

**THE “CONDOM CULTURE” MAKES A TRAGIC SITUATION WORSE:  
WHY CHASTITY AND FIDELITY ARE THE BEST STRATEGY AGAINST HIV/AIDS**

- Condoms can give people a false degree of confidence, leading them to have more partners than they might otherwise have had. A Ugandan study has shown that the purportedly protective effect of increased condom use was cancelled out by an increase in the number of sexual partners.<sup>1</sup>
- HIV incidence has been shown to rise, not fall, with increased condom use. In Cameroon, condom sales increased from 6 million to 15 million between 1992 and 2001, while the prevalence of HIV tripled, from 3% to 9%.<sup>2</sup>
- Changes in sexual behaviour have been shown to be more effective in reducing HIV transmission than condoms. Uganda has seen a 70% decline in HIV prevalence since the early 1990s, linked to a 60% reduction in casual sex.<sup>3</sup>
- Positive behaviour change is possible and achievable: “In Cameroon the percentage of young people having sex before the age of 15 has gone down from 35% to 14%.” (UN AIDS Press Release, July 29, 2008). A rise in sexual fidelity and a reduction in the number of sexual partners has been credited with the recent falls in HIV infection rates in Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe.
- Reducing the number of sexual partners a person has provides more protection against HIV than condom use.<sup>4</sup> As recognised by the Atlanta Centers for Disease Control, abstinence and fidelity are the most effective strategies against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).<sup>5</sup>
- An AIDS expert writing in the Washington Post cited a 2008 review in the journal *Science* which concluded that widespread and aggressive promotion of condoms had not produced any significant reduction in the number of new HIV infections in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>6</sup>
- Condoms lead to people making riskier sexual choices, including casual sex, in a mistaken belief that using a condom “compensates for” the risk.<sup>7</sup>
- Knowing about condoms is not sufficient to protect against HIV infection. Those who engage in risky sexual behaviour do not use condoms consistently or in a sustained manner.<sup>8</sup>
- Sexually transmitted infections (STI’s) have continued to increase despite an aggressive condom promotion strategy. This strategy has consistently failed to control STI rates in countries such as Canada, Sweden and Switzerland.<sup>9</sup>
- Data from Thailand and Cambodia suggests that behavioural changes, such as having fewer partners, less casual sex and less use of sex workers, has achieved lower rates of STIs.<sup>10</sup>

- A UNAIDS report has found that even when people use condoms consistently, the failure rate for protection from HIV is an estimated 10%.<sup>11</sup>
- The value of fidelity was dramatically highlighted in a February 2006 report in the journal *Science*. The HIV rate among eastern Zimbabwean men aged 17 to 29 fell by 23% between 1998 and 2003, and among women aged 15 to 24 it fell by 49%, as the percentage of sexually active men who reported a casual partner decreased by 49%.<sup>12</sup>
- The Catholic Church promotes chastity outside and within marriage. We believe every person has the capacity to be faithful and to reserve the gift of their sexuality to the person they marry. The sociological evidence cited above supports the truth that people can choose positive behavioural change and be chaste before marriage and faithful to their partner after marriage.
- Human sexuality is not purely biological, but profoundly emotional and personal. The human person is made for love and is worthy of love. Catholics believe that sexuality, through which a human being's belonging to the bodily and biological world is expressed, "becomes personal and truly human when it is integrated into the relationship of one person to another, in the complete and lifelong mutual gift of a man and a woman."<sup>13</sup>
- Sexual intercourse is the most complete and intimate way a man and a woman can unite and communicate, and is designed to express the unity and unconditional love of a man and a woman in marriage. In giving themselves to each other in sexual intercourse, a man and a woman express and renew, in a bodily way, their wedding vows. Sex between unmarried persons is incapable of this and reflects a profound incompatibility between the nature and quality of a couple's commitment and what they are saying with their bodies.

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<sup>1</sup> "In this study, gains in condom use seem to have been offset by increases in the number of sex partners." Kajubi, Phoebe; Kanya, Moses R MD; Kanya, Sarah; Chen, Sanny MHS; McFarland, Willi MD; Hearst, Norman MD, MPH. "Increasing Condom Use Without Reducing HIV Risk: Results of a Controlled Community Trial in Uganda," *JAIDS Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*: 1 Sept 2005, Vol 40, Issue 1, pp 77-82.

