................. 20

It should not be scarce ............................................................................................................... 21

Conclusion ............................................................................................................................... 21

Recommendations .................................................................................................................. 22
Background information
This qualitative study was conducted in Malawi to explore views regarding condoms use among young girls aged 15 - 24. This was a small qualitative study conducted among girls and boys in semi-urban communities of Blantyre in Malawi. Findings of the study will be used to design and develop tools for teaching young girls and boys on the female condom.

Objectives
The main objective of this study was to qualitatively explore young girls’ views towards female condoms and its use among boys and girls aged 15 - 24. Specifically, the study aimed at:

- Finding out what they think about the female condom
- Find out what young men say about the female condom
- Find out which they prefer between male and female condom
- Establish reasons why they use or and do not use the female condom
- Establish how they access and how they would want to access female condoms
- Find out what they want to know about the female condom

Methodology and study location
This was a qualitative study. 4 Focus Groups and 2 individual in-depth interviews were conducted among young girls aged 15 – 24 year. Participants for the study were recruited from primary schools in the outskirts of Blantyre in Malawi. These are semi-urban. Each focus group comprised of 12 female participants. A total of 50 young people were interviewed.

Data Collection
2 trained male and female research assistants in qualitative data collection were used to collect data. Each of the assistants conducted one focus group and one IDI. Data was recorded on digital tape recorders with some key issues being recorded in ink. Recorded data was later transcribed and translated verbatim and type in Microsoft word. The word documents were transferred into a qualitative data analysis software.
Data management and Analysis

Audio recorded data was transferred into a computer and saved as audio data as back up immediately after an interview. Audio recorded data were transcribed and translated verbatim in Chichewa by the RAs immediately after the interviews. Translation and typing into English was done immediately after all interviews were transcribed. Typed English transcripts were saved in word format.

MAXQDA 10 software for qualitative data analysis was used. Prior to importing data into the software, data was read specifically to check for spelling mistakes and grammatical errors that could have been done during transcription and translation. Where necessary, the PI had to go back to the recorded data to verify that any corrections made would not change the meaning as per the raw data.

Data was read and re-read and text segments were coded. Data was analyzed by predominantly using inductive codes. This involved breaking the data into text segments and then assigning codes to identify recurring patterns and themes relating to young girls’ views and experiences with the female condom. Once all the interviews had been coded, themes were identified. The identified themes were used to write a report on their views regarding the female condoms.
Findings
Below is a presentation of findings of the study. First will

Views about condom use

Condoms are good
Participants were asked what their views are regarding condoms use. Findings show that most young people are aware of condoms and their importance. Almost all groups reported that condoms are good especially among those who cannot abstain.

“...my views are that it is good to use condoms among the young people for those who cannot abstain.....” IDI

“...condom use among young people is good...mmnh..because it helps us to prevent STIs...mmm....but also prevention of unwanted pregnancies...” Male FGD

For Prevention
Almost all respondents said that condoms are good for prevention. Findings show that most young people are aware that condoms protect them from various things such as HIV, STIs as well as early pregnancies. It also came out from almost all groups and IDI as they mentioned prevention from HIV, STI and pregnancies as some of the things that condoms protect them from.

“....we use condoms to prevent HIV and AIDS....mmmh....also as we are still at school they assist us to avoid early pregnancy...Female FGD 1

‘....condoms among young people is good....mmmh...because it helps us to prevent STIs....but also prevention of unwanted pregnancy.’

Views about Female Condoms
Participants were asked what their views are regarding the female condoms. Participants had different views regarding female condoms. The views expressed were dependent on the level of knowledge of the participants regarding female condoms.

They like them
Findings show that some young people especially girls like the female condom because of various reasons. Some said that they like the female condom because it is not easy for it to break unlike the mail condom. Some said that they like it because they are protected from partners who deliberately break the condom to have unprotected sex with them and that it
makes a woman take part in deciding to use a condom. Findings also show that they like the female condoms because it can protect them in the event that they are raped or forced into sex.

It is unlikely to break
Some participants said that they like the female condom because it cannot easily break unlike the male condom. They said the female condom is larger in size hence less prone to breaking. This view was also shared by some boys.

It protects them from tricksters/Makes you much safer
It also came out prominent from those who know the female condom that using it makes them much safer because it protects them from partners who deliberately breaks the condom of force them into unprotected sex.

