



INTERNATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING

The American Association of University Women is deeply concerned about current administration policy governing the distribution of U.S. funds to international population assistance programs. AAUW opposes the Mexico City Policy and denial of funds to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which has cut off support to family planning agencies and health services for millions of women.

By the year 2000, the global population will surpass six billion people, a majority of whom live in developing countries under impoverished conditions. Women suffer the most as high population rates decrease their access to education, food, employment, and health care while increasing mortality, homelessness, stagnating economies, and high teen pregnancy. AAUW's position supporting reproductive choice extends to women around the world.

Despite the problems created by population growth, the U.S. has weakened its commitment to international family planning programs. In recent years Congress has prohibited the provision of abortion services, lobbying, and research with Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) funds.

President Bush has adopted the Mexico City Policy, which denies U.S. funds to overseas **non-governmental** organizations which provide abortion counseling, referral or services with their own **non-U.S.** government funds. However, foreign governments that provide abortion related services are exempt from this requirement. This policy, first announced by the Reagan Administration at the 1984 U.N. International Conference on Population in Mexico City, is being carried out solely by an administrative directive without any input or guidelines from Congress.

The Mexico City Policy has cut off funding to private family planning providers assisting over 1.4 million individuals in Third World countries. U.S. organizations which have been forced to implement the Mexico City Policy (or lose their funding) report that they can no longer work effectively in many countries where abortion is legal, since virtually all qualified indigenous health and family planning groups offer abortion counseling, referral or services. In 65 developing countries, the Mexico City Policy denies women the right to make informed decisions about their reproductive options.

The Mexico City Policy has been challenged and upheld in two court cases in September 1990: *Pathfinder Fund v. AID* in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia and *Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) v. AID* in the U.S. Second Circuit Court. In *PPFA*, the Court rejected PPFA's arguments that the ban violates the first amendment rights of family planning providers by not allowing them to counsel women about all their reproductive options, and also interferes with the privacy rights of those seeking family planning information. PPFA has appealed to the Supreme Court.

These court decisions and Congress' inability to overturn the Mexico City Policy forced the international division of PPFA to cut back from 110 to 20 projects in late 1990. Over 1.6 million women in 38 countries were served by this division each year. AAUW strongly opposes this short-sighted and dangerous policy.

UNFPA

UNFPA is the largest multilateral family planning organization, providing assistance to over 141 countries. The U.S. has refused to contribute to UNFPA since 1985 when the

FAA was amended to prohibit U.S. funding of any organization that “supports or participates in the management of a program of coercive abortion or involuntary sterilization.” The U.S. alleges that China’s family planning program is coercive and refuses to fund UNFPA as long as China remains one of the countries receiving assistance.

In its first session, the 101st Congress voted to restore funding to UNFPA. Congress stipulated that U.S. funds could not be used for programs in China and had to be kept in a separate account. This appropriations bill was vetoed by President Bush and died.

Family planning assistance from the U.S. is vital to developing nations as it promotes women’s opportunities for self-sufficiency through family planning, education, and general health care not generally available elsewhere. Women in Third World countries are entitled to the same safe, confidential and comprehensive reproductive health care which we advocate at home. A leading cause of maternal death and injury in the developing world is illegal abortion, frequently resulting from the lack of family planning assistance. AAUW condemns attacks on international family planning and advocates renewed U.S. funding for UNFPA.

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