



FUNDING

Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) for 2007 show a lack of progress

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) latest statistics on ODA for 2007, reveal a lack of progress in EU development aid. 17 of the 27 European Member States have not increased their ODA in the last year and of these, 11 have actually allowed it to fall.

A decrease by 8.4% globally, and a decrease at EU level of 5.8% (excluding debt relief). This decrease of ODA has led the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD to conclude that;

"most donors are not on track to meet their stated commitments to scale up aid and will need to make unprecedented increases to meet the targets they have set for 2010."

Decreases were seen in Portugal (-9.8%), UK (-2.0%), Switzerland (-0.5%) and Belgium (-0.6%).

UNFPA figures state that for each million dollars spent on reproductive health supplies, we can prevent 360,000 unwanted pregnancies; the death of 800 women; 11,000 infant deaths and 14,000 additional deaths of children under five.

Goldman Sachs Invests in Women

Goldman Sachs, the Wall Street investment bank, will begin a major philanthropic effort to upgrade business skills of women in emerging and developing countries.

The programme, called 10,000 Women, will involve more than a dozen universities and graduate schools, such as Harvard Business School and the UK's Judge Business School at Cambridge University, and will focus on developing countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Rwanda.

The programme is based on research that shows that closing the gender gap in employment in key emerging markets could lift per capita income 10 -14% above baseline forecasts by 2020.

US AIDS bill Gets \$50 Billion in Funding

The US has approved \$50 billion in funding to fight AIDS over five years through the President's Plan for Emergency AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). The proportion of funding for

abstinence-only education has been reduced from current levels, but a provision will effectively expand the so-called "global gag rule" to PEPFAR funding.

Another provision requires every organisation receiving PEPFAR money to adopt a policy against "prostitution and human trafficking."

Funding needed for Maternal and Child Health

The World Health Report, 2005 "Make every mother and child count", estimated that an additional US\$108.1 billion would be needed in the period 2006-2015, which translates into an annual average US\$10.8 billion for maternal and child health (US\$5.2 billion for child health and US\$5.6 billion for maternal and newborn health).

In 2004, the world's major donors invested only \$530 million in maternal and newborn health. If this trend continues, the MDGs will not be achieved by 2015.

Ireland's Minister Kitt announces funding of €3m for Women

Michael Kitt, Minister of State for Overseas Development, has announced Irish Aid funding of €3m to programmes targeting maternal mortality and reproductive health in developing countries.

The Minister said:

"Ireland is proud to be one of the first countries to contribute to the new UNFPA trust fund for maternal health, "No Woman Should Die Giving Life". This fund will support 75 of the poorest countries to deliver better services for women before, during and after childbirth."

In addition, funding will be given to thematic funds on female genital cutting/mutilation, and obstetric fistula.

HUMAN RIGHTS

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg has made it a right for same-sex to adopt

Ms E.B. is a lesbian kindergarten teacher. She has been in an intimate relationship with another woman whom she has lived with for 18 years. In 1998, E.B. qualified for adoption but her application was rejected due to the women's sexual orientation.

The ECHR has now ruled that she must get compensation amounting to Euro 24,500. The ECHR decided that France had violated the European Convention on Human Rights by excluding the possibility of adoption to the lesbian couple.

International Women's Day (IWD)

Extracts from UK House of Lords IWD debate

- Percentage of female MPs:
UK - 19.5%
Rwanda - 48.8%
South Africa - 32.8%
Afghanistan – 27%;
- UK 's persistent pay gap stands at around 17%;
- Women are over-represented in lower paid sectors, which have been identified by the Fawcett Society as the 4 Cs: cleaning, caring, catering and cashiering;
- Almost half of women in England and Wales experience domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking in their lifetime;
- Health related cost of a rape is now calculated at £73,487 per case;
- Happiness for the modern woman is a family, a job and a man who knows how to unload the washing machine...*"as I said to my wife this morning two out of three is not bad."*
- "On every man's heart should be engraved, "kids are us."

LEGISLATION/POLICIES

Council of Europe (CoE) Parliamentary Assembly Report on: "Access to safe and legal abortion in Europe"

The CoE report on abortion calls on all 47 members states to:

- decriminalise abortion, if they have not already done so;
- guarantee women's effective exercise of their right to abortion and lift restrictions which hinder, de jure or de facto, access to safe abortion;
- adopt appropriate sexual and reproductive health strategies, including access of women and men to contraception at a reasonable cost and of a suitable nature for them, as well as compulsory relationships and sex education for young people.

