



### **Population and Development Funding**

#### **G8 Summit**

From 6-8 June 2007 the leaders of the G8 countries met in Heiligendamm, Germany to discuss the world economy, climate change and Africa.

On the final day of the summit, in their declaration 'Growth and Responsibility in Africa', the G8 countries committed to providing a projected US \$60 billion over the coming years to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

While the timeline for implementing this additional funding remains undefined, a number of funding priorities were outlined. These include an emphasis on increased education opportunities for women and girls, further research into microbicides and vaccines, prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV, and strengthening the link between HIV/AIDS activities and sexual and reproductive health and family planning programs.

#### **European Commission**

EC President Barroso announced on 31 May 2007 that the EC would be increasing its contribution to the Global Fund for 2007-2010. President Barroso pledged 100 million euros for 2007, and an additional 300 million euros over the following three years, and stated that the European Commission would continue its role as a leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

#### **Bangladesh**

The UK, EC and three UN agencies are assisting Bangladesh in a new effort to improve the health and well-being of mothers and newborns. The cooperative agreement reached in June 2007 will launch a five-year project with US \$31.2 million in funds to reduce maternal deaths by 15% and neonatal deaths by 25%. It will test innovative means of addressing delays in receiving obstetric care for poor households.

#### **Spain to increase funds to UNFPA**

Spain announced that it will give 10 million euros to reproductive health programs at the UNFPA and will give a further 5 million euros to emergency operations. The 10 million euros will be used for the acquisition of basic

products for reproductive health as well as other methods to promote sexual and reproductive health in Latin America.

### **Sexual and Reproductive Health News**

#### **RAISE Initiative**

On 20 June 2007, World Refugee Day, the Reproductive Health Access, Information and Services in Emergencies Initiative (RAISE), a joint programme of Marie Stopes International (MSI) and Columbia University, called on the international community to ensure that displaced persons worldwide have access to sexual and reproductive health services and information.

The RAISE Initiative seeks to address the lack of access for more than 14 million refugees and 24 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide to services such as family planning, maternal and neonatal care, STI prevention and treatment and responses to gender based violence.

In Darfur, for example, the acute need for medical and psychosocial care for gender based violence survivors has been largely unmet by the humanitarian response.

Overall, the initiative is seeking to change how reproductive health is addressed at every level of decision making in the planning and implementation of international humanitarian responses; including working with donor countries, the UN and humanitarian agencies.

#### **Male Circumcision and HIV Transmission**

Important links between male circumcision and the transmission of HIV have been confirmed by recent studies. Randomised trials conducted in South Africa, Kenya, and Uganda, begun after observational studies in Sub-Saharan Africa and South-East Asia, confirmed strong inverse relations between the prevalence of male circumcision and national HIV prevalence rates.

The trials have shown that circumcision, when performed by trained professionals, reduces the risk of HIV infection by as much as 60 percent in men engaging in vaginal sex. The WHO and UNAIDS have already begun issuing policy guidelines and programme recommendations on this potentially highly important public health intervention.

However, it has also been noted that as male circumcision does not protect completely against HIV, it should only be considered a complementary prevention strategy to existing interventions. Additionally, whether male circumcision reduces the risk of male to female transmission of HIV is not yet known.

#### HPV Vaccine

The UK's Department of Health has agreed, in principle, to accept the recommendation of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) that the HPV vaccine should be given to girls between 12-13 years of age.

The vaccine protects against around 70% of the human papilloma viruses (HPV) that cause cervical cancer. Routine vaccination of girls in the UK could start as early as autumn 2008.

#### Zimbabwe

The UK's Department for International Development reports that in 2006 in Zimbabwe's sales of female condoms increased by 50%. The UK has funded 90% of these condoms, which are being distributed through hairdressers in low income areas.

#### Condoms in India

A survey of over 1,000 men in India has concluded that condoms made according to international sizes are too large for a majority of Indian men. The issue is very serious as the failure rates of condoms due to falling off or tearing are extremely high in India. Reproductive health specialists in India have called for condoms in a variety of sizes to be made more widely available.

Additionally, the BBC reported in June that controversy erupted in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh over a vibrating condom that was marketed by a state-owned company. The controversy was over whether the device is a contraceptive or a sex toy, as sex toys are banned in India. One of the company's spokesmen said that they introduced the vibrating condom to address the fall in condom usage. Respondents to surveys reported that a major factor for not using condoms was the lack of pleasure users experienced.

