

ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON POPULATION, DEVELOPMENT AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH



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FUNDING

Canada Supports the Fight Against Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The Canadian International Development Agency will contribute Canadian\$15 million over 4 years to the UNFPA project against sexual violence. It will provide direct services to 15,000 victims of sexual violence. The project will work with other international agencies, NGOs and the DRC transitional Government to address this systemic problem that plagues the region.

Norway Supports International Abortion Fund, Distances itself from Bush Policies

Norway will support the global safe abortion fund with at least US\$1.5 million a year which has been set up by the IPPF.

Norway also disagrees with US President Bush's policy of withholding economic support to international organizations that promote safe abortion through information or services.

Britain has already pledged to support the fund with an initial £3 million.

US Government Agrees to Stop Funding Nationwide Abstinence Programme

An agreement to stop funding the Silver Ring, a US nationwide programme that promotes teen abstinence with US taxpayer money, was reached between the US Department of Health and Human Services and the American Civil Liberties Union.

The programme will not be eligible for any more funding unless it ensures the money won't be used for religious purposes.

It has been said: *"Public funds were being used to fund a road show, really, to convert teens to Christianity."*

HIV/AIDS Conference Calls for Faster Microbicide Development

At the closing of an international AIDS conference in South Africa, AIDS experts called upon political and pharmaceutical industry leaders to fund development of microbicides.

Peter Piot, head of UNAIDS, said, *"I don't know of any other technology which would make such a difference to this pandemic as microbicides."*

USAID Stops Aid to Successful Indonesian Family Planning Group

Indonesia's National Family Planning Coordinating Board has been so successful at improving maternal and infant health and lowering the country's birthrate that USAID will discontinue financial aid in September 2006.

Australia Government's International Aid Policy.

The new White Paper on the Australian Government's Overseas Aid Programme sets out the broad objectives for aid. Of particular interest to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights advocates is the increased investment in maternal, sexual and reproductive health services and a re-affirmation of gender equality as a core value of the aid programme

LEGISLATION/POLICY

Colombia Court Eases Abortion Ban

Colombia's constitutional court has voted to partially legalise abortion.

The court decided to permit terminations in cases of rape, incest or if the life of the mother or foetus is in danger.

The issue has long been the subject of debate in the majority Roman Catholic country, whose president, Alvaro Uribe, had warned against easing the ban.

The ruling, by a majority of 5-3, brings Colombia into line with most of its Latin American neighbours

EU Presidency and SRHR

Under the UK EU Presidency, the EU produced an agreed statement, on December 1st 2005, on the importance of prevention in HIV and AIDS programmes and policies. This emphasised the role of Sexual and Reproductive Health services and

women's and men's sexual and reproductive rights.

The UK is now trying to get commitments for Sexual and Reproductive Health services and supplies as part of the international commitments to Universal Access.

The Partnership on Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health



The UK is involved in the new Partnership on Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health, which was established in September 2005.

The partnership marks a milestone in an intensive and growing global focus on the health of women and children.

While some countries have made progress, at current rates the world is not on track to achieve the 2015 Millennium Development Goals for maternal and child health. Each year, more than half a million women die in pregnancy or childbirth and nearly 11 million young children die, most of preventable causes.

India Issues First Jail Term in Female Feticide Law

Twelve years after inaction of the Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Act to check female feticide, an Indian court has sentenced a doctor to two years in prison for using ultrasound tests to determine the sex of fetuses. It was the first conviction under the law.

UN Commission on Population and Development

The UN Commission on Population and Development meeting in New York in March discussed the condition of millions of migrants worldwide in preparation for a UN General Assembly meeting on migration in September.

Ms Obaid, UNFPA Executive Director said: *"Perhaps more than any other issue, international migration puts into stark relief the enormous social, political, economic and cultural transformations now occurring in a world divided between excess and need," and "brain drain" of health workers from poor to rich nations requires urgent responses from the international community. "Many developing countries, especially in Africa, are*

experiencing more severe shortages of doctors, nurses and other health workers,"

The UN released a report, "World Population Monitoring," that said 1/3 of all migrants are concentrated in 28 countries, with 61% residing in developed countries, including the United States, Germany, France and Australia.

HUMAN RIGHTS

International Women's Day

Women around the world celebrated International Women's Day in March and its theme, "Women in Decision-Making: From Politics to the Private Sector," with marches, protests and workshops. Issues topping the IWD agenda were the struggle to de-legitimize violence against women in the developing world, and to protect abortion rights in countries with more established gender equality, especially the US and countries such as Poland and Italy.

