



FEMINIST MAJORITY FOUNDATION

## CHOICES CAMPUS LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

WORLD'S LARGEST PRO-CHOICE STUDENT NETWORK

# GLOBAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH & RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

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## ONE WOMAN DIES EVERY TWO MINUTES FROM PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH...

Maternal mortality is the second leading cause of death for women of reproductive age, yet at least 225 million women around the world who wish to either delay or prevent pregnancy lack access to modern contraceptives. Women and girls around the world face numerous barriers to accessing basic contraception and family planning services, and basic maternal healthcare, resulting in hundreds of thousands of women dying needlessly each year.

### WHAT IT MEANS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS WORLDWIDE

- Every day, nearly 800 women die from complications in pregnancy and childbirth. In 2014, an estimated 290,000 women died - and 10 million more suffered from injury, infection or disease - during pregnancy and childbirth.
- Almost all maternal deaths – 99% – occur in the developing world. More than half occur in Sub-Saharan Africa and almost one third in South Asia.
- Of the 290,000 maternal deaths each year, about 47,000 result from unsafe, often illegal, abortion. Almost all of these deaths occur in the developing world.
- 16 million girls worldwide between 15 and 19 and 1 million girls under 15 give birth every year. Most of these girls have limited access to healthcare services.
- Around 3 million unsafe abortions are performed on girls 15 to 19 years old every year. These young girls are also more at risk for maternal death and obstetric fistula because of physical immaturity. Complications from pregnancy and childbirth are the second leading cause of death for these girls globally.

## MATERNAL DEATH AND INJURY IS PREVENTABLE

The 225 million women with an unmet need for modern contraceptives account for 81% of unintended pregnancies in developing regions. Improved access to quality healthcare services, including safe and effective modern contraceptives, could prevent millions of unintended pregnancies, saving tens of thousands of women's lives.

Women who become pregnant also need quality maternal health services. Most maternal deaths result from complications that can be prevented or managed – such as severe bleeding, infections, high blood pressure, and obstructed or prolonged labor. Yet each year, more than two-thirds of women who experience these complications do not receive necessary care.

## THE SOLUTION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IS EMPOWERMENT

Women and girls must be equipped with the services, knowledge, and ability to make healthy decisions about their own lives.

- **Access to Contraceptives:** If we met the need for modern contraceptives in developing countries, unintended pregnancies would drop by 70% and unsafe abortion rates would decline by 74%, saving some 70,000 women's lives each year.
- **Access to Reproductive Health Services:** Of the 125 million women and girls who give birth each year, about 54 million are not able to make the minimum recommendation of four antenatal visits, and about 43 million do not give birth in a health facility. Many more do not receive adequate postnatal care, resulting in potentially fatal, yet preventable, health complications.



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If we met the need for maternal care and the need for modern contraception, maternal deaths would decline roughly 67%, from 290,000 deaths per year to 96,000.

- **Access to Education:** Education raises the status of girls and women in their families and communities and gives them agency in making decisions about their lives. Girls who are able to access education are less likely to be victims of child marriage, are better able to avoid pregnancy, and are less likely to live in poverty. 95% of births to adolescents occur in developing countries, and 9 in 10 of those occur within marriage or a union. Preventing child marriage and ensuring girls' education is key to advancing women's health and gender equality.

### **FAMILY PLANNING IS A HUMAN RIGHT**

Access to safe, voluntary family planning is a human right that saves lives and promotes women's empowerment. Deciding if and when to marry is also a basic right recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But forced child and adolescent marriage that compromises girls' ability to obtain an education, and increases their risk of violence and HIV/AIDS, is a reality in too many countries. It is vital that the US support family planning and reproductive health programs along with initiatives that advance the status of women and girls throughout the world.

### **PROMISES MADE TO WOMEN AND GIRLS**

At the 1994 International Conference on Population & Development (ICPD), 179 countries agreed to provide universal access to education and reproductive health services by 2015.

One year later, governments committed to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The Platform

for Action represents promises made to improve the lives of women worldwide, including through access to safe, effective family planning information and services.

In 2000, the international community established the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of 8 development goals to achieve by 2015. MDG 5 sets out the goal to improve maternal health by reducing the maternal mortality rate by three-quarters and achieving universal access to reproductive health and family planning. While MDG 5 has not been achieved, maternal mortality has declined by 45% since 1990. The UN is currently working to build on the MDGs with a post-2015 development agenda that UN Member States are expected to adopt at the Special Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2015.

### **UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO FAMILY PLANNING**

The estimated cost of meeting one hundred percent of the need for family planning in the developing world is \$9.4 billion. This estimate includes contraceptive supplies, health worker salaries, and program and systems costs – and it is \$5.3 billion more than what is currently spent. Advocates estimate that the US fair share of this cost is at minimum \$1 billion. The Feminist Majority has taken the position that this request is too low and should be a minimum of \$2 billion.

