

# Family Planning and Reproductive Health



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## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

**An estimated 225 million women in developing countries want to avoid pregnancy and have an unmet need for effective, modern contraceptives.<sup>1</sup>**

**Despite progress, in 2015 303,000 women died from pregnancy and childbirth, including from unsafe abortions.** Most of these deaths were preventable, and 99% occurred in developing countries.<sup>2</sup>

**Enabling women, youth, and couples to prevent unintended and high-risk pregnancies through increased use of contraception, will decrease child and maternal deaths** by an estimated 25% and 30%, respectively.<sup>3</sup>

**For the 1.8 billion adolescents and youth worldwide, the largest generation ever, access to reproductive health services, including comprehensive sex education and contraception is critical** to ensure they have the tools to remain healthy, continue their education, and develop skills to build more peaceful and prosperous communities.<sup>4</sup>

**Investments in family planning and reproductive health (FP/RH) are essential to advancing gender equity and achieving U.S. global health goals,** including ending preventable child and maternal deaths and achieving an AIDS-free generation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONGRESS

**Ensure robust funding for international FP/RH programs, including the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in annual appropriations bills.** The U.S.'s fair share of addressing the unmet need for modern contraceptives is \$1.178 billion.<sup>5</sup>

**Repeal the Helms Amendment.** The Helms Amendment prohibits U.S. foreign assistance funds for abortion "as a method of family planning." For over 40 years, the amendment has been incorrectly implemented as a total ban on foreign aid funding for abortion, including cases where a woman experiences rape, incest, or a life-threatening pregnancy. Its repeal would allow U.S.-funded groups to provide lifesaving services to address unsafe abortion, a major cause of maternal mortality and morbidity in developing countries.

**Support permanent legislative repeal of the Global Gag Rule, also known as the Mexico City Policy.** The gag rule denies foreign organizations receiving U.S. global health assistance the right to use their non-U.S. funds to provide legal abortion services, counseling, or referrals, or to advocate for the reform of restrictive abortion laws in their own country. Attempts to legislatively reinstate the gag rule should be rejected on multiple grounds: it impedes women's access to family planning by cutting off funding for often the most experienced health care providers; it interferes with the doctor-patient relationship by restricting accurate provision of information by providers; and it restricts local citizens' freedom of speech.

**Increase funding for contraceptive research and development (R&D).** Biomedical research is needed to refine existing contraceptive methods to make them more acceptable, affordable, and accessible, and to develop new methods that better meet the needs of women, including the development of multipurpose prevention technologies that simultaneously prevent unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV.

## WHY THIS INVESTMENT IS IMPORTANT

The U.S. is a global leader in family planning services and is currently the largest bilateral donor globally. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has funded FP/RH programs for over 50 years and currently supports programs in more than 45 countries. In FY2016, the U.S. invested \$607.5 million in international FP/RH, including \$32.5 million for UNFPA. These investments have a real impact and made it possible to achieve the following:

27 million women and couples receive contraceptive services.

6 million unintended pregnancies are averted.

2.3 million induced abortions are averted (2 million of them unsafe).

11,000 maternal deaths are averted.<sup>6</sup>

Addressing the demand for access to reproductive health services – including through the provision of a full range of effective contraceptive methods and accurate information about sexual and reproductive health and rights – will improve maternal and child health, reduce unintended pregnancies, lower HIV infection rates, promote women’s rights and empowerment, expand women’s and girls’ opportunities for education, raise standards of living, and support more sustainable development.

Integration of FP/RH information and services with other health and development programming – including those that advance

gender equality and women’s empowerment and prevent and mitigate the negative impacts of child-, early-, and forced marriage; early pregnancy; and gender-based violence – ensures progress on a wide range of goals shared by the U.S. and international community.

In order to meet these 21st century challenges, the United States should increase investment in international FP/RH programs. These programs are also cost-effective: every additional \$1 invested in contraception saves \$1.47 in pregnancy-related care.<sup>7</sup>

### FOR EVERY INCREASE OF \$10 MILLION IN U.S. INTERNATIONAL FP/RH ASSISTANCE, THE FOLLOWING WOULD RESULT:

440,000

440,000 MORE WOMEN AND COUPLES WOULD RECEIVE CONTRACEPTIVE SERVICES AND SUPPLIES.

95,000

95,000 FEWER UNINTENDED PREGNANCIES, INCLUDING 44,000 FEWER UNPLANNED BIRTHS, WOULD OCCUR.

38,000

38,000 FEWER ABORTIONS WOULD TAKE PLACE (OF WHICH 30,000 WOULD HAVE BEEN UNSAFE).

200

200 FEWER MATERNAL DEATHS WOULD OCCUR.<sup>8</sup>

### Resources

Adding It Up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health 2014 <http://bit.ly/1yqUok7>

Just the Numbers: The Impact of U.S. International Family Planning Assistance <http://bit.ly/1qPvTfT>

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### Citations

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2. "Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2015." <http://bit.ly/1S3zu11>.
3. Cleland J. et al., (2012) Contraception and health. *The Lancet* 380, 149-156.
4. "State of World Population 2014: The Power of 1.8 Billion Adolescents, Youth and the Transformation of the Future." <http://bit.ly/2b4BKJg>.
5. "Adding It Up."
6. "Just the Numbers: The Impact of U.S. International Family Planning Assistance." <http://bit.ly/1qPvTfT>.
7. "Adding It Up."
8. "Just the Numbers."