

# Final Report: Qualitative Interviews with Mirena Users and their Partners in Kenya *Summary of Findings*

DECEMBER 2016





Building on a market assessment completed in 2015, FHI 360 conducted qualitative interviews in 2016 with Mirena clients and their male partners in Nairobi in partnership with Family Health Options Kenya (FHOK).

**Objective:** To examine attitudes regarding product-related attributes and acceptability, including the potential non-contraceptive benefits of the product.

Funding provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation through FHI 360's Contraceptive Technology Innovation Initiative

# Executive Summary (1 of 3)

**Background:** In 2015, FHI 360 and Marie Stopes International (MSI)/Marie Stopes Kenya (MSK) conducted a market assessment which explored the potential demand for a new, more affordable levonorgestrel intrauterine system (LNG-IUS) in Kenya and identified key considerations for successful introduction and scale-up. That assessment included an analysis of the current market for Mirena® in Kenya, as well as results from interviews with Key Opinion Leaders. Findings suggested that that introduction of a new, more affordable LNG-IUS could drive increased awareness, demand and uptake for the method.



## Executive Summary (2 of 3)

**Background continued:** In 2016, to complement the previous assessment and in partnership with FHOK, interviews were conducted with current and recent Mirena users as well as with a sub-set of their male partners.

Findings will be used by service delivery partners to help inform development of the demand creation and other communication strategies.



# Executive Summary (3 of 3)

## Key findings from the interviews included:

- Women's main reason for choosing Mirena as their family planning (FP) method was the perception that the method had less side effects than other FP methods. Other reasons were because it was a long-acting method, and because it was recommended by providers/friends.
- Almost all women currently using Mirena reported positive experiences; the majority said they would recommend it to a friend and will continue use of the method. The majority of men were also very positive about their partner's use of Mirena.
- Respondents felt the main barrier to broader use of Mirena in their communities was lack of knowledge about the method and the high price of existing products.



# Methodology

- Project Sites: Two Family Health Options Kenya (FHOK) clinics in and around Nairobi
- Project Design: Qualitative interviews (in-person and by phone)
- Project Population: Convenience sample of Mirena users/recent users (N=29), and a subset of their husbands/partners (N=9)



## Price Paid for Mirena and Demographics of Respondents

Mirena is currently only available in the private sector in Kenya and is sold at a high price; typically only high-income women have been able to access the method to date. Women interviewed reported paying from 4,000 to 20,000 KSH (US \$40-\$195) for the Mirena with the average price of 10,659 KSH (US \$104). Most women interviewed were educated professionals.

	Women (N=29)	Men (N=9)	Total (n=38)
<b>Age in years (average)</b>	38.3	38.7	38.4
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Single	1	0	1
Married	26	9	35
In Union/living together	1	0	1
Widowed	1	0	1
<b># Children (average)</b>	2.3	2	2.2
<b>Education</b>			
Completed primary	1	0	1
Some secondary	1	0	1
Completed secondary	3	0	3
<b>Post-secondary</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Occupation</b>			
<b>Professional/Technical/ Managerial</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>30</b>
Other	7	1	8
<b>Currently using Mirena</b>	23	6	29
<b>Removed Mirena</b>	6	3	9

# Previous Use of Family Planning Methods

Women (N=29)	
<b>Previous Use of FP Methods<sup>1</sup></b>	
<b>Condoms</b>	1
<b>Pills</b>	17
<b>Injectables</b>	7
<b>Implants</b>	6
<b>Copper IUCD</b>	8
<b>Other<sup>2</sup></b>	4
1. Not mutually exclusive	
2. Other includes herbal, natural method, counting days, and withdrawal	



## Desire for Future Children

More than half of the women reported using Mirena for limiting pregnancies, whereas two-thirds of the men viewed use of Mirena for spacing pregnancies.

	Women (N=29)	Men (N=9)	Total (n=38)
<b>Yes</b>	8	6	14
<b>No</b>	18	3	21
<b>Maybe</b>	3	0	3

# Reasons for Choosing Mirena

For this and all subsequent slides, **orange** text indicates most common answers provided by respondents.

