



FUNDING

Donor support for contraceptives stagnates despite rising global demand

Donor contributions for contraceptives and condoms for HIV prevention amounted to \$223 million in 2007—a mere 5% increase over the 2006 total of \$212 million, according to a new analysis by UNFPA. This is despite a growing unmet need for such supplies, as more couples use modern methods of contraception and world population continues to increase.

The analysis shows a sixfold increase in donor investments in the female condom, from nearly \$2 million in 2001 to almost \$13 million in 2007. In addition, 85% of donor support in 2007 was allocated to three types of supplies: male condoms, oral contraceptives and injectables.

Europe cuts family planning aid for developing countries

European governments have cut family planning (FP) funding in their development aid, finds Euromapping, a study by the German Foundation for World Population and the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development.

Funding for FP and basic reproductive health services in poor countries fell by 7.8%, a loss of more than \$160 Million. This leaves millions of people suffering unnecessarily from maternal and infant deaths, unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions.

Other key points:

- In 2007, EU ODA reached 64% of the world's total, whilst in real terms falling by €1.6 billion.
- Greece, Austria, Portugal and Italy each spend less than \$1 per capita on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS in developing countries.

US withhold funding to UNFPA for the seventh consecutive year

The Bush administration has announced it will withhold \$39.7 million authorised by Congress for UNFPA, for the seventh year.

Since 2002, the administration has withheld a total of US\$235 million from UNFPA, which

supports voluntary FP and reproductive health care programmes in 154 countries worldwide.

UN MDG review pledges to meet MDGs 4 and 5

At the UN MDG review the Presidents of Chile, Finland and Tanzania committed their countries to action to meet MDGs 4 and 5, on child and maternal health.

They warned that without concerted global action these critical goals will be missed. At the current rate of progress MDG 4, which aims to cut child mortality by two thirds by 2015, will only be met by 2045.

Vice President Gabriel Ntisezerna of Burundi pledged to extend free healthcare to all pregnant women.

The UK Secretary of State for International Development Douglas Alexander pledged to spend an estimated £450 million over the next three years to support national health plans for 8 International Health Partnership countries, including Ethiopia, Mozambique, Burundi and Nepal.

These new pledges will enhance the impact of existing contributions from committed stakeholders such as the Government of Norway which has pledged \$1 billion over ten years to reduce child and maternal mortality on top of \$1 billion already pledged between 2000 and 2015 for vaccinating children in developing countries.

Global Fund: Round 9 call for proposals

The Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria has launching its Round 9 call for proposals. It is noteworthy that the Global Fund encourages the integration of sexual and reproductive health and rights into its focal areas.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Gender protocol signed in South Africa

A protocol was signed in South Africa at the Southern African Development Community summit to protect the rights of women under the law.

The protocol demands 50% representation by women at all levels of government by 2015, and calls for member states to put in place legislative measures to guarantee that political and policy structures are gender-sensitive.

Spain adopts law on gender equality

Spain has adopted a law on Actual Equality between Men and Women, which is intended to codify and strengthen protections for women's rights throughout the country.

LEGISLATION/POLICIES

UK approves Act on forced marriage

The UK has approved the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007. The act is designed to protect individuals from being forced to enter into marriage without their free and full consent, as well as individuals who have been forced to enter into marriage without such consent.

It amends the Family Law Act 1996 to insert provisions that authorise a court to issue a protection order. The scope of such an order is broad. It may contain any prohibitions, restrictions, or requirements that the court deems appropriate to protect individuals. It may be directed at any person aiding, abetting, counselling, procuring, encouraging, or assisting another person to force, or to attempt to force, a person to enter into a marriage; or conspiring to force, or to attempt to force, a person to enter into a marriage.

An order may be requested by the person who is being or has been forced to marry or by any relevant third party. If violence has been committed or is threatened, the court may order the person against whom the order is made to be arrested.