Extracts and facts from the HoL's Women's debate March 2006

"I remember them saying, "Burn your bras"? A lot of our women in factories said to me, "Brenda, if we burn our bras there'll be an increase in industrial accidents in this factory";

45% of Liberal Democrat MEPs are women, compared with 33% for Labour and 8% for the Conservatives;

Almost half of all adult women in England and Wales have experienced at least 1 incident of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking;

In 2003, domestic violence alone accounted for a quarter of all violent crime;

In England and Wales, the rate of conviction for rape, with some guilty pleas, has decreased from 32% of cases reported in 1977 to 5.3% in 2003 and 2004;

More than 75% of 11 and 12-year-old boys thought that women should get hit if they make men angry;

Women between the ages of 20 and 45 who experience rape or sexual assault are most commonly assaulted by a current partner or ex-partner;

30% of pregnant women in the UK have experienced domestic violence while pregnant;

A woman is killed every two or three days as a result of domestic violence;

Women are on average beaten more than 30 times before they go to the police;

Domestic violence costs our economy about £23 billion a year;

Female employment rose from 42% to 70% from 1971 to 2004.

Legislation for Women:

- Representation of the People Act 1918
- Abortion Act 1967
- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Employment Protection Act 1975
- Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1976
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Work and Families Bill

Globally, domestic violence is the leading cause of morbidity among women aged 15 to 44, which is greater than war, malaria, cancer and motor vehicle accidents;

Women do 2/3 of the world's work but earn only 10 per cent of the world's income;

This year Africa and Latin America got their first women presidents, in Liberia and Chile.

Amnesty International and abortion

Amnesty International has proposed advancing abortion rights around the world, marking a new direction for the human rights advocacy group that built its global reputation on campaigns to free political prisoners.

SRHR PROGRAMME WORK

Cardinal backs limited condom use



Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini said that in couples where one had HIV/Aids, which could pass to the partner, the use of condoms was "a lesser evil".

The Vatican says condoms should never be used, even to stop Aids spreading from one married partner to another.

The Church teaches that abstinence is the best way to tackle disease

Soon the Vatican will issue a document about the use of condoms by persons who have grave diseases, starting with AIDS.

African Sex Lives Getting Healthier - AIDS

Many young Africans are losing their virginity later, having fewer sexual partners and using more condoms; signs that the campaign against AIDS is finally hitting home.

HIV infection rates among young people are falling in many parts of East Africa for the first time, about five years after African leaders took the initiative against the virus and declared it an emergency on the world's poorest continent.

"What we are seeing is some serious behaviour change," United Nations HIV/AIDS chief Peter Piot told Reuters in an interview at an AIDS summit in Nigeria.

Global funding in the fight against AIDS, mostly for Africa, has quadrupled in the last four years to \$ 8.4 billion. Life-saving anti-retroviral drugs take the lion's share, because they are more expensive than prevention.

Nepal Conflict a "Nightmare" for Pregnant Women

Many women continue to die in childbirth, deaths that could have been prevented in the absence of conflict conditions. UNFPA's country representative in Nepal, said, "*Unfortunately, in times of war, women's health, and more specifically women's reproductive health, is overlooked. Pregnancy and childbirth is increasingly becoming a nightmare for many women due to the disruption of health services.*"

World Health Day: Health workers needed to achieve MDGs

On World Health Day 7th April, UN experts said the current shortage of 4.3 million skilled healthcare workers could deal a fatal blow to world hopes of reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, "*The global population is growing, but the number of health workers in many of the poorest countries is falling.*" Currently, no countries in Africa, Asia, or Latin America and the Caribbean are on pace to meet the target of reducing maternal mortality by 3/4 by 2015.

"*Addressing the shortage of midwives through education, training and deployment to underserved areas would bring us much closer,*" said Ms Obaid, UNFPA executive director.

Arletty Pinel, chief of UNFPA's reproductive health branch, said: "Dead mothers don't talk, and those that surround them sometimes see this as a 'normal' process of life. But most maternal deaths could have been avoided if the system hadn't failed those women."

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Ethiopia and misoprostal

Ethiopia has taken an historic step to become the second country in the world to approve an old drug, misoprostol, for a new use, controlling postpartum haemorrhage.

Postpartum haemorrhage, life-threatening bleeding following childbirth, is the leading cause of maternal deaths worldwide.

Nigeria was the first country to obtain similar regulatory approval in January.

Greenpeace Report Reveals the Impact of Toxic Chemicals on Reproductive Health

Falling sperm counts, rising infertility and genital abnormalities in babies could all result from exposure to hazardous man-made chemicals used in perfumes, carpets, electronics, clothing and a host of other consumer goods, reveals a Greenpeace report released.

Sperm counts have fallen by 50% in 50 years, infertility among couples has more than doubled in industrialised countries since the 1960s, while testicular cancer has become increasingly common. The male-female birth ratio has changed dramatically in some areas and birth defects of the reproductive system are increasingly noted in baby boys.

Burundi and HIV Certificate

A Catholic Church in Burundi has announced it will not conduct weddings for couples unless they produce a certificate indicating their HIV status.

Teenagers and Cervical Cancer

The vaccine for human papillomavirus is currently being developed and could be available within 12 months. It is said to prevent 70 per cent of cervical cancer.

Girls aged between ten and 12 should be vaccinated against cervical cancer.

It is vital that girls protect themselves against the cancer before they become sexually active.

The UK Government estimate that between ¼ and 1/3 of young people have sex before age 16. This estimate is based on figures from National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles.