

An Open Letter to the President

Dear President Obama,

The undersigned organizations working to promote women's sexual and reproductive health and rights write to express deep gratitude for your repeal of the Global Gag Rule. We thank you for ending this restrictive policy, which has contributed to the deaths and injuries of countless women and girls and undermined the democratic participation of non-governmental organizations in many countries. From our daily work with those most affected, we know that your action will have profound positive effects on the lives of millions of people. We are hopeful that it heralds a new era of U.S. partnership in global cooperation to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and the advancement of women's sexual and reproductive rights worldwide.

Historically, the United States has played a pivotal role in improving the sexual and reproductive health of vulnerable women in the developing world, including as a leading funder of international family planning, HIV/AIDS and reproductive health programs. In earlier years, policy leadership from the United States was critical in achieving landmark agreements at the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 and Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. At both conferences, U.S. delegations led efforts to forge global consensus on strategies to assure individuals' and couples' rights to attain the highest standard of reproductive and sexual health and to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children, free of discrimination, coercion and violence, including through access to safe abortion, where legal. After eight years of U.S. policies that undermined these and other commitments by the United States and many other countries, we are now at a moment to move forward once again.

The need for action is greater than ever. Worldwide, poor reproductive health remains the leading cause of death for women, particularly in the most impoverished countries. More than half a million women die from pregnancy or childbirth complications each year. At least 200 million women lack access to family planning and contraceptive information and services, contributing to more than 40 million pregnancies that are terminated every year, half of them unsafely. Complications from unsafe abortion result in approximately 67,000 deaths and at least 5 million serious injuries annually, all of which are preventable. New cases of HIV continue to outpace the number of people placed on treatment, with insufficient attention to preventive measures, including greater access to basic sexual and reproductive health information and services, especially for young people.

Sound public health investments by the United States and other governments in sexual and reproductive health and rights can help women exert more control over their own lives and overcome these and other health challenges, which are likely to grow more acute in the midst of an unprecedented global economic crisis. We hope that your Administration will honor America's human rights obligations and strongly support the achievement of our global health commitments, including the Millennium Development Goal to halve maternal mortality by 2015, which includes a target for achieving universal access to reproductive health care. We specifically call on you to:

- significantly increase U.S. funding for comprehensive sexual and reproductive health, including family planning and maternal health
- support integration of HIV/AIDS and other sexual and reproductive health programs and removal of the anti-prostitution pledge in PEPFAR
- support removal of remaining legal and policy restrictions on U.S. funding for safe, voluntary, legal abortion information and services, including the Helms Amendment
- restore funding for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), and
- ensure that officials from your Administration act as a strong voice for women's sexual and reproductive health and rights in the United Nations and other international arenas and do all in their power to translate international agreements into actions that improve women's lives.

Your administration holds great promise for the health and lives of women and for the future of families and communities everywhere. We thank you again for removing the Global Gag Rule and stand ready to support and assist you in achieving our common goal of ensuring that all women can enjoy the sexual and reproductive rights they need to live happy, healthy, productive lives.

Sincerely,

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Center for Reproductive Rights
Family Care International
International Planned Parenthood Federation
International Planned Parenthood Federation, Western Hemisphere Region
Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada/Coalition pour le droit à l'avortement au Canada, Canada
Асоцијација за здравствена едукација и истражување (ХЕРА)/Health Education and Research Association (HERA), Macedonia
Action Canada for Population and Development (ACPD)/Action Canada pour la population et le développement, Canada
Action Research and Training for Health, India
Advocates for Youth, USA

African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Africa region
Aim for Human Rights, The Netherlands
American Civil Liberties Union, USA
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, USA
Asia Safe Abortion Partnership, Asia
Asociación Argentina de Sexología y Educación Sexual (Filial Tucuman) (AASES)/Argentinian Association of Sexology and Sexual Education (Tucuman Group), Argentina
Associação para o Planeamento da Família (APF)/Portuguese Family Planning Association, Portugal

Association Guinéenne bien être Familial (AGBEF)/Planned Parenthood Association of Guinea, Africa
Associazione italiana donne per lo sviluppo (AIDOS)/Italian Association for Women in Development, Italy
ASTRA- Central and Eastern European Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Central and Eastern Europe
ATHENA Network, Global
Balance Promoción para el Desarrollo y Juventud AC/ Development Promotion and Youth, México
Bangladesh Adolescent Girls Rights Forum (BKAF), Bangladesh
Bangladesh Women's Health Coalition, Bangladesh
BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights, Nigeria

Bill and Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, USA
Black Women's Health Imperative, USA
CASA Netherlands, Netherlands
Catholics for Choice, USA
Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir, AC/Catholics for the Right to Decide, México
Center for Creative Education, USA
Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE), USA
Center for Inquiry, USA
Center for Research on Environment Health and Population Activities (CREHPA), Nepal
Center for Women Policy Studies, USA
Center for Women's Global Leadership, USA
Centro de Investigación Epidemiológica en Salud Sexual y Reproductiva/Epidemiological Research Center in Sexual and Reproductive Health, Guatemala
Centro las Libres de Información en Salud Sexual Región Centro/ "Las Libres" Center for Information in Sexual Health, Mexico
Colectiva por el Derecho a Decidir/Collective for the Right to Decide, Costa Rica
Colectivo El Torito AC/Little Bull Collective Civil Association, México
Comité de Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos de la Federación Latinoamericana de Sociedades de Obstetricia y Ginecología Sexual and Reproductive Rights/Sexual and Reproductive Rights Committee of the Latin American Federation of Obstetrics and Gynecology Societies (FLASOG), Latin America
Commission on Citizenship and Reproduction, Brazil
Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP), USA
Consortio Latinoamericana contra el Aborto Inseguro (CLACAI)/Latin American Consortium Against Unsafe Abortion, Latin America
Consortio para el Diálogo Parlamentario y la Equidad/Consortium for Parliamentary Dialogue and