

Family Planning and Reproductive Health

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.¹
- 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.²
- 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.³
- 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 ensuring they have the tools to remain healthy, continue their education, and develop skills to build more peaceful and prosperous communities.⁴
- 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.' fair share of addressing the unmet need for modern contraceptives is \$1.178 billion.⁵
- **Block the reinstatement of the Global Gag Rule and support its permanent legislative repeal:** The gag rule denies foreign organizations receiving U.S. FP/RH assistance the right to use their non-U.S. funds to provide legal abortion services, counseling, or referrals, or 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 restricts the freedom of speech of local citizens.
- **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 is this investment 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 FY 2016, 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); and
- 11,000 maternal deaths are averted.⁶

Addressing the demand for access to sexual and 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 girl's 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 which aim to 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.

To meet these 21st century challenges, the United States should be increasing 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.⁷

For every increase of \$10 million in U.S. international FP/RH assistance:

- 440,000 more women and couples would receive contraceptive services and supplies;
- 95,000 fewer unintended pregnancies, including 50,000 fewer unplanned births, would occur;
- 38,000 fewer abortions would take place (of which 40,000 would have been unsafe); and
- 200 fewer maternal deaths would occur.⁸

Endorsing Organizations:



Contact Information:

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¹ "Adding It Up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health 2014," Guttmacher Institute and UNFPA, December 2014. <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/AddingItUp2014.pdf>.

² "Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2015," WHO, 2015. http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/193994/1/WHO_RHR_15.23_eng.pdf.

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" UNFPA, 2014. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/EN-SWOP14-Report_FINAL-web.pdf.

⁵ Adding It Up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health 2014," Guttmacher Institute and UNFPA, December 2014. <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/AddingItUp2014.pdf>.

⁶ "Just the Numbers: The Impact of U.S. International Family Planning Assistance," Guttmacher Institute, May 2016. <https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2016/05/just-numbers-impact-us-international-family-planning-assistance>.

⁷ "Adding It Up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health 2014," Guttmacher Institute and UNFPA, December 2014. <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/AddingItUp2014.pdf>.

⁸ "Just the Numbers: The Impact of U.S. International Family Planning Assistance," Guttmacher Institute, May 2016. <https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2016/05/just-numbers-impact-us-international-family-planning-assistance>.