**The most common reason why women opted for Mirena as their FP method was the perception that method had less side effects than other FP methods (N=12).** Specific side effects women wanted to avoid included weight gain and hormonal imbalances. Other reasons mentioned included:

- **Long-acting method**
- **Recommended by friends and providers**
- Desire for IUD but not “the coil” (i.e., the copper IUD)
- Highly effective method
- Hormones are localized
- Leads to reduced bleeding during periods
- Convenient (doesn’t require daily action)
- Safe method
- Recommended for health benefits (e.g., treatment for fibroids)

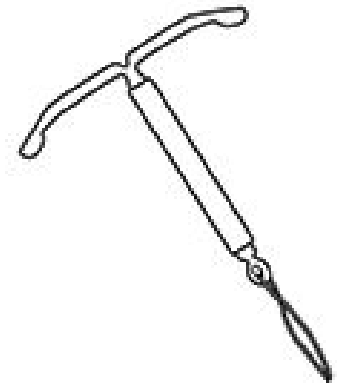
“

*Even though hormones are involved it is at a very minimal level.... It is something I don't have to pop into the mouth every day. And it is something that keeps me going for about 5 years then that made all the sense to me.*

”

- MIRENA USER

# Participants' Views on Mirena: Likes and Dislikes



Almost all women currently using Mirena reported positive experiences; majority said they would recommend to a friend and will continue use of the method.

## *LIKES*

- Convenience of method and not having to worry
- Did not experience any side effects
- Longevity of the method
- Reduced periods
- Not feeling the method
- Effective in preventing pregnancy

## *DISLIKES*

- Many women (n=16) did not have anything negative to say
  - Insertion procedure
  - Cost of the method
  - Feeling the string
  - Bleeding, cramping
- Note: 1 woman said she didn't like not having regular periods

“

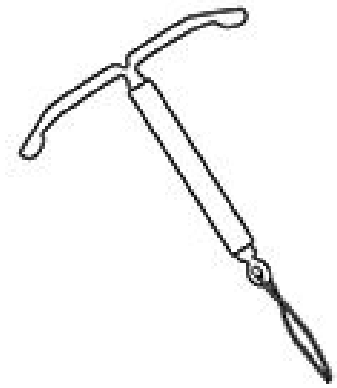
*“The spotting bit was the first few months. I liked [the method] because I didn’t have my periods and I didn’t have to stress about that.”*

*“It is 5 years. For all these 5 years I don’t have to worry about pregnancy. I have not heard anybody say it has failed. It empowers a woman.”*

*“I dislike the price and the fact that maybe the trained people to handle Mirena are not as many.”*

”

**-MIRENA USERS ON LIKES  
AND DISLIKES**



# Mens' Views on Mirena: Likes and Dislikes

**Almost all men were very positive about their partner's use of Mirena.**

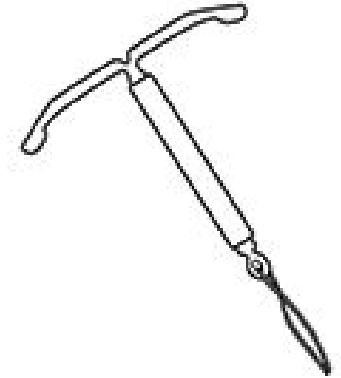
## *LIKES*

- **Partner did not experience any side effects**
- Flexibility of removing the method at any time
- Longevity of the method
- Not feeling the method

## *DISLIKES*

- **Some men (n=3) did not have anything negative to say**
- **Changes in partner's period**
- Cost of the method
- Infections
- Weight gain
- Discomfort during sex
- Hygiene issue due to location of method insertion

## *Mirena Users*

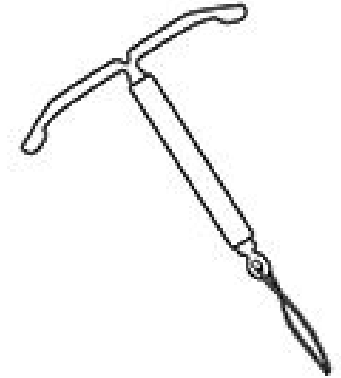


# Bleeding Changes with Mirena Use

**Most women mentioned experiencing some changes to their periods after using Mirena**

## **Bleeding changes mentioned included:**

- **Reduced periods (very light bleeding or spotting only)**
  - Irregular bleeding
  - Initial heavy bleeding then normal
  - Heavier bleeding
- Only 1 respondent indicated that she had no bleeding (amenorrhea)



