



FUNDING

G8 Summit – Japan 2008

The G8 Summit Declaration notes that “Reproductive health should be made widely accessible. The G8 will take concrete steps to work toward improving the link between HIV/AIDS activities and Sexual and Reproductive Health and voluntary Family Planning programmes”.

The G8 signed up to new action to meet goals on health, and also reaffirmed commitments made at Gleneagles to provide \$25 billion in aid to Africa, and \$50 billion globally by 2010, as well as establishing universal access to treatment for AIDS.

Funding was agreed to help to fund a target of 2.3 health workers per 1,000 people in 36 African countries. This would mean in total an additional 1.5 million new doctors, nurses or health workers, including a major increase in the number of skilled midwives so that women no longer have to die when unaided during childbirth.

World Population Day 2008

Sarah Brown, Patron of the White Ribbon Alliance, gave the keynote speech at the World Population Day (WPD) reception in the House of Lords.

The theme of this year’s WPD reaffirmed the right of people to plan their families. It was fitting, therefore, that Sarah Brown spoke about the important role of family planning in helping to reduce maternal mortality.

Gillian Merron MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development took the occasion to announce a new 5-year funding agreement with IPPF of £42.5 million. “This is in recognition of IPPF’s continued strong performance in

improving the effectiveness of its operations.”

The World Bank

Joy Phumaphi, The World Bank Vice-President for Human Development and former health minister of Botswana urged, on World Population Day, greater focus on contraception. She said: “It’s simply tragic that so many leaders in poor countries and their aid donors have allowed reproductive health programmes to fall off the radar”.

“Giving women access to family planning also helps to boost economic growth while reducing high birth rates so strongly linked with endemic poverty, poor education, and high numbers of maternal and infant deaths”

She said the issue was especially important now with countries worried about climate change and how they will be able to feed people if energy and fuel costs keep rising.

European Donors Partner with Ipas to Expand Access to Safe Abortion

The Governments of Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK recently committed to new funding for Ipas to reduce needless deaths and injuries due to unsafe abortions.

More than 19 million women each year risk their lives and health through unsafe abortion procedures, according to estimates by the World Health Organization.

EU Communication

Louis Michel, European Commissioner responsible for Development and Humanitarian Aid, said: “This year we mark the half-way point towards reaching the UN Millennium Development Goals of 2015. We know what we must do:

increase our aid spending to meet targets and make every euro count”.

The Communication “*EU as a global partner for development*” adopted by the EU Commission examines four areas where the Commission and Member States have pledged to improve aid for poor countries:

More money: The Commission calls on Member States to keep their promises to increase aid to 0,56% of GNI in 2010 and 0,7% in 2015;

More effective aid: The Communication sees four main areas of progress - namely division of labour, aid predictability, use of budget support and management of results.

More coherent policies: In the coming years, special attention will be given to the effects of trade, environmental and migration policies, e.g. the impact of EU bio fuel policy on developing countries as well as the “brain drain” in sensitive sectors;

Better trade capacity (Aid for Trade): Member States are called on to finance their share of the aid for trade programme, which foresees altogether €2 billion by 2010. Under the programme, roads and other infrastructure will be financed to connect regional markets.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Egypt Bans Female Genital Mutilation
Egypt’s Parliament has outlawed female genital mutilation (FGM) except in cases of “medical necessity.”

FGM will now be punishable by a jail term of between three months and two years or a fine of US\$190 - 940. FGM, widespread in Egypt, is seen by many as a human rights violation and can be lethal through haemorrhaging or infection.

Malaysian Women May Need Consent to Travel Abroad

Malaysian women travelling abroad will need familial consent under a new Government proposal to prevent women from being used as drug mules.

According to Foreign Minister Rais Yatim, in 119 cases of Malaysian women appearing before foreign courts, 90% were linked to drugs. Faridah Khalid, National Council for Women's Organisations Malaysia deputy

president, called the proposal “*backward and unfair and an infringement of our rights.*”

The Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council, Geneva

The UN Human Rights Council held its first session of the Universal Periodic Review in Geneva. This is a new monitoring mechanism aimed at reviewing the fulfillment by each State of its human rights obligations and commitments on the basis of the Governments’ reports, the compilation report prepared by the Office of High Commission for Human Rights and stakeholders reports including NGOs.

The following countries were reviewed in the April session: Bahrain, Ecuador, Tunisia, Morocco, Indonesia, Finland, UK, India, Brazil, the Philippines, Algeria, Poland, the Netherlands, South Africa, Czech Republic and Argentina.

Sexual and reproductive rights received limited attention and abortion was one of the big non-issues; it was addressed only twice (Poland, Argentina). On the other hand, the Holy See asked questions regarding the protection of life in connection with the review of Ecuador and the Philippines.

LEGISLATION/POLICIES

UK Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill and the 1967 Abortion Act

Amendments to modernise the UK 1967 Abortion Act have been tabled to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, which will have its Report stage and third reading in the Autumn.

Modernising Amendments are:

1. Remove the need for two doctors’ signatures to authorise every abortion (NC1, NC13);
2. Allow suitably trained nurses and other health care practitioners to carry out abortions (NC2, NC14);
3. Extend the locations where abortions can take place to primary care level (NC7, NC10);
4. Allow women the choice to be at home to complete early medical abortion (NC9);
5. Ensure that anti-abortion organisations are transparent about their views when offering women “counselling” (NC11);

6. Clarify that the right to conscientiously object to providing abortion services does not extend to providing contraceptive services (NC12);
7. Extend the 1967 Abortion Act to Northern Ireland (to be tabled).