“....ok it also helps....because some young men they can take off the male condom....mmh.....but if you are wearing the female condom you are able to protect yourself......FGD Two

...female condom is good....mmmh....because if you meet your fellow youth partner....mmmh....who does not want to use condom(male)....mmmh....cannot realize that you are putting on it because it does not really come outside.....” FGD Two

This view was also shared by male respondents. They reported that some men do not like to use condoms and using female condoms protects the girl from being infected.

“The female condom is good....mmh because there are some men who do not want to use condoms when having sex....mmh and if a woman has put on the female condom she is protected from STIs...”

They don’t know how to use them
Both male and female respondents expressed the view that most of them do not know how to use the female condom. This is in agreement with other views which respondents reported regarding accessibility, in ability to use and lack of civic education on the use of the female condom.

‘I cannot even explain because I have never used it before....mmhh even I have never met a woman who has used it before.’ Male FGD

It is worn in advance
A female condom is worn minutes or hours before meeting a partner for sex. Participants who had knowledge about the female condom reported that they feel much safer because they put it on in advance that their partners cannot realise that they are using a condom.
“...let me also add on what my friend has just said.....the female condom is good...mmmh...because you wear it in advance when you are going to meet your boyfriend .....mmmh...so if he does not want to use the male condom....mmmh....he will not notice that you are putting on the female condom...mmmh....he will just feel like he is having unprotected sex .....and by wearing the female condom you are protected from STI....ok.....FGD One

While this view was also shared by male respondents, they had questions over how comfortable the woman is and how they can urinate with the condom on.

It protects them from rape
Participants especially those who had knowledge about the female condom reported that because you put it on in advance, you can be protected in the event that you have been raped. Because of this they said you can be protected from STIs.

I like it because you can wear it the whole day before you meet your boyfriend.....mmmh.. and they are also good because you if you are wearing it you are protected when someone rapes you.....mmmh....you cannot get STI......

Decision making over condom use
Some participants reported that the female condom is good because it makes a woman take part in deciding on matters of sex. They said this in comparison with the male condom where the decision is made by the man on whether they should use or not use a condom.

“...my view is that....it also makes women to take part on sex issues......” FGD one

They don’t like it (Female Condom)
While some respondents said that they like the female condom, some said that they don’t like it. They mentioned different reasons why they did not like the female condom. For male respondents, they said that they like the male condom because it is the one they are used to. Female respondents mentioned that it causes pain.

Painful when putting on
Respondents who had knowledge on the female condom reported that the female condom is not preferred because if causes pain when putting.

“......female condoms most girls or women do not like it because they say when they are inserting it on the vagina they feel pain that is why most girls do not like it.....FGD Two

Further to this, respondents said that they don’t like the female condoms because it is not as easy as the male condom to put on. Some expressed the view that if it were easy to put on, most women could have been using it.
“...I do not like it because I it is difficult to wear....” FGD One

“.....the female condom is not liked by many because...it is difficult to put on but if it was easy many people could have like it..... ” FGD Two

Boys do not talk about female condoms
Male respondents reported that they do not talk much about female condoms because they are not easy to access. They also said that when one mentions about a condom, they only think about the male condom.

‘.....we only think about the male one.....we cannot be discussing about the thing which is difficult for us to access.’ Male FGD

Never used it before
Respondents who had no knowledge on the female condom said that they did not like it because they have never used it before. Some said that they have never seen it before and therefore difficult for them to express their liking or disliking of it.

“I do not like it because I have never used it before.... ” FGD One

Myths about the female condom
Findings from this study show that there are myths that exist that make some young girls not use condoms. Some respondents reported that they have heard that the female condom can go into the stomach while some said that the lubricant is not good to them because it can cause cervical cancer.

“ok me I do not like it because I have held that sometimes it can go inside the stomach.....is it true.........? FGD One

“...what I have held is....mmmh...condoms do have lubricants....mmmh....and that lubricant if it goes inside the stomach....mmmh....it can cause cervix cancer...FGD One

Views about using the female condom
Respondents were asked to express their views regarding using the female condom. Findings show that some who had knowledge about female condoms said that they have no problems using it. Findings also show that some who have knowledge about the condom and those that did not have said that using a female condom is difficult.

It is easy to use
Some respondents especially those who had knowledge about the female condom said they do not find problems using it.

“.....Ii do not find difficult using female condom....mmmh....the ring does not give me any pain.....mmmh.....i can put it on let us say round 2pm.....mmmh.....and am meeting my boyfriend round 4pm I cannot feel pain because am used to it..... ” FGD Two
It is difficult to use
Some respondents both those who had knowledge and those who had no knowledge about the female condoms reported that using a female condom is difficult. Some said it is difficult because most women do not know how to use it and they do not use it regularly. Some said that it is difficult to use because of the rings.