### **US INVESTMENTS IN INTERNATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING**

The US is a leading donor to international family planning and reproductive health programs. Congress, however, must vote annual to appropriate this funding. Although funding for international family planning has increased since Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 – the last fiscal year of the GW Bush Administration – it has never reached the level necessary to achieve universal access.



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Funding between FY 2008 -2015 peaked in FY 2010 when Congress appropriated \$648.4 million – \$55.4 million more than President Obama requested that year. The political climate then changed, and faced with a hostile House, Congress slashed funding for FY 2011 to \$615 million – despite the President’s request for \$716 million. In FY 2012, President Obama once again requested additional funding – \$769 million – but after House opposition, Congress appropriated only \$610 million. Funding levels have remained stagnant ever since.

Included in the \$610 million international family planning funding is \$35 million for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), a decrease from a high of \$55 million in FY 2010. The UNFPA is the leading UN agency working for reproductive health. According to UNFPA, the number-and-rate of women dying from complications during pregnancy and childbirth has been cut in half since it began work in 1969. Importantly, however, during the last 7 years of the GW Bush Administration, funding for UNFPA was totally withheld. Funding was restored in FY 2009 under the Obama Administration, but House opposition continued, and later, the House voted to prohibit all funding to UNFPA for FY 2011. The House and Senate later compromised on \$40 million, which was subsequently decreased to \$35 million.

President Obama has requested \$612.6 million for international family planning and reproductive health programs in FY 2016, including \$35 million for UNFPA. This request is only \$2.6 million higher than the currently appropriated funding level and is \$31.7 million less than what the President requested for FY 2015. It is also \$387.4 million less than the minimum \$1 billion US fair share of funding to achieve universal access.

### HOPES YET TO BE REALIZED

- Providing universal access for family planning and reproductive healthcare will not only reduce maternal mortality, it will help to reduce infant mortality, increase gender equity, strengthen national economies, and promote environmental sustainability.
- Investing in family planning saves on other healthcare costs. Every additional dollar invested in meeting the need for contraception, brings \$1.47 in savings on pregnancy related-care, including HIV care for women and newborns. Family planning also reduces other development costs in education, healthcare, water, and sanitation.
- Increasing access to family planning will lower the incidence of unsafe abortion, but it will not eliminate the need for safe abortion services. Currently, some 20 million unsafe abortions are performed each year, resulting in tens of thousands of deaths and leaving

### US FAMILY PLANNING ASSISTANCE, FY 2008 - 2015

Family planning/reproductive health budget; millions of current \$

|               | 2008  | 2009  | 2010  | 2011  | 2012  | 2013  | 2014  | 2015  |
|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Bilateral Aid | 457.2 | 522.4 | 593.4 | 575.0 | 575.0 | 575.0 | 575.0 | 575.0 |
| UNFPA         | 0.0   | 50.0  | 55.0  | 40.0  | 35.0  | 35.0  | 35.0  | 35.0  |
| Total         | 457.2 | 572.4 | 648.4 | 615.0 | 610.0 | 610.0 | 610.0 | 610.0 |



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many women and girls permanently injured. Providing safe abortion services is integral to women's healthcare worldwide. Natural and wartime disasters leave women and girls especially vulnerable to sexual violence, making access to safe abortion services especially crucial in these situations.

## TAKING ACTION

### WHAT THE US MUST DO

- The US must increase funding for international family planning and reproductive health. Meeting the need for modern contraception alone would result in 52 million fewer unintended pregnancies and 21 million fewer unplanned births, while saving tens of thousands of women's lives. Meeting the need for family planning services and increased maternal care saves hundreds of thousands of women's lives.
- President Obama must take immediate executive action to help provide safe abortion in cases of rape, incest, or life endangerment by correcting a misinterpretation of the Helms Amendment, which is preventing foreign aid programs in the developing world that receive US funding from providing abortion services. The Helms Amendment prevents foreign assistance funds from being used to "pay for the performance of abortion as a method of family planning," but it does not prevent funding of abortion in cases of rape, incest, or life endangerment. The Helms Amendment is dangerous for women and should be repealed entirely, but the President can act now to help provide life-saving care to women globally.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Call on your Senators and Representatives to support increased US funding of global family planning and reproductive health programs.
- Call on the President to take executive action to correct the misinterpretation of the Helms Amendment and help provide desperately needed safe abortion services in cases of life endangerment, rape, and incest.
- Host a film screening (e.g., Difret, Not Yet Rain, Walk to the Beautiful) to educate others on the need to empower women and girls and respect sexual and reproductive health and rights globally.
- Organize a speakOUT or a die-in representing the needless deaths of women and girls.