#### New contraceptive pill approved

A new hormonal pill that stops women's periods altogether has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration in the U.S. and will enter the market this summer. The pill, called Lybrel, is the first contraceptive pill

approved that completely eliminates monthly periods. Though there is no medical reason to have a period, Lybrel has sparked opposition from some, in particular in Poland where it is also being introduced.

#### Russia and HIV/AIDS

At a 15 May 2007 conference, the head of Russia's federal AIDS centre revealed shocking new rates of HIV infection and deaths from AIDS in that country, with approximately 1.3 million infections.

Moreover, while intravenous drug users remain the most vulnerable population, heterosexual transmission is increasing. The epidemic is increasingly being feminized, with 44 percent of the newly reported cases in 2006 being women.

Recognising the increasing seriousness of this epidemic, Chris McCafferty, MP, used Russia as a case study in the strategy for combating HIV/AIDS in Europe she presented to the Council of Europe.

#### Population Decreases in Central and Eastern Europe

According to the World Bank, the former Soviet Republics and Eastern Europe will have the oldest populations in the world by 2025. This is due to a sharp decrease in fertility rates. It is thought that this could have significant impacts on the region's economic situation.

#### Reproductive Choice and the Law

##### Women on Waves

The Dutch abortion clinic that performs abortions on international waters, Women on Waves (WoW), has renewed its license to allow for a new sailing. In the last three years WoW has visited several European countries with restrictive abortion laws. As the ship operates in international waters, it is governed by the national law of whichever flag it flies. This year it plans to visit Portugal and Malta. However, the new license from the Dutch government requires WoW to reach a cooperation agreement with a hospital in the country on whose shores it is operating, which may be very difficult in Malta.

##### U.S. vote on Global Gag Rule

On 21 June 2007, the U.S. House of Representatives voted in favour of an amendment to a spending bill that would exempt badly-needed contraceptives from the

Global Gag Rule. With this amendment, U.S. donated contraceptives to family planning providers overseas would resume.

This would be a critical step in reversing some of the damage done by the Global Gag Rule to decades of advances in health care around the world. The House also voted to give greater flexibility to PEPFAR recipient countries to determine what HIV prevention strategies are appropriate for their populations.

On 28 June 2007, the Senate Appropriations Committee adopted its version of the spending bill that also includes language expanding access to contraception through an exemption to the Global Gag Rule. Importantly, the Senate version of the bill also modifies the Kemp-Kasten restriction that has been misused by the Bush administration to deny U.S. funding to UNFPA. In the Senate version, U.S. funding would only be withdrawn if an organisation 'directly supports' coercive abortion or involuntary sterilisation. The bill would also remove the requirement that at least one third of PEPFAR prevention funding be limited to 'abstinence until marriage' programs.

It is expected that this version of the bill will be passed by the full Senate. The bill will not be scheduled for a vote until late July at the earliest.

Unfortunately, President Bush has stated he would be willing to veto the entire spending bill over the amendments to expand access to contraception.

#### Amnesty International Condemned by the Vatican

Amnesty International has finally developed a position on a woman's right to an abortion as a human right, marking a shift in the organisation's policy of remaining 'neutral on abortion'. The Vatican quickly called on Catholics to withdraw support and donations from Amnesty, accusing the organisation of promoting death.

#### Egypt and Female Genital Mutilation

Egypt has announced that it will impose a complete ban on female genital mutilation, following an outcry over the death of young girl. The new ban will cancel out a provision that previously allowed the practice to be performed in exceptional cases by a qualified doctor. Recent studies have shown 90% of women in Egypt have undergone female genital mutilation. The country's top religious

authorities, as well as Egypt's first lady, have spoken out in favour of the ban.

#### Public Support for Legal Abortion

According to two recent surveys, a strong majority of respondents support safe, legal abortions in Britain and Ireland. A poll commissioned by the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) found that 63 percent of the respondents agreed that 'if a woman wants an abortion, she should not have to continue with her pregnancy'.

Additionally, the survey used a split sample to address the current 24-week legal limit for abortions. Half the sample was given more information about the provision of late abortions than the other half, and of the half with more information, 54 percent agreed that 'abortion should be allowed to take place up to 24 weeks, when two doctors agree it is best for the woman's physical or mental health'.