“.....most women do not know how to use female condom....eeeh.....because they do not use it regularly.......” FGD Two

“.....it gives problems when wearing it because of the rings....you feel pain when you are wearing it because of the rings.....mmmh...that is why someone said the vagina lose elasticity because of female condom.....that is why it is difficult to use...” FGD One

The view that female condoms are gives problems when putting on was also shared by male participants. Some participants reported that girls they have problems putting on female condoms.

‘......but also they say they find them difficult to put them on.’ Male FGD

The sex is not enjoyable
Some male respondents who had ever used the female condom reported that sex with a female condom is not enjoyable.

“.....but I can also say I have used the female condom once when I was having sex ...mmm ....I did not enjoy the sex ....I could not get the sensitivity I get when I am using the male condom...there was no satisfaction I get when I am using a male condom” Male FGD

Preference between male and female condom
Respondents were asked to express their views over which condom they would prefer between the male and female condom. Both condoms were preferred by some and varying reasons were expressed for liking or disliking the other. Likes or dislikes were also based on their knowledge of the male or female condom.

The like the female condom
Some participants especially girls said that they preferred the female condom to the male. Asked why they liked the female condom, respondents said that a female condom is safe because it protects you from partners who want to have unprotected sex from you. They also mentioned that the fact that it is worn in advance makes you safe and protected from tricksters.
**The female condom is safe**

It came out prominent from all groups that the female condom protects young women from partners who may indulge them into unprotected either by force of by deliberately breaking the condom. Some said that some partners cheats by pretending that they have put on a condom yet they break it deliberately thereby finding themselves having unprotected sex.

“….I will prefer the female one because when I meet my boyfriend who does not want to use male one I will just allow him knowing that I have protected myself……FGD One

“Me I like the female condom because they say the male condom is not 100% safe...mmmh... but also some men can put on the male condom....mmmh...but during sex he can use some tricks to take it off without you noticing....so I like the female condom because you wear in advance and he cannot have chance to take it out....FGD Two

Respondents also said the female condoms make them safe in the event that their partner insists on unprotected sex or tricks them by breaking the male condom so they have unprotected sex.

“......ok because if you have not put on the female condom relying that your boyfriend will use the male one......mmmh...he can wear it but during sex he can break the tit......mmmh.....and ....can infect you with STI......the female condom you cannot break it yourself because you will be afraid if contact STI...... FGD Two

**It does not break easily**

Respondents also said they preferred the female to the male condom because the female condom rarely breaks as compared to the male condoms. They also said because the female condom is bigger than the male condom, chances of it breaking are not as much as the male condom. This view was shared by both male and female respondents.

‘The female condom has been manufactured well...mmm.....because male condom can break, the female condom cannot break.’ Male FGD

**Some women do not like the female condom**

Some male respondents reported that most women do not like the female condom but male condoms for reasons they do not know about. Some said that women do not use female condoms because they do not easily access them and also that they wait for the man to buy the male condom.

“To my side the female condom....mmmh I can say most women avoid them....they normally use the male condom ...according to my observation, most women do not use female condoms, I do not know why” Male FGD
“I just want to add on what he has just said, most women do not like to use the female condo...they do not even have them in possession...they wait for the man to go and buy the male condom.” Male FGD

They like the male condom
Male respondents said that they like the male condom because it is easy to put and they are used to it. Some said that they prefer the male condom because it is cheap and easy to access.

‘....it is easy to put on and we wear it ourselves and we are used to it.’ Male FGD

Male respondents also said that the female condom is difficult to access and that most girls fail to use instructions on how to use the female condom. Some also said the even when they buy a female condom, their girl friends fail to use them

‘…..you can buy one and give it to your girlfriend to put on....mmmhh....but fails to put it on because she cannot follow the instructions like what our friend said earlier.....’ Male FGD

Girls are not aware of female condoms
Findings from this study show that knowledge and accessibility of female condoms is a problem. Male respondents reported that most girls are not aware of female condoms. They also said female condoms are not readily available and if available they are found in places such as bars and saloons which do not have privacy.

“…..it seems most of them they are not aware of them (female condom) Male FGD

“...but also female condoms are not readily available...if you go into a bar you will only find male condoms Male FGD

Reasons for not using the female condom
Respondents were asked to express their views regarding reasons why young females may not use the female condom. Findings show that there are various reasons why young females do not use female condoms which range from knowledge, access, peer pressure and stigma related to the female condom.

Lack of knowledge of the female condom
Findings shows that lack of knowledge of the female condom make some young women unable to use the female condom. Lack of knowledge was expressed in terms inability to use and misconceptions that young women are exposed to regarding the female condom.

“.....some cannot use female condom because they do not know it.......” FGD One
Misconceptions
Respondents both male and female also reported that misconceptions about the female condoms make them unable to use the female condom. These included the belief that it can go into the stomach and effects of the lubricants as a cause for cervical cancer.

Difficult to realise breakage
Respondents reported that it is difficult to know if a female condom is broken or not.

“They also say it is difficult to notice if any breakage on the female condom than the male one……because you cannot see what is happening when you are inserting it inside.” FGD One

‘They also say it is difficult to notice if any breakage on the female condom than the male one……because you cannot see what is happening when you are inserting it inside.’ FGD IDI

It can get stuck in the vagina
Male respondents reported that there are myths about the female condom that it can get stuck in the vagina or be pushed into the womb during. They said that this can make girls who have never used a female condom to not like it.

‘……and on top of that there is a myth that says the female condom can get stuck in the vagina .....mmmh….or I can say it can be pushed into the womb ...mmm.....and for the women who have not been taught about female condoms and just hear about this myth….mmmhh..... they are discouraged from using the female condom.’ Male FGD

Not easily accessible
Findings show that female condoms are difficult to access than male condoms. Findings also show that lack of knowledge of where to access female condoms makes young girls unable to access and use them. Respondents to this study reported that female condoms are not readily available as compared to male condoms which you can find everywhere. If they have to access condoms, they have to travel long distances in order to access them.

“…..but also the female condom is not readily available like the male condom....” FGD Two

Shyness
Male respondents reported that most women are shy to access condoms and this makes them unable to access and use the condoms. They also said that some girls think that if they produce a condom, boys will think that they are sex workers.
‘...shyness, women are very reserved...if they produce a condom, they think you will think they are sex workers’ *Male FGD*

**Difficult to use/Causes pain**

Respondents reported that female condoms are difficult to use and that where they are used, they cause pain. Because of this respondents said the most young women do not use female condoms. It must be pointed out that the issue of pain when using the female condom was in some cases not from experience but what they heard from other people who had ever used a female condom.

‘...the other reason is that women or girls do not know how to insert the condom and it pains IDI

‘.....the female condom is not liked by many because...it is difficult to put on but if it was easy many people could have like it......’ *FGD Two*

**Pressure from men**

Findings show that pressure from men is another barrier to female condom use. Respondents reported that some men prohibit their girl friends from using the female condom because it brings some mistrust in the relationship if a boyfriend finds you with the condoms.

‘...yes like we said earlier ....there is some suspicion of mistrust when your boyfriend find you that you are wearing a female condom....’ *FGD One*

The desire to have unprotected sex by young men was also mentioned as one of the barriers to female condom use. Some respondents mentioned that some men force them into unprotected sex because they claim not to enjoy sex with a condom.

‘Some young men say if you are going to use the female condom then you are not going to have sex.......they insist on unprotected sex....mmmh....and that makes you to accept not to use female condom.’ *FGD two*

‘Sometimes it men who discourage women from using female condoms...like saying you do not enjoy sex with condom....mmmh....so women are weak in thinking and they accept that..’ *FGD Two*

**Fear of losing a boyfriend**

Related to pressure from boyfriends as a reasons for not using female condom was the fear that they may lose their boyfriend. Respondents said that because they do not want to lose the boyfriend, they accept to have sex without a condom.

‘Others do not like the condom because....the male partners tells them if they love them they should not use condom during sex.......so most boys do not like to use condoms with their girlfriend in order to enjoy sex...’ *FGD One*
‘They fear to lose the relationship if their partner discover that they have used the female condom…….’ FGD Two

Fear of being laughed at
Findings also show that some young people do not use condoms for fear of being laughed at that they do not know sex. Respondents said that friends laugh at each that if you use a condom, you do not know how enjoyable unprotected (plain) sex is. Because of this, they prefer not to use the condom.

‘…… they will laugh at them that they do not know the enjoyment in plain sex.’ FGD One

‘They are shy that their friends will laugh at them that they do not know how to do sex…..(laughter)…….’ FGD One

What young men say about female condom
Respondents were asked to express their knowledge over what young men say about the female condom. Findings show that from what respondents said, young men do not like female condoms. They reported that young men think that girls who use female condoms are infected, untrustworthy and they do not love the boyfriend. Findings also show that some young men say decision over condoms use should be made by the person who made the proposition.