## Attitudes Regarding Bleeding Changes with Mirena Use

**Women had mixed feelings about changes to their periods**

**Some of the attitudes mentioned were:**

- **Most women liked having reduced periods (lighter or spotting)**
- A few women did not like lighter periods
- One woman wanted and expected lighter periods with Mirena use but that did not happen
- The small number of women who had heavier or irregular periods with Mirena use did not like these changes



“

*My periods are reduced, almost completely gone...I actually just spot...so for me it is very convenient...I can still say I get my period every month, the only thing it is really reduced.*

”

**-MIRENA USER**

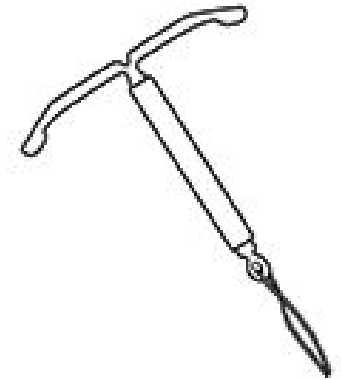
“

*The first 3 months I almost removed it. I bled and...I bled. But then we have a certain group, thanks to social media, I asked...and I was told it was normal so I held on for 3 months, the bleeding stopped and now it is pretty comfortable...it is not exactly regular but it is very light...I am happy with it.*

”

**-MIRENA USER**

## *Mirena Users*



# Recommending Mirena and Advice to Friends

**The majority of Mirena users would recommend this method to their friends (n=21).\***

**Reasons for recommending the method included:**

- **Lack of side effects**
- Method convenience
- Prevention of pregnancy

**\*However, several mentioned high cost as potential barrier to use.**

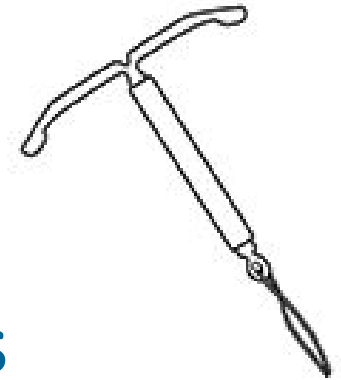
“

*“Yes I can but the price...you know not all people can afford, it is quite high. If possible they should make the price affordable, so each and everybody even the ones in the rural areas can be able to afford.”*

*“I talk of the minimal...almost zero side effects it has. I talk about the freedom it gives a woman in terms of menses.”*

”

**-MIRENA USERS ON  
RECOMMENDING THE  
METHOD**



## Women's Views on Community Awareness and Barriers to Use of Mirena

**Most women felt that awareness of the method is low (n=23)**

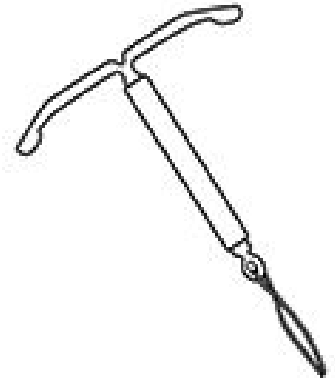
- **Commonly mentioned barriers to greater use were cost and myths and misconceptions (e.g., method causes cancer)**
- Other potential barriers that were mentioned were the insertion process, hearing about negative experiences with the method from current users, the fact that the method is hormonal, and religion (e.g., personal religious beliefs)

“

*I don't think many people know about Mirena...it is seriously not known. Actually other than the clinic I have...never heard people talk of Mirena...even if they would be aware, the price would...keep them off.*

”

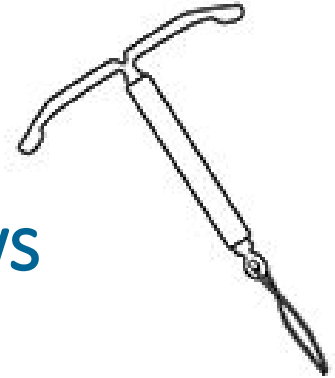
**-MIRENA USER**



## Men's Views on Community Awareness and Barriers to Use of Mirena

**Generally male partners did not think that community members were aware of the method, and this lack of knowledge about the method was perceived as the main barrier to its use.**

- Other potential barriers cited were myths and misconceptions about the method (e.g., causes infertility), and the cost of the method.