Additionally in the UK, the Commons Science and Technology Committee announced in June a new Parliamentary Inquiry on Scientific Developments relating to the Abortion Act 1967. BPAS has said they look forward to having the opportunity to inform policy makers of the need to maintain the 24-week limit on abortions, the safety of modern abortion techniques, and the importance of these procedures for women.

Another recent opinion poll commissioned by the Safe and Legal (in Ireland) Abortion Rights Campaign also demonstrated public support for a woman's right to choose in that country. The poll revealed that 82 percent of respondents agreed that a woman should be able to terminate her pregnancy if it seriously endangers her life, and 69 percent of respondents agreed that a woman should be able to terminate her pregnancy if it was the result of rape. Finally, 43 percent of the respondents agreed that a woman should be able to obtain an abortion if she decides it is in her best interests to do so.

Source: BPAS Press Release and Safe and Legal (in Ireland) Abortion Rights Campaign Press Release

#### Recent and Forthcoming Conferences and Reports

##### **Conferences and Inquiries:**

G8 Parliamentarians Conference

From 30-31 May 2007, ministers and parliamentarians from G8 countries, as well as others in Africa, Asia and Europe, attended the 'G8 Parliamentarians Conference on the Economic Rewards of Investing in HIV/AIDS Prevention and Health'. Chris McCafferty, MP, Chair of the APPG on Population, Development and Reproductive Health, and Kari Mawhood, Assistant to the APPG, attended the conference in Berlin ahead of the G8 Summit in Heiligendamm.

At the conclusion of the conference, the participants issued a Parliamentary Appeal to G8 Heads of State and Governments. Among other things, the Appeal called on governments to live up to their financial commitments by providing support for country-driven strategies, investing in health infrastructure, recognizing human rights, empowering women and young people, addressing population growth and investing in new technologies.

#### International Development Committee Maternal Health Inquiry

The House of Commons International Development Committee has announced an inquiry into maternal health, and has issued a call for interested organisations and individuals — especially those from developing countries — to submit written evidence by 14 September 2007.

Improving maternal health is the fifth Millennium Development Goal (MDG) with the target of reducing the maternal mortality ratio by three-quarters by 2015. The main purpose of the inquiry will be to examine how donors — particularly the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) — can support progress towards MDG 5.

The APPG will be submitting written evidence.

#### **Recent Reports:**

##### World Bank

In mid-April the World Bank released the 2007 Global Monitoring Report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This year's report is entitled 'Confronting the Challenges of Gender Equality and Fragile States' and looks at gender equality and women's empowerment in fragile states, where poverty is increasingly concentrated.

##### Advocates for Youth

Advocates for Youth announced in May the publication of a new policy report, 'Improving

U.S. Global AIDS Policy for Young People: Assessing the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief'. The report addresses several ways that PEPFAR is failing to serve young people in particular.

##### UNFPA

In June, the UNFPA released its report on population and urban growth, *The State of World Population 2007: Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth*. The report is accompanied by a supplement on youth, called *Growing up Urban*. The report addresses the challenges of urbanization and also its potential to create opportunities to overcome poverty and environmental problems.

##### European Parliament Report on MDGs

A new EP report by Welsh Socialist MEP Glenys Kinnock was adopted on 19 June 2007. The report warns that an increase in development aid will not be sufficient to achieve the health related MDGs, and calls on the European Commission and EU governments to better coordinate their aid efforts to increase funding for health.

##### LGBT Issues

###### Lithuania

In Lithuania, an intended gay parade scheduled for 25 May 2007 was called off, due to threats found on the internet. The parade was part of the EU campaign, 'Yes for diversity, no for discrimination'. EU representatives expressed their concerns about the municipal authorities' decision, saying it showed how much more needs to be done to fight discrimination.

###### Moldova

On 8 May 2007, Human Rights Watch wrote to the President of Moldova urging respect for international law regarding sexual minorities. A recent ban on an LGBT Rights demonstration was cited as an example of blatant abuse. Previous demonstrations in Moldova have also been cancelled, leading LGBT advocates to file a complaint at the European Court of Human Rights, which is still pending.

**For references and more information contact: Kari Mawhood, Assistant to the APPG on Population, Development and Reproductive Health.**

**E-mail: [mawhoodk@parliament.uk](mailto:mawhoodk@parliament.uk) or Telephone: 0207 219 2641 ☺**