They don’t like using the female condom

‘Most young men do not like to use the female condom….mmmh….it is only a few who accepts to use them…..’ FGD One

‘Young men sometimes say…mmmh….if you are going to put on the condom and I also do that is nonsense it is better that it should only be me putting on the male condom……….how can you a woman put on condom…eh….it is only me (man) who is supposed to wear a condom and I have also the right to use or not use the condom…….’ FGD One

‘….some say a girl cannot use the female condom because she is not the one who made the proposal of the affair…. FGD Two

Male respondents also said that they do not like the female condom. One of the reasons given for not liking it was that it is scarce but also they said there hasn’t been enough civic
education on how to use the female condom. They also said that most people have not seen the female condom.

‘….aaaah the instructions on how to use the female condom….mmhh there have not been enough lessons…people just know that there is a female condom…but most of them have not seen it as my friend has just said it is difficult to access them.’ Male

FGD

They think you are infected
Respondents also said that some young men say that if they are using a female condom it means to them that you are infected.

‘….they say if you wear the female condom in advance….mmmh….it means you are suspecting yourself of STI….. if you are not suspecting of anything you could have worn it in his presence.’ FGD One

Access to Female Condoms
Respondents were asked to express their views regarding where they access condoms and provide suggestions over how they would prefer to access female condoms.

Not easy to access
Findings from this study show that female condoms are not easy to access and that few women use them. They also said if you have to access them you have to travel a long distance. They also said that places where they are accessible are not safe for because they fear of what people will say. They mentioned that female condoms are found in hair dressing saloons and the hospital.

‘….like in our area(Matindi) it is difficult to access them….you need to go to Lunzu township to access them…….’ FGD One

Shy to collect condoms
Respondents also reported general shyness by girls to collect condoms. The shyness was also related to places where condoms are accessed. Some of the places they mentioned included bars and hair dressing saloons.
‘Women are shy to collect them……and when those who come to encourage the use of Female condoms comes to take stock….mmmh…and they see that female condoms are not being taken……mmmh….they stop bringing in more stock…’  

**Fear of what others will say**

It also came out clear that the shyness was related to the fear of what other people will say about them. While distance was reported as a barrier, some places where female condoms can be accessed make them unable to collect condoms. They reported that they are shy to go and buy condoms in saloons where female condoms are sold, for fear of being gossiped at.

‘Even in saloons it is difficult to access them when you find women inside….mmmh….you fear that when you buy them they will start gossipping about you when you leave.’  

Respondents reported that sometimes female condoms are found in bars where they can also not go because it is not safe for them.

‘They are also find in bars…mmmh….and it is difficult to for a woman to go in a bar to buy .....mmmh….so they just stay without using them……’  

**Female condoms are not as common as male condom**

Findings show that female condoms are not as wide spread as the male condoms. In terms of access, respondents said that male condoms are found in a lot of places unlike the female condom.

‘...it is also not easy to access them here….because they have not spread much like male……condoms….so that is why they are scarce here….and most people say it is not important...’  

**Suggested ways of accessing Condoms**

Respondents were asked to express their views over how they would easily access condoms. Respondents reported that places such saloons, hospitals bars youth clubs and condom distribution agents are some of the potential places where they can access condoms.

**Hospital**

Respondents mentioned hospital because they said you can be provided with counseling on how to use the female condom. They also mentioned a private clinic (NGO) Banja La Mstogolo where they say you can easily access and be counseled on how to use.

‘At hospital because nurses are able to counsel you on how to use them…’
‘At Banja La Mtsoqolo .....mmmh...because they can give you counseling on how to use’ FGD One

Distribution agents
Respondents reported that use of distribution agents would be good because it would make girls more comfortable to deal with the distributor in person

‘Just to add if there could be a woman who can be going around homes....selling to women... .....mmmh..... I think most women will be comfortable to get them because there will be some .....privacy FGD One

Youth Clubs
Findings also show that Youth Clubs were a preferred source of female condoms. Respondents said that club chairpersons would be responsible for collection of female condoms on behalf of the club. Some respondents also said that through youth clubs, they would be told how to use the female condom. It should be pointed out that for all suggested distribution points, respondents mentioned an element of education on how to use the female condom.