<sup>2</sup> Norman Hearts and Sanny Chen. "Condom promotion for AIDS prevention in the developing world: is it working?" *Studies in Family Planning*. March 2004. pp 39-47. Cited in Michael Cook, "African AIDS: the facts that demolish the myths", 21 March 2009, [www.mercatornet.com](http://www.mercatornet.com)

<sup>3</sup> "Uganda provides the clearest example that human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is preventable if populations are mobilized to avoid risk. Despite limited resources, Uganda has shown a 70% decline in HIV prevalence since the early 1990s, linked to a 60% reduction in casual sex. The response in Uganda appears to be distinctively associated with communication about acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) through social networks. Despite substantial condom use and promotion of biomedical approaches, other African countries have shown neither similar behavioral responses nor HIV prevalence declines of the same scale." Rand L. Stoneburner\* and Daniel Low-Beer, "Population-Level HIV Declines and Behavioral Risk Avoidance in Uganda," *Science* 30 April 2004: Vol. 304. no. 5671, pp. 714 – 718.

<sup>4</sup> "The public health benefit of condom promotion in settings with widespread heterosexual transmission, however, remains unestablished. In countries like Uganda that have curbed generalized epidemics, reducing

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the number of individuals' sex partners appears to have been more important than promoting the use of condoms". Norman Hearst and Sanny Chen. "Condom Promotion for AIDS Prevention in the Developing World: Is It Working?" *Studies in Family Planning*, March 2004.

<sup>5</sup> "Persons with several sex partners during a lifetime are more likely to acquire infection than persons with few sex partners during a lifetime. Thus, abstaining from sexual activity is the most effective way to prevent infection." *HPV Provider Survey: Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices About Genital HPV Infection and Related Conditions*. June 14, 2005. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/HPVProviderSurveyExecSum.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> "In a 2008 article in *Science* called "Reassessing HIV Prevention" 10 AIDS experts concluded that "consistent condom use has not reached a sufficiently high level, even after many years of widespread and often aggressive promotion, to produce a measurable slowing of new infections in the generalized epidemics of Sub-Saharan Africa. Let me quickly add that condom promotion has worked in countries such as Thailand and Cambodia, where most HIV is transmitted through commercial sex and where it has been possible to enforce a 100 percent condom use policy in brothels (but not outside of them). In theory, condom promotions ought to work everywhere. And intuitively, some condom use ought to be better than no use. But that's not what the research in Africa shows." *The Pope May Be Right*, by Edward C. Green, *Washington Post* Sunday, March 29, 2009; A15.

<sup>7</sup> "One reason is "risk compensation." That is, when people think they're made safe by using condoms at least some of the time, they actually engage in riskier sex. Another factor is that people seldom use condoms in steady relationships because doing so would imply a lack of trust. (And if condom use rates go up, it's possible we are seeing an increase of casual or commercial sex.)" *The Pope May Be Right* By Edward C. Green, *Washington Post* Sunday, March 29, 2009; A15.

<sup>8</sup> "In theory, condoms offer some protection against sexually transmitted infection; practically, however, epidemiological research repeatedly shows that condom familiarity and risk awareness do not result in sustained safer sex choices in real life. Only a minority of people engaging in risky sexual behaviour use condoms consistently". *BMJ* 2008;336:185 (26 January), Are condoms the answer to rising rates of non-HIV sexually transmitted infection? No, Stephen J Genuis, associate clinical professor.

<sup>9</sup> "The relentless rise of sexually transmitted infection in the face of unprecedented education about and promotion of condoms is testament to the lack of success of this approach. In numerous large studies, concerted efforts to promote use of condoms has consistently failed to control rates of sexually transmitted infection—even in countries with advanced sex education programs such as Canada, Sweden, and Switzerland. ...The ongoing assertion that condoms are "the" answer to this escalating pandemic reminds me of Einstein's words, "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." *BMJ* 2008;336:185 (26 January), "Are condoms the answer to rising rates of non-HIV sexually transmitted infection? No", Stephen J Genuis, associate clinical professor.

<sup>10</sup> "Reports of diminished rates of sexually transmitted infection as a result of widespread condom use in countries such as Thailand and Cambodia are reinforcing the focus on condoms as the primary strategy. Careful scrutiny of the data, however, suggests that changes in sexual behaviour (fewer partners, less casual sex, and less use of sex workers) after mass educational campaigns rather than widespread condom use by ordinary citizens was instrumental in reducing infection rates."<sup>2</sup> <sup>11</sup> *BMJ* 2008;336:185 (26 January), Are condoms the answer to rising rates of non-HIV sexually transmitted infection? No, Stephen J Genuis, *associate clinical professor*.

<sup>11</sup> "UN Report Adds to a Condom Debate: HIV Failure Rate Found to be 10%", John Donnelly, *Boston Globe*, 22 June 2003, A19.

<sup>12</sup> Simon Gregson et al, "HIV Decline Associated with Behavior Change in Eastern Zimbabwe", *Science*, 3 February 2006.

<sup>13</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2337 (St Pauls Publications, 1997).