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill UK

The HFE Bill saw its Report Stage and Third Reading in the House of Commons in October. Due to a programme motion proposed by the Government, amendments tabled by back-bench MPs on abortion were not reached and therefore not debated or voted upon. Many MPs were unhappy with the limited time made available for the Bill. The Bill returned to the Lords with Government amendments on embryo research, the definition of embryos, parenthood of people receiving assisted reproduction treatment andaviour siblings. The House of Lords accepted amendments and the Bill is now awaiting Royal Assent.

UK Government launches cross-government strategy for global health

The UK Government has launched a new strategy, 'Health is Global', which sets out the

span of global health issues and plans for tackling these across government and with other partners, including WHO, the EU and civil society organisations.

The strategy is aimed at improving global health to achieve both domestic and international objectives of the UK government.



The strategy outlines the critical global health challenges that the UK and the rest of the world faces and sets out five areas of actions to address them: Global health security; Strong and fair health systems; Effective international health organisations; Free and fair trade for health; Evidence-based policy development and practice.

It also highlights new and neglected areas, such as the climate change, emerging diseases, the links between health and foreign policy and national security as well as the increasing importance of non-communicable diseases in low- and middle-income countries.

"Health is Global" recognises that in order to protect the health of UK population and to harness the benefits of globalisation to health and development across the world, there must be a clear, coherent and co-ordinated approach to the many issues that influence global health.

UK Government accepts recommendations of sex and drugs reviews

All pupils in UK state schools will now receive high quality lessons in everything from first aid and personal finance to sex and relationships and the consequences of drugs misuse.

The Schools Minister announced that Personal Social and Health Education will become a compulsory part of the curriculum from Key Stage 1 to 4 (ages 5 to 16).

The Government sees education as key to supporting young people to avoid teenage pregnancy, STIs, drug and alcohol misuse.

Lessons should be age appropriate.

Primary school may cover: - recognising that animals produce offspring, naming parts of the body, preparing for puberty and being able to talk about feelings and friendships.

Secondary school may cover: - learning how to develop mutually respectful personal relationships and the importance of stable relationships to family life and how risky sexual behaviour contributes to the spread of STIs and unplanned pregnancy.

US Administration hits Marie Stopes International's (MSI) overseas abortion fight

US Agency for International Development (USAID) has informed six African countries that it does not want the contraceptives it provides them to go to MSI supported organisations.

MSI gets no US funding, but USAID said the organisations partners also shouldn't receive US products - such as condoms and intrauterine devices - because MSI works in China, home to the controversial "one-child policy."

That position expands application of a 1985 law (PL 99-88) the Bush administration has used to withhold money from UNFPA because it says that China's policies include coerced abortion and involuntary sterilisation.

Dana Hovig, MSI's chief executive said: *"This senseless decision is likely to have only one clear consequence: the death of African women and girls. And the Bush Administration should answer for that."*

The State Department argues that the governments can distribute the products through other services on the ground and that USAID will continue "to supply the same volume of commodities to these countries."

Female genital mutilation (FGM) common in Egypt despite ban

Legislation introduced six years ago in Egypt outlawing the custom of FGM appears to have failed miserably.

3730 Egyptian girls aged 10 to 14 were interviewed. 85% of the girls had been subjected to FGM since it was outlawed, almost 2/3 by non-medical personnel.

The girls' parents said they disobeyed the law to comply with religious and traditional beliefs and curb the sexual drive of their daughters.

Paul Van Look from the World Health Organization says: *"Counselling parents and religious leaders is the only way to eradicate FGM in Egypt. A significant number of*

families within a community will have to make a collective, coordinated choice to abandon the practice so that no single girl or family is disadvantaged by the decision."

Sweden legalises provision of abortion to non-residents

Sweden has amended its 1974 Abortion Act, making abortion services in Sweden available to non-resident women.

Under the Act, women not residing in Sweden may obtain an abortion under the same terms and conditions as apply to Swedish nationals and residents. However, non-resident women must pay a fee of €1,000 Euros, a charge not applicable to those residing in Sweden.