‘I also think they should be accessed in youth clubs where we can ask the chairman or chairlady to go and collect the female condoms at hospital and should get instructions on how we can use them.... FGD Two

‘Youth organization ......because they are able to tell you how you can use them...like how you can put it on.....while at saloon you can just buy it without advising you how to use it....’ FGD Two

Toilets
Another view expressed regarding accessibility of female condoms was toilets. Respondents reported that toilets provide private space which can make them access the condoms easily.

‘In offices....because if you going in a toilet, you can go and collect no one will notice and you can go and use it.....nobody will know that such Miss has collected a condom in the toilet’ FGD Two

What they want to know about female condoms
Respondents were asked what they wanted to know about the female condom. Findings show that respondents had a number of things that they wanted to know about the female condom.
How it looks
Some respondents reported that they have never seen a female condom and wanted to know how it looks. Findings show that some young people had never seen the female condoms but had heard about it. Some said that they wanted to know how big the rings were because they just hear about them.

‘To me I have never seen the female condom….mmmh…so I would like to see it how it looks. Does it look like pants or like what…..?....(laughter)…… FGD One

‘I would like to know how big are the rings of the female condom…..’ FGD Two

How to put on a female condom
It came our prominent that most respondents both those who had ever seen it and those who had just heard about it wanted to know how to wear it. Respondents reported that some young girls do not use the female condom because they do not know how to use it.

‘I would like to know how to use the female condom…. most women or girls do not use them….mmmmh....because they do not know how to wear them….. IDI

My views are like .....we need to know how to use it ....sometimes we get it but we do not know how to put it on....we do not know which ring should go first or which one should remain outside....we really find it difficult to wear it......FGD One

‘What is needed is awareness campaign on how to use the female condom’ Male FGD

How long to wear it
While respondents wanted to know how to wear the female condom, they are also said they wanted to know for how long they should wear it before having sex and how many times they can use the female condom.

‘....also how many times can I use it in a day....’ FGD Two

‘How many times can I use it in a day....’ FGD Two

‘How to out in on’ Male FGD

Side effect
Some respondents said they would like to know if the female condom has any side effects.

‘What side effects does it gives’ FGD One

Male respondents mentioned that they would like to know if a woman feels comfortable after putting on a condom. They also wanted to know what she would do if she wanted to urinate.
‘….ok, it is worn 8 hours before sex……but does the woman feel comfortable with it the time she had worn it?’  Male FGD

‘…..also if she would like to pass urine, what happens to the condom?’ Male FGD

**It should not be scarce**

Most respondents expressed the view that the female condom should not be scarce as this would help some of them avoid pregnancy and finish school.

‘To me I think the female condom should not be scarce that most of us girls can finish school. FGD Two

**Conclusion**

Findings of this study show that the female condom is not very well known among young people especially boys. While some have heard about it, most of them seem not to have seen or used it. Findings also show that for those that have used it, they have had problems in using it. Some of the reasons for difficulty in using the condom include inadequate education on its use, unclear instructions on the packaging as well as scarcity of the condom.

This study has also revealed that there are myths and misconceptions that may act as barriers to female condom use. Myths such as the condom can get stuck in the vagina or can go into the stomach may make some potential users be discouraged and not want to use the female condom.

Female condoms are also not as readily available as the male condoms. Where they are found, they have been found in places which are not easily accessing by young people. This is because sometimes they are afraid of what people will say if they see them collecting or buying female condoms.

The view that young girls fear that their boyfriend will think that they are untrustworthy if they are found with condoms is another potential barrier to condom use. While most girls aired this view, some boys said the same but reported that this is what they girls think. It may be important to explore it further and establish whether boys also hold the similar view.

Lack of knowledge on the female condom, its unavailability as well as lack of civic education on how to use it seems to be another major barrier to condom use. The popularity and availability of the male condom seems to have overshadowed the female condom that in most
cases it is the male which is preferred. This is also reinforced by the view that young girls feel shy to go and buy condoms which in turns lives the decision to buy condoms to men. Because men prefer the male condom, girls are unable to use the female condom.

**Recommendations**

- There is need for scaling up civic education on the use of the female condom among both males and females. This should also include dispelling of myths and misconception about the female condoms.

- The female condoms need to be readily available in appropriate places where girls can easily access them. Use of youth clubs is one way that respondents to this study recommended.

- There is need for continued reference of male and female condom use in any situation where condom use is being discussed.

- Promotion of female condom must target both males and females and promote dialogue and discussion over use of both condoms.