

Opinions on the use of the female condoms by Malawian women

Have Malawian women embraced the female condom? by Thengo Kavinya

A female condom (also known as a femidom) is a device that is used during sexual intercourse as a barrier contraceptive and to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs—such as gonorrhoea, syphilis, and HIV) and unintended pregnancy. Invented by Danish MD Lasse Hessel, it is worn internally by the female partner and provides a physical barrier to prevent exposure to ejaculated semen or other body fluids. Female condoms can be used by the receptive partner during anal sex.

In Malawi the female condom was launched in 2008 amid high hopes that it would empower women to have more control in their sexual relationships and better protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancies but usage has remained relatively low.

A situation analysis of magnitude, behavioral patterns, contributing factors, current interventions and impact of sex work in HIV prevention in Malawi has revealed the low utilization of female condoms among sex workers. This study was commissioned by the Family Planning Association of Malawi (FPAM) with funding from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Most women have revealed that they shun female condoms because they are not user friendly. They even stressed that for an illiterate woman to follow all the instructions on female condoms it's so tiresome. They also alluded to the fact that in villages it was difficult to access such condoms.

MMJ did some research on why most women are not embracing the sheath and this is what they had to say.....

Ivy Kalumikiza
Cleaner
“Fellow women have told me that the female condom causes cancer; others fear it can easily burst and cause irreparable health problems in the womb. But if you look at all this, you know that these are lies, and that these women just need right information.”

Chifundo Kamingo
Student
“I think there is lack of knowledge among fellow women on the goodness of using the condom, women need to be empowered to increase uptake.”

Miriam Zingeni
Hairdresser
Most of my friends have complained that the female condom is laborious as well noisy during sexual intercourse. unwieldy and is like a plastic bag, so I dont desire to use it.

Josphine Maoni
Businesswoman
Most of us feel like condoms are meant for prostitutes. So we usually find it hard to tell our partners to use condoms let alone use the female one because we feel they will lose their trust on us. “Women think marriage is a safe haven,they think that when you're married, you don't have to worry about HIV.”

Anne Mula
Guard
We do not understand how to insert the female condom and worry that the product will get stuck or lost inside our bodies. My friends have stopped using it because they find initial insertion and use uncomfortable.

Mercy Kaliphysa
Shop attendant
Firstly it is difficult to introduce the female condom in married situations due to the stigma associated with condoms in general. The general belief is that male condoms are generally for disease prevention and are commonly viewed as symbols of infidelity and uncleanliness therefore female condoms run the similar stigmatization

Grace Phiri
Civil Servant
In my view this product to be accepted and used by women, there is also need to involve men. There is need to civic educate men on the advantages of female condoms otherwise we women alone cannot convince a man on this let alone you might be regarded as a prostitute to your partner.