A debate and vote on the Report in the main chamber of the CoE is scheduled for 16th April 2008.

Abortion remains illegal in Ireland, the North Andorra, Malta and Poland.

Gisela Wurm, the Austrian Rapporteur said: *"Even in member states where abortion is*

legal, conditions are not always such as to guarantee women effective access to this right. "

"The lack of health-care facilities, the lack of doctors willing to carry out abortions, the repeated medical consultations required, the time allowed for changing ones mind and the waiting time for the abortion all have the potential to make access to abortion more difficult, or even impossible in practice."

"Women must be allowed freedom of choice and offered the conditions of a free and enlightened choice, she added."

Abortion in Ireland

Abortion, which is illegal in Ireland, has been the subject of a series of referendums since the mid Eighties. A Supreme Court ruling in 1992 reinterpreted an earlier Constitutional ban on abortion when it cleared the way for a teenage rape victim to undergo a termination.

That decision opened a legal loophole theoretically allowing abortion though the procedure has never been legislated for.

Just over 5,000 Irish women underwent abortions in British clinics in 2006. That figure has been falling since 2001 when 6,673 women with Irish addresses opted for terminations in the UK.

Ipas calls for further investigation of US Government censorship of abortion information

A federally funded Johns Hopkins University project, Popline, made a recent decision to remove an Ipas publication on abortion and human rights from a database of publications maintained as an international web-based resource for health researchers and the general public.

Administrators further decided to block searches on the term "abortion" for visitors to the website, a decision reversed on April 4th by the Dean of the Bloomberg School of Public Health. The Ipas publication on abortion was however not re-instated.

Ipas regards the singling out of this publication for exclusion from more than 26,000 items on the Popline database that relate to abortion, as another instance of excessive and politically-motivated government interference in free speech and academic freedom.

Filipino women and men sue Manila mayor for ban on contraception

Twenty Manila women and men have filed a case in a Philippine high court against the mayor of Manila, arguing that the city's eight-year ban on contraception has severely and

irreparably damaged their lives and health and the majority of women in Manila City.

The order endangers women's health, exposes them to violence, and further drives already struggling families into dire poverty due to unintended pregnancies.

Google sued over anti-choice ad

A Christian group is suing Google over the internet giant's refusal to take its anti-abortion adverts.

The Christian Institute wanted to pay Google so that whenever the word 'abortion' was typed into the popular search engine, its link would appear on the side of the screen.

The link would have read: 'UK abortion law news and views on abortion from the Christian Institute www.christian.org.uk.' But Google refused the advert because it said it had a policy of declining sites, which mixed the issue of abortion with religious views.

The Christian Institute has now started legal proceedings against Google on the grounds, that it is infringing the Equality Act 2006 by discriminating against Christian groups. It is seeking damages, costs and the permission to publish its advertisement.

UK Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill (HFE)

The HFE will soon be scheduled for debate in the House of Commons.

The Bill will provide the first opportunity in 18 years for MPs to vote on the upper time limit for most abortions: currently 24 weeks.

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE SERVICES

DfID Select Committee Maternal Health Report 2nd March 2008 summary:

- The number of maternal deaths in 2005 is cited as 536,000 but it could be as high as 872,000;
- For every one deaths 30 further women will become disabled, injured or ill owing to pregnancy;
- MDG5 has seen the least progress of all the MDGs;
- DfID is a leading donor to MDG5;
- DfID address sensitive issues including abortion;
- The skilled attendant shortages need to be changed, as well as the lack of emergency obstetric care;
- There is a need to increase access to basic drugs, equipment including Family Planning supplies;
- It is crucial to address gender inequalities;

- There is an urgent need to improve health information systems;
- There is insufficient political will globally to drive actions to improve the health of women;
- Maternal Mortality is more than a medical problem. The Ministers of Finance, Health, Education and Transport all need persuasion;
- DfID should continue to support the abolition of charges for health care (through cash transfers or vouchers, and transport subsidies) especially for the poorest women and in conflict settings;
- DfID should prioritise activities and play to its strengths and support other actors;
- UK Confidential Enquiry into Maternal Deaths has over 50 years of experience investigating quality of care through in-depth reviews and has and should serve as a model for similar processes in other countries to improve quality of care.