Medical, legal and ethical professionals including the Royal College of Gynaecologists and the Royal College of Nursing have called for Parliament to modernise the Abortion Act to bring it up to date with development in medical, ethics, practice and social attitudes in the twenty first century. Full briefings can be found on Voice for Choice' website: http://www.vfc.org.uk/images/stories/vfc_briefing_hfe_act.pdf

Egyptian Health Minister Hatem el-Gabali has Announced an \$80 million Family-Planning Campaign.

The slogan of the new campaign is: "Two children per family -- a chance for a better life." *Egypt's big problem - too many Egyptians*", President Hosni Mubarak said recently, launching a new family planning campaign as his government grapples with long bread lines and riots over flour rations.

Egypt is the 16th most populous country in the world, and the most populous Arab nation. Its fertility rate, 2.7 children born per woman, places it 88th among nations, according to 2008 estimates in the CIA World Factbook.

Mubarak has urged Egyptians to have smaller families since coming to power in 1981, when the country's population was slightly more than 40 million, about half of its estimated population of 81 million today.

Islam does not prohibit contraception, and Egypt has had aggressive family planning campaigns in the past. TV ads in the 1990s urged condom use, showing a small family ascending into prosperity and a large one descending into poverty.

EU Fail to Speak with One Voice at the UN Commission on Population and Development

This years Commission on Population and Development (CPD) had the priority theme: 'Population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development'.

Advancing progressive Sexual and Reproductive Health language in the thematic resolution was frustrated by the EU's inability to reach consensus principally caused by Malta. Consensus was required to push forward a strong European voice. However, this was not possible despite the fact that the two other main anti-choice countries in the EU - Poland and Ireland - fell into line with other EU member states.

This meant that Malta, a country of under 400,000 people, was able to block the EU majority view on SRHR.

Norwegian Government Considers Adoption of Swedish-like Law on Sex Work.

Norwegian Minister of Justice, Knut Storberget, stated that the planned introduction of criminalisation of the purchase of sexual services is a measure to counter trafficking in women to Norway.

This statement is challenged and questioned by many experts in the field of SRHR and anti-trafficking. It is claimed that penalisation of purchasing sexual services will not eliminate the phenomenon of sex work but only push it into the so-called underground where women, including young immigrants, are even more vulnerable to abuse.

The Norwegian minister ensured that along with restrictions of the law, other programmes to get prostitutes out of the business will also be implemented. The government has proposed that clients of sex workers could be sentenced for up to six months in jail. The proposed law will be put to Parliament for voting and if it passes, the law that defines buying sex as a criminal offence will enter into force in January 2009.

Current law does not penalize prostitution in Norway, but pimping itself is banned.

Kenya Government Adopts Male Circumcision as a Strategy in Fighting HIV

A new circumcision policy for men aimed at reducing HIV infection rates has been published by the Kenyan Government.

The policy stipulates how all willing Kenyan men, irrespective of their age,

will undergo circumcision, and sets out the use of the surgical procedure as a standard HIV prevention strategy for the country. Health facilities are to be strengthened to ensure that they cope with the expected demand from men seeking to be circumcised.

According to the 2003 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey, close to 72% of men aged between 15 and 19 years were circumcised compared to 84% above this age.

The new policy has generated excitement and disquiet among members of the public, with some praising it and others saying it will worsen the vulnerability of women to HIV infection as men are likely to refuse to have protected sex.

Tajikistan Poverty Drifts Baby Trade

More and more cases of selling newborns by women living below the poverty line are being reported. Media report that one can buy a child for about US\$90.

When a woman is found guilty of selling a newborn, she is criminalised by the police and after the case goes to court, she can be sentenced to prison. This criminal offence falls within the legal category of trafficking in minors and the woman can be sentenced for five up to eight years of imprisonment.

In 2007, the police reported 13 cases of baby trade and only within first two months of 2008, 6 cases were disclosed.

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Japan Experiences Slow Population Growth

In Japan the Government has found that Japan's number of children has declined for 27 consecutive years, and that the country now has fewer children 14 or younger than at any time since 1908. The proportion of children in the population fell to an all-time low of 13.5 percent, while the elderly age 65 and older are 22 percent of the population. It is predicted that by 2020, the elderly will outnumber children by nearly 3 to 1.

A Number of Factors Hinder Women's Consistent Contraceptive Use

A new Guttmacher research uncovered a number of factors that impede women's ability to use contraceptives consistently and correctly over the long term. These include:

Life changes: An important life event, such as the beginning or end of a relationship, a move to a new home, a job change or a personal crisis;

Method problems: Dissatisfied users are more likely to put themselves at high risk for unintended pregnancy, by missing contraceptive pills or not using a condom every time;

Ambivalence: Women who are the least motivated to avoid pregnancy are also the least likely to be using oral contraceptives or to be using the method consistently;

Access: Many women report difficulty accessing contraceptive services or say they cannot afford the more effective, prescription methods of contraception;

Disparities: Having a low level of education, belonging to a racial or ethnic minority or being on Medicaid are associated with contraceptive behaviour that is likely to increase women's risk for unintended pregnancy.

Italian Doctors Refuse to Perform Abortions

70% of Italian doctors refuse to perform an abortion. Thus the Italian health care system faces a real challenge in providing medical services that by the letter of law must be guaranteed to women.

The Ministry of Health released a report that shows that the percentage of gynecologists who refuse to terminate pregnancies has risen by 10% in comparison with the year 2003. Furthermore, more than half of anesthesiologists also refuse to participate in providing abortion services. This disturbing trend can be partly attributed to the anti-choice catholic lobby that is even more and more influential in Italy.

For references and more information contact: APPG Population, Development and Reproductive Health Parliamentary and Policy Advisor Ann Mette Kjaerby, e-mail: kjaerbym@parliament.uk or telephone: 0207 219 2492 ☺