



# U.S. Anti-Choice Foreign Policy

## Global Gag Rule

Also known as the “Mexico City Policy,” it was enacted in 1984 by President Reagan, rescinded in 1993 by President Clinton and reinstated in 2001 by President Bush. The policy prohibits organizations receiving U.S. foreign aid funds from using different, non-U.S. funds to provide legal abortion services, lobbying for abortion law reform, or providing counseling or referrals for abortion.<sup>1</sup> Organizations that reject on principle the idea that an outside government should dictate their interactions with patients also would not qualify for U.S. assistance.

- As a result of the gag rule, there has been a loss of funding leading to less available contraception, especially in Africa where the HIV/AIDS epidemic has been devastating.
- Clinics have closed and services have been eliminated in several developing countries despite the fact they may be the only healthcare facility in the community.<sup>2</sup>
- The rule may actually increase abortion rates by denying contraceptive supplies to organizations that refuse to abide by the gag rule.<sup>3</sup>
- A “chilling effect” is imparted where, despite availability of funds for the treatment of post-abortion complications, clinics fearful of losing funding are afraid to keep the necessary equipment in case others misconstrue its intended use.<sup>4</sup>

## United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

The United Nations Population Fund is a healthcare program with a focus on reproductive health and family planning activities.<sup>5</sup> The Bush administration has withheld a total of \$127 million in appropriations for the UNFPA since 2002.<sup>6</sup>

The U.S. is the only country ever to deny funding to UNFPA based on non-budgetary reasons.<sup>7</sup> The funds were initially withheld based on false information that UNFPA supported “forced abortion” in China, despite the fact that a State Department fact-finding team was unable to find evidence of these alleged practices.

UNFPA estimates that the \$34 million being withheld each year could have prevented 2 million unwanted pregnancies, 4,700 maternal deaths, 800,000 induced abortions, nearly 60,000 cases of serious maternal illness and over 77,000 infant and child deaths.<sup>8</sup>

Denial of UNFPA funding can have serious consequences in emergency aid, such as during the 2005 Southeast Asia tsunami and the 2008 Myanmar cyclone, which hit women hard in areas such as access to basic health needs, prenatal care, and increased reports of rape and domestic abuse.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A Planned Parenthood Report: The Bush Administration, The Global Gag Rule, and HIV/AIDS Funding, June 2003, page 4, available at [http://www.plannedparenthood.org/files/PPFA/news-030702\\_AIDS\\_report.pdf](http://www.plannedparenthood.org/files/PPFA/news-030702_AIDS_report.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Id., page 5-6. see also [GlobalGagRule.org, Impacts on Affected Countries: http://www.globalgagrule.org/impacts.htm](http://www.globalgagrule.org/impacts.htm).

<sup>3</sup> Pathfinder International, The Global Gag Rule: Undermining Women’s Health and US Foreign Policy, [http://www.pathfind.org/site/PageServer?pagename=Advocacy\\_Resources\\_Fact\\_Sheets\\_Gag\\_Rule](http://www.pathfind.org/site/PageServer?pagename=Advocacy_Resources_Fact_Sheets_Gag_Rule).

<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Population Fund, <http://www.unfpa.org/about/index.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> 34 Million Friends of UNFPA: Mobilizing the Grassroots to Save Women’s Lives, <http://www.unfpa.org/support/friends/34million.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Id.

<sup>8</sup> UNFPA Statement on U.S. Funding Decision (statement by Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, funding director) <http://www.unfpa.org/news/news.cfm?ID=146&Language=1>.

<sup>9</sup> Corrie Pikul, As Tsunami Recedes, Women’s Risks Appear, <http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/2137>; see also UNFPA Myanmar Situation Update, <http://www.unfpa.org/emergencies/myanmar/> (last visited July 10, 2008).