## Women's Perception of Community Views on Bleeding Changes with Mirena Use

**Almost half the women (n=14) perceived that women in their community would like possible changes in bleeding with Mirena use, others reported mixed feelings, and a few (n=5) said that women in their community would not like these changes.**

### **Perceived reasons other women would like changes:**

- Not having to pay for sanitary pads
- Not having to deal with wearing pads
- Lack of heavy bleeding
- No cramping

### **Perceived reasons other women would not like changes:**

- Interfering with the natural way of things
- Worrying about being pregnant
- Fear of infertility



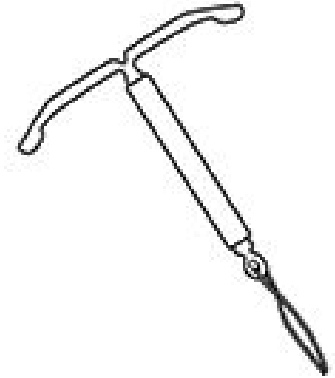
“

*“Who won’t want to not have their periods, who enjoys to go and buy tampons and pads...When I don’t have the periods I will be having a nice time intimately with my husband...Now for a student who has cost issues attached to that maybe in campus or high school... not having periods eliminates not having a budget for buying pads and all that.”*

*“Some women would like that and some women don’t like that because, some women believe that when you don’t bleed you are not fertile... you become infertile .”*

”

**-MIRENA USERS ON  
COMMUNITY  
PERCEPTIONS OF  
BLEEDING CHANGES**



## Perceived Community Attitudes about Mirena and Potential to reduce Anemia

**Almost all women (n=27) agreed that the potential benefit Mirena provides in reducing anemia would be accepted and valued, and seen as a positive benefit.**

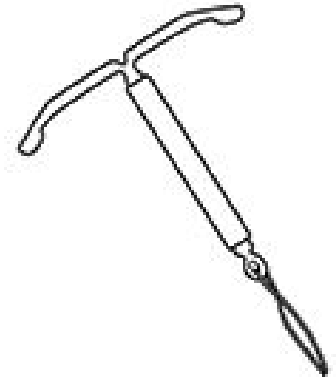
**All male partners (n=9) agreed that community members would be interested in using a contraceptive method that could potentially help with anemia.**

“

*It has really helped my sister. She used to get anemic...Mirena has helped boost her blood...she will remain with her doctor who is doing...Mirena.*

”

**-MIRENA USER**



## Perceived Community Interest if a More Affordable LNG-IUS was Introduced

**The large majority of women interviewed believed that women in their community would be interested if a more affordable version of the Mirena product was introduced, from both a financial and method-benefits standpoint (n=27).**

- Women felt if more people could afford the method, then more people would be using it because of the benefits it provides such as longevity of the method, the lack of side effects, minimal bleeding, and pregnancy prevention.

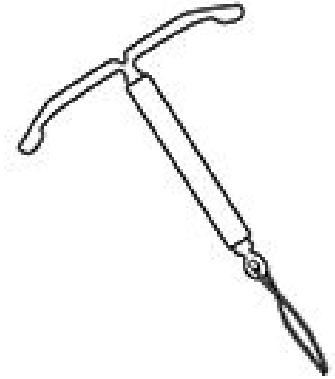
**Most men agreed there would be more interest in the product if it was more affordable and if people had more knowledge about the method (n=7).**

“

*Definitely they will go for it...The public sector has subsidized services, compared to the private sector. So essentially if people are buying from the public sector, the cost of the product will go down and there will be more expertise to offer this service.*

”

**-MIRENA USER**



## Suggestions for Marketing a New LNG-IUS Product

**Women frequently mentioned health facilities and clinics, and mass media (TV, radio, newspapers) as possible places to promote a new LNG IUS product.**

- Other suggestions included social media, religious institutions, and community outreach.

**Almost all men mentioned media, including TV, radio, billboards, magazines, and the internet as strategies for promoting a new LNG IUS product.**

“

*Of course billboards and...TV, but I think the one that would touch people more is community outreach because there people can talk and ask questions and they can be explained for that these things are not bad.*

”

**-MIRENA USER**

# Kenya: What's next?

- Results are being shared with service delivery partners to help inform development of the demand creation and/or communication strategies.
- ICA Foundation product is registered in Kenya; MSI is seeking registration of Medicines360 product (Avibela).
- Based on this and additional market research, MSK is refining the launch strategy following development of initial draft in 2016.





# Project team

Sarah Mercer

Rose Masaba

Geeta Nanda

Rose Ngahu

Kate Rademacher

Amos Simpano

Marsden Solomon

Markus Steiner

Eunice Were

James Wawire