



ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON POPULATION DEVELOPMENT AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

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FUNDING

UK and Spanish ODA rejected by Peru

The Peruvian Ministry of Health refused to accept a five-year \$24 million bilateral development assistance grant from DFID, UK. Peru has also rejected ODA from Spain.

Grants were intended to improve reproductive health care services throughout the country. This is the latest in a series of regressive positions taken by the government of Peru, which is now dominated by members of ultra-conservative Catholic religious groups and heavily supported by the far right in the U.S.

UK 2002 Spending Review

By 2005-06, 90 per cent of the UK's bilateral aid resources will be spent in low-income countries.

The UK is seeking to work more closely with bilateral and multilateral donors to reduce transaction costs in aid for developing countries.

NGOs feel left out!

Belgium ODA to UNFPA

Belgium will donate extra money to UNFPA this year. The funding is leftovers from other budgets. This means Belgian aid for UNFPA for 2002 will rise to about 6.3 million Euros.

International Financing to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The World Bank and the U.N. estimate that an additional \$50 billion in aid from the international community will be needed each year if the MDGs are to be achieved by 2015.

Bill Gates Grant for HIV/AIDS in India

When Bill Gates warned of the potential for an AIDS crisis during his trip to India, Health Minister Shatrughan Sinha accused him of "spreading panic". Bill Gates merely quoted a U.S. government study, which projected that, the number of HIV cases in India may rise from around 4 million to a projected 25 million in 2010.

Mr. Sinha's comment is especially troubling as he is not only the Health Minister but also a senior adviser to the AIDS initiative that will

be funded by the \$100 million grant that Mr. Gates announced.

Global Health Fund Disbursement of money

The Global Health Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has announced its first disbursement of money to 39 countries.

Tanzania's \$12 million project did not receive funding as their Finance Ministry told fund officials that it would control the money instead of the Health Ministry, the agency that had been designated. Fund officials said they wouldn't allow the change.

WHO Funding in jeopardy

\$3 million in U.S. funding for the World Health Organization (WHO) Human Reproduction Programme is in jeopardy because of its research into the so-called "abortion pill," RU-486.

The U.S. says that they can't support any activity that supports abortion as a method of family planning or that motivates or coerces people into practicing abortion. Therefore they are unwilling to use their money to support RU-486 research.

HUMAN RIGHTS

The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, 24th November, was celebrated around the world

Afghanistan

Hamid Karzai, President of the Afghan transitional government said, "The campaign against violence is a duty of every Afghan person", he asked each Afghan to abstain from violence in their private and social life.

Habiba Sarabi, Minister of Women's Affairs, said, "Illiteracy, ignorance, unacceptable custom, economic problems, mental problems because of 23 years of war, manlordism, marriage by force, premature marriage and childhood engagement are all factors that cause violence in our society."

The Afghan Independent Human Rights has set up a working group to monitor and

address human rights violation against women.

China

Radhika Coomaraswamy, the special rapporteur of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights on Violence Against Women was quoted in the China news service saying, "Gender-based violence is recognised as a universal problem facing all societies and that despite much progress, there often remains a gap between the enactment of a law and its full implementation, resulting in high levels of impunity".

Pakistan

The independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan said that honour killings are on the rise in Pakistan. Responsible are ingrained social attitudes toward female sexuality, and women's changing attitudes towards their own sexuality because of greater exposure to the rest of the world.

Bosnia

Human Rights Watch said in its latest report, "A network forcing women and girls into prostitution is flourishing in Bosnia with the complicity of international and local police".

Thousands of women are believed to have fallen victim to the traffickers by being tricked, threatened and often physically assaulted.

South Africa

President Mbeki urged people to get involved in the fight against the abuse of women and children.

Mr Mbeki said, "I pledge to expose, oppose and combat all violence directed at women and children in whatever form I encounter it, be it in my home, my work place or in my community".

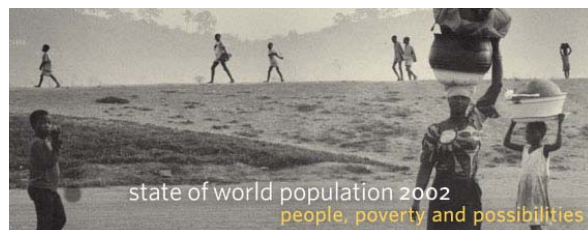
POLICIES

The International Parliamentary Conference on the Implementation of the ICPD PoA

Over 100 parliamentarians from 70 countries met in Ottawa Parliament, 21-22 November, to discuss ways to help secure funding and strengthen laws, policies and services so that everyone can enjoy the right to reproductive health.

The Conference Statement of Commitment is enclosed.

