

**ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON POPULATION
DEVELOPMENT AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH**



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FUNDING

Currency Transaction Tax

Experts from the financial sector and academia have confirmed that the implementation of a Global Currency Transaction Tax is technically and legally feasible.

Currency transactions between banks are already processed via high-security international computer systems, making it easy to collect a tax.

The experts calculate that introducing a tax of only 0,005% on transactions of all major currencies would raise about 33 billion USD per year for International Development.

The health Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are most off track with a funding gap of 488 billion USD. To bridge this gap, it is essential that donors not only meet their current Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments but also commit to innovative ways to generate additional resources for development.

Donors ODA in 2009 rose, despite the Financial Crisis.

The Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee figures rose slightly in real terms (0.7%) to 119.6 billion USD representing 0.31% of DAC members' combined gross national income.

In 2009, the largest donors by volume were the United States, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Japan.

Five countries exceeded the United Nations ODA target of 0.7% of GNI: Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

The largest percentage increases in net ODA in real terms were from Norway, France, the United Kingdom, Korea (which joined the DAC with effect from 1 January 2010), Finland, Belgium and Switzerland.

US 2011 Family Planning Budget

The Obama administration has proposed 715.7 million USD for bilateral and multilateral international family planning/reproductive health assistance.

If appropriated by Congress, this would represent the largest amount of funding for international family planning/reproductive health programmes ever approved.

This action demonstrates that the US is back as an international leader on family planning/reproductive health issues.

Danish Government approves 4.4 million Euro to Marie Stopes International

The grant will support MSI's voluntary contraception/safe abortion services until September 2011.

At present 215 million women have an unmet need for family planning and 67,000 women die each year as a direct result of an estimated 20 million unsafe abortions. Thousands more are left injured, disabled or infertile. Nearly all of these deaths and injuries could be prevented through adequate access to sexual and reproductive health and safe abortion services.

Uganda Downsizes Health Budget by 14%

As a result of the budget cuts, reproductive health supplies estimated at 3.5 million USD will not be procured this year. The health budget now stands at 9.7 % of the country's total budget, which is in violation of the African Union Abuja Declaration that states 15 % should be allocated to health resources.

President Obama has announced the launch of a \$63 billion, ten-year Global Health Initiative.

The Global Health Initiative will have an emphasis on maternal and child health, family planning and programmes to fight infectious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.

LEGISLATION/POLICIES

MEPs want Longer Maternity Leave

MEPs have proposed extending maternity leave in the European Union to 20 weeks full pay and granting fathers 2 weeks paid leave.



The aim is to provide minimum rules across the 27 member states and updates the pregnant workers directive dating from 1992. Under this law, the minimum leave is 14 weeks and pay rate should be no lower than sickness pay in the member state concerned.

Spanish Senate Pass Bill on Abortion

The Spanish Senate has approved a new law that eases restrictions on abortion, declaring the practice a woman's right and doing away with the threat of imprisonment, in part of a drive toward liberal policies that has angered conservatives and the Catholic Church.

According to the new bill, abortion is allowed without restrictions up to 14 weeks and gives 16- and 17-year-olds the right to have abortions without parental consent.

It also permits abortion up to 22 weeks if two doctors certify there is a serious threat to the health of the mother, or foetal malformation.

Beyond 22 weeks, it would be allowed if doctors certify foetal malformation deemed incompatible with life or the foetus were diagnosed with an extremely serious condition.

MDG Review September 2010

The UK Government has promised to urge all countries to sign up to a Joint Action Plan to improve the health of women and children with ambitious outcome targets at the MDG Review in September.

New World Bank Reproductive Action Plan

The World Bank has a new 5 year plan to help poor countries reduce their high fertility rates and prevent the widespread deaths of their mothers and children.

The Bank will help 58 countries with high maternal death and fertility rates. It stresses the following points:

- More contraception;
- More frequent antenatal visits;
- Spread preventive knowledge;
- Train new health workers.

Kenya's New Constitution

Reproductive health experts say the new Kenyan Constitution will guarantee better health for the people of Kenya and, in particular, for Kenyan women.

This is expected to result in more women delivering in hospitals and a sharp improvement in family planning services.

The new constitution contains a clause that permits abortion if the life of the mother is threatened.

WHO Code of Practice on Health Workers

The World Health Organization (WHO) Code of Practice aims to stop health workers leaving poor countries for rich ones. The current gap is 4.3 million medical professionals according to the WHO.

Highlights of the code include:

- A call for destination countries to provide technical and financial support for developing countries to strengthen health systems;
- A provision on abstaining "from active recruitment of health personnel from developing countries unless" equitable agreements (or other arrangements) supporting that recruitment are in place;
- A call for Member States to establish and maintain an effective legal and administrative framework to give effect to the Code of Practice.

At present, Europe trains 173,800 doctors a year compared to just 5,100 in Africa. The problem is exacerbated by staffing shortages in EU member states, which are causing their health services to recruit doctors from developing countries which are even more poorly resourced.

Despite having 24% of the world's health burden, Africa has only 3% of the staff. The shortage of qualified health workers represents one of the main obstacles to the realisation of the health MDGs; the paradox is trying to provide health care without health workers!

HUMAN RIGHTS

"UN Women" Agency Receives Final Approval

The UN will consolidate 4 agencies that address gender issues into a single body, named UN Women. The 4 old agencies are:

- UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM);
- Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI);
- Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DAW);
- International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW).

Rights for Women in Rwanda

In Rwanda women occupy some of the most important government ministries and make up 56% of the country's parliamentarians, including the speaker.

Women in Rwanda now have the right to own land and property. Rape has been acknowledged as a serious offence; there is a free police hotline and there are heavy jail sentences for perpetrators.

Contraception has been made widely available. Women who want to stop having babies but whose husbands object are told it is their right to choose. Some attend clinics in secret for three-monthly injections.

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Ultrasound as Male Contraceptive

Ultrasound could work as a reversible contraceptive for men. Applying ultrasound to the testes for 10-15 minutes could provide protection for up to six months.

The technique has been proven in rats and trials will be extended to humans next year. Sperm production can be halted temporarily without causing a longer-term reduction in fertility.

Free Contraceptives in India

The government of India will supply free contraceptives to all states and union territories under the National Family Welfare Programme. Furthermore, subsidised contraceptives are supplied through social marketing organisations

Foetus Feels No Pain Before 24 week

Studies suggest that late abortions, permitted for serious abnormalities or risks to a woman's health, do not result in foetal suffering because of increasing evidence that the chemical environment in the uterus induces "a continuous sleep-like unconsciousness or sedation".

The connections in the foetal brain are not fully formed in that time, nor is the foetus conscious, according to the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

Maternal Mortality Remains a Major Challenge to Health Systems Worldwide.

Maternal deaths has dropped by more than 35% in the past 30 years – from more than a half-million deaths annually in 1980 to about 343,000 in 2008, according to a new study by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME).

Nearly 80% of all maternal deaths are concentrated in 21 countries, with six countries (India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo) accounting for more than half of all maternal deaths.

Nearly 1/5 maternal deaths – a total of 61,400 in 2008 – can be linked to HIV.

Women Less Likely to Die in Childbirth in Albania than in UK

Just as many women are dying in pregnancy and childbirth in the UK as they were 20 years ago, leaving Britain trailing behind countries like Albania, Poland and Slovakia as well as the wealthier nations of Europe.

The reasons include a rise in older mothers and obesity.

The number of women dying is however still low, at 8.2/100,000 live births, but the UK ranks only 23rd in a world league topped by Italy, whose rate is 3.9. Next come Sweden, Luxembourg and Australia.

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