HEALTH | Keeping HIV at bay

Fear leads to

low female

condom use

Myths make women

shun the female

condom, leading to

the high HIV/Aids prevalence

rate among them.

For every 100 male condoms

the government distributed,

only one female one was, despite

a higher HIV prevalence

rate among women, a government

agency said yesterday.

Figures from the National

Aids and STI Control Programme

indicated 175,937,418

male condoms were used in

2012 compared to the 1,714,600

female condoms distributed in

the same period.

Dr George Githuka of Mostat-

Risk Population, an HIV

programme at Nascop, said

women are disproportionately

affected by HIV as statistics

show their HIV prevalence at

6.9 per cent against men’s 4.4

per cent.

“It’s time women took leadership

in protecting themselves

against HIV,” he said during

the marking of the 2nd Global

Female Condoms Day in

Nairobi.

**Poor comparison**

“Women ask themselves

what it would portray of them if

they had it. They say men may

think they are promiscuous if

they carry it and initiate the use

of it,” Dr Githuka said.

He also noted that the cost

of a female condom, at Sh52, is

higher than the male one.

In his presentation, Technical

Advisor, Behaviour Chance

Communication at Nascop

Japheth Nyambane said that

the poor comparison in condom

use is a result of the low

number of female condoms the

country procures.

The Nascop study also found

that of all those who should

use a condom, such as female

sex workers and discordant

couples, only 49 per cent are

protecting themselves from

sexually transmitted infections

and unplanned pregnancies.

“When condoms are used

correctly and consistently, they

are up to 95 per cent effective

in reducing the risk of HIV (and

other STIs) transmission and

unintended pregnancies,” Mr

Nyambane said.

**Reduce the cost**

The government, he said,

had made an effort in making

available second generation

female condoms made of

synthetic nitrile, making them

more comfortable than the first

generation ones.

National Aids Control Council

director Alloys Orago asked

the government to reduce the

cost of female condoms so that

they are more readily available

to users.

Women believe

carrying a condom

and initiating its use

portrays them as

promiscuous

100

**Number of male condoms**

**used last year for**

**every female one**

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risk of HIV”

**Nascop Technical**

**Advisor Japheth**

**Nyambane**