Under the amended law, Swedish nationals and residents, as well as non-residents, are able to request an abortion before the end of the 18th week of pregnancy so long as the procedure does not pose a serious danger to the woman's life or health on account of her having an illness.

Portugal approves law addressing gender equality

Portugal has passed a law, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in accessing goods and services and punishes acts that violate the principle of equality between men and women.

The law applies to public and private institutions that furnish goods and services to the community whether for remuneration or free-of-charge. It proscribes discrimination in the form of acts, omissions, and contractual provisions, as well as sexual harassment. Affirmative action is not considered discriminatory. Nor are acts that serve to protect pregnant and nursing mothers.

The law prohibits asking women seeking goods and services for information on pregnancy, except for the protection of their health.

It also prohibits taking into consideration costs related to pregnancy and maternity in setting insurance premiums or in determining rates for financial services.

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE SERVICES

European demographics

European demographic trends have been high on the political agenda for some time now.

Low birth rate poses economic challenges in many experts' views. Newest estimates

provided by the EU indicate that from the year 2015, deaths will outnumber child births in the EU.

According to Eurostat expert estimates today's population amounts 495 million and it will slightly grow to 521 million in 2035. This is predicted to be the peak of the curve as from that point the population will start shrinking and will reach 506 million in 2060.

As life expectancy is on the rise, it is estimated that the percentage of people over 80 will triple by 2060.

The decrease in population will be mostly experienced by eastern European countries. Eurostat forecasts that in countries like Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania or Romania, the number of inhabitants will drop by 20%. Poland will experience an 18% fall

Changing sexual behaviour in Africa leads to decline in HIV

There have been significant gains in preventing new HIV infections in a number of heavily affected countries, according to new data in the UNAids 2008 Report on the global Aids epidemic.

In Rwanda and Zimbabwe, changes in sexual behaviour have been followed by declines in the number of new HIV infections.

Condom use is increasing among young people with multiple partners in many countries. Young people are waiting longer to have sex. This has been seen in seven most-affected countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Uganda and Zambia. In Cameroon the percentage of young people having sex before the age of 15 has declined from 35% to 14%.

From 2005 to 2007 the percentage of HIV-positive pregnant women receiving anti-retroviral drugs to prevent mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) rose from 14% to 33%.

In this same period the number of new infections among children fell from 410,000 to 370,000.

Several countries, including Argentina, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belarus, Cuba, Botswana, Cuba, Georgia, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Thailand, have achieved close to universal access, with more than 75% coverage of PMTCT.

The report shows the combined will and efforts of governments, donors, civil society and affected communities can make a difference.

Rates of new HIV infections are however rising in China, Indonesia, Kenya, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Viet Nam. Increases in new HIV infections are also being seen in some older epidemics and HIV incidence is increasing in Germany, the UK and Australia.

The global epidemic has levelled off in terms of the percentage of people infected (prevalence), while the total number of people living with HIV has increased to 33 million people globally, with nearly 7,500 new infections each day.

Afghanistan birth rate deadly

Afghanistan's birth rate is now the highest in the world at six to seven children per woman. If current trends continue, the Afghan population will more than double by 2050, straining resources like water and food. "Continued rapid population growth poses a bigger threat to poverty reduction in most countries than HIV/AIDS," UNFPA said.

Ambivalence towards pregnancy undermines couples' consistent use of contraceptives

For some individuals, the perceived emotional and sexual benefits of becoming pregnant may outweigh their goal of preventing a pregnancy through contraceptive use, even when the pregnancy is not wholly intended, according to "Pleasure, Prophylaxis and Procreation: A Qualitative Analysis of Intermittent Contraceptive Use and Unintended Pregnancy," by Jenny A. Higgins et al., published in the September 2008 issue of *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*.

Some described increased sexual arousal at the prospect of a pregnancy, even when they do not actually desire a child or the responsibilities of parenthood.

Some romanticise about procreation, usually in the context of a long-term relationship

Others embraced unintended pregnancy as a way to foster a relationship, cultivate a new family and potentially escape the hardships of their lives.

All the above scenarios resulted in decreased contraceptive use.

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