UNFPA's State of the World Population Report 2002



This year's report titled 'People, Poverty and Possibilities: Making Development Work for the Poor', contends that reducing the gender gap in health and education can significantly reduce personal and household poverty and generate national economic growth.

Reproductive health problems are among the main insecurities associated with poverty, according to the report, which notes that poor women have more unwanted children since they lack access to reproductive health services and information. At the same time, gender inequality often deprives women of the ability to refuse risky practices, keeps women uninformed about prevention, and puts them last in line for care and life-saving treatment.

Speaking at the report's launch in New York, Jeffrey Sachs, special advisor to Kofi Annan's on the U.N. Millennium Development Goals, said, "The report underscores the fact that women's access to reproductive health services is not just a worthy goal on its own, but an absolutely critical tool to alleviating poverty."

Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director of UNFPA, said, "We cannot confront today's massive challenges of poverty, hunger, disease and environmental destruction unless we address the issues of population and reproductive health."

U.S. withdraws support for the ICPD PoA

During the U.N. ESCAP meeting in Bangkok in October, the U.S. stated that it will not reaffirm its support for the 1994 ICPD PoA adopted in Cairo by 179 nations.

The U.S. delegation asked that all references to "reproductive rights" and "sexual rights and health" be removed, it insisted on removing language on "unsafe abortions," and instead proposed language regarding the "desirability of abstinence as the healthiest choice for married adolescents," and "adoption" as a strategy to limit abortion.

Martyn Jones MP is attending the U.N. ESCAP parliamentarians side meeting in Bangkok this month.

Sally Keeble MP, Under Secretary of State for International Development is heading the UK delegation at the meeting.

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Condoms handed out in China to curb HIV/AIDS

China's most populous city Chongqing has decided to stock hotels and public places with free condoms to encourage safe sex and curb rising AIDS infections.

The city plans to distribute 1 million condoms a year to achieve a condom usage rate of 50 percent among high-risk groups such as prostitutes and their clients.

China's has also begun putting clean needles on sale at designated pharmacies in response to reports stating that drug users share their needles as they were hard to find.

A U.N. report said China already has 1.5 million HIV positive people and faced an "AIDS catastrophe".

China's Government is gradually facing up to the extent of its AIDS problem.

India and Infanticide

In India the 2001 census found just 820 girls for every 1,000 boys among children under age 6, down from 879 in 1991. The lopsided sex ratio reflects the spread of modern medical technology, particularly ultrasound exams, which allow Indian couples to indulge a cultural preference for sons by aborting unwanted girls.

India has a history of female infanticide-of baby girls being smothered, drowned in milk or simply abandoned, long before amniocentesis testing or ultrasound technology.

Each boy was an extra pair of hands for labour. Inheritance laws allowed land to stay in the family if it passed to a son. Bearing a girl was like watering someone else's field, according to an old Indian maxim.

The 1994 legislation barring sex disclosure and female feticide went unenforced until last year. A crackdown made ultrasound operators and abortionists more cautious, yet continuing demand keeps it profitable.

More than 300 cases have been lodged against patients and doctors, and authorities have reason to be concerned. Many believe that societies with large gender imbalances are more likely to suffer upward ticks in sexual violence, especially when large

numbers of bachelors realise they have little to no prospect of finding a companion. The Health Ministry plans to tighten existing laws and may even outlaw the pricey sex selection of in vitro fertilization.

Interesting points

IUDs removed to have Holy Communion in the Philippines

An American missionary serving as Parish priest in the Philippines reportedly threatened to excommunicate women who would not remove their IUDs. At least 24 women in the said town had their IUDs removed out of fear.

These women were afraid that they could no longer receive the Holy Communion because they use IUDs to prevent pregnancies, a method that the Catholic Church abhors.

Condom use in Zambia

A study in Zambia revealed that only 11 percent of the women interviewed believed that a married woman could ask her husband to use a condom, even if she knew that he had been visiting prostitutes and was possibly infected with HIV/AIDS.

Emergency Contraception

Single-dose emergency contraception is just as effective as multiple doses, a finding that could make delivering and taking emergency contraception much easier, an international study from the WHO released suggests.

HIV in the UK

The Terrence Higgins Trust suggests that one third of 18-24 year olds think there is a cure for AIDS, it further estimates that there are more than 34,000 people living in the UK with HIV, although up to a third do not know that they are infected.

UK Sexual Health Campaign

The DoH has launched its new "lottery style" campaign to warn young people of the dangers of STIs. The campaign includes posters, beer mats and parody "scratch cards" which invite cardholders to scratch of the underwear of pictures of men and women to reveal what STI they may catch if they have unprotected sex.

The campaign has been criticised as "futile" and "tacky", others suggest, "a little irony and youthful bad taste may work wonders".

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