Emergency Obstetric Care

WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA recommend that for every 500,000 people, there should be at least one comprehensive and four basic Emergency Obstetric Health Care facilities (EMOC);

- 15% of all births should take place in EMOC facilities;
- 100% of complications should be treated;
- 5-15% of all births should be by caesarean sections;
- case fatality rate of obstetric complication should be less than 1%.

EMOC must provide: antibiotics, oxytocic drugs, anticonvulsants, manual removal of the placenta, removal of retained products, assisted vaginal delivery, caesarean section and blood transfusion.

UK Prime Minister's Wife Pledges Support to Tackle Maternal Deaths Worldwide

Sarah Brown, hosted a luncheon on 27th March in honour of Madame Carla Sarkozy to discuss the work of the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood and the campaign to reduce maternal mortality.

Sarah Brown was also the key note speaker at Women and Children First (UK) evening reception on 6th March where she said:

"The international community has a responsibility to increase investment levels and offer long-term financial support for this cause".

"Countries need to adopt and effectively implement laws and policies that protect poor families from the catastrophic consequences of unaffordable maternity care".

AIDS vaccine not on horizon, but drugs offer hope

AIDS won't be stopped by a vaccine in the foreseeable future, but researchers suggest that creative uses of drugs to treat HIV infection may also work to prevent it.

A study in Uganda by the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has shown that when a husband who is HIV-positive is treated with antiviral drugs, it can reduce by at least 90% the chances he will infect his HIV-negative wife. The same protective effect works if the wife is positive and her husband is not.

Getting an early diagnosis, and getting treatment to drive down viral load, is going to be good for prevention.

Swiss change Safe Sex message on HIV

Swiss AIDS experts has said that some people with HIV who meet strict conditions and are under treatment can safely have unprotected sex with non-infected partners.

Strict conditions include successful antiretroviral treatment to suppress the virus and no sexually transmitted diseases.

Concerns have been raised about this research, as it can never be guaranteed that somebody is not infectious.

The recommendation will therefore still be that people on treatment continue to practice safer sex, including protected sex with a condom, in any relationship.

International Health Partnership (IHP)

At the IHP debate in the House of Commons in March, Gillian Merron MP, PUSC for ID said:

"It is important to understand that it is about not just the delivery of health care, but enabling women to have access to family planning and safe abortion, and overcoming cultural and financial barriers to accessing care."

"We need to ensure that women have greater access to midwives, doctors, and the correct, proper, skilled, sympathetic and empathetic health care workers to provide maternity and emergency care where it is needed."

UK SRHR

Prime Minister calls for new UK Family Planning strategy

Gordon Brown called British rates of teen pregnancy in Britain "*too high*", noting they are the highest in Western Europe".

He called for a new prevention strategy, that would provide comprehensive sex education in all British schools, sex education

resources for parents, morning-after pill distribution from local pharmacies and access to services and contraception at public health clinics.

"We need to take action to deal with [teen pregnancy]," Brown said. "I believe the whole country will benefit from a better strategy."

FGM in the UK

The Foundation for Women's Health, Research and Development (FORWARD) said that about 20,000 girls are at risk of female genital mutilation before their 15th birthday in the UK.

According to WHO, about 100–140 million girls have undergone FGM worldwide.

BPAS Review on Abortion Spring 2008

- The number of abortions in the UK has been steadily increasing reaching 193,700 in 2006;
- Total UK fertility rate was 1.79 children per woman in 2005, 1.77 in 2004 and 1.63 in 2001;
- 1 in 5 women is now childless at 45;
- 40% of BPAS clients say they did not use family planning because of a misunderstanding about fertility and contraception and due to a need for closeness, intimacy, togetherness, spontaneity and romance;
- It is suggested that what people look for in their relationship mitigate against the planning and preparedness.

Ann Furedi, BPAS Chief Executive said:

- *"A lot of people out there are having sex who don't want to have children".*
- *"The average age at which women have children has reached 29".*

Caitlin Moran wrote on Abortion: why it's the ultimate motherly act':

'It is only after you have had a nine-month pregnancy, laboured to get the child out, fed it, cared for it, sat with it until 3am, risen with it at 6am, swooned with love for it and been reduced to furious tears by it, that you really understand just how important it is for a child to be wanted. And, possibly even more importantly, to be wanted by a reasonably sane, stable mother.'

"Decisions to terminate pregnancies are often influenced by the desire to be a good parent."

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