WOMEN’S CONTROL OF THEIR LIVES

For women, a key element of empowerment is gaining greater control over the circumstances of their lives. Only when women fully recognize and exercise their right to shape their own lives can they achieve gender equality. Demographic and Health Surveys collected data on aspects of women’s control in their own lives in 46 countries during the years 2000-2012.

Control of Household Decisions

In only 12 of 43 countries do more than 51% of currently married women participate in household decisions, such as major household purchases, the woman’s own health care, and visits to the woman’s family or relatives.

Control of Income

At least 90% of currently married women who earn cash have a say in how their own cash earnings are used in 29 of 46 countries.

Control of their Bodies

Currently married women’s levels of unmet need for family planning range from 7% in Vietnam to 37% in Haiti. Unmet need is defined as the percent of women who want to avoid pregnancy but are not currently using a contraceptive method.

Less than ¼ of currently married women use modern contraception in 37 of 46 countries.

In 19 of 30 countries, less than 3 of 4 currently married women can refuse sex with their husband.

Less than 75% of married women say they can ask their husbands to use a condom in 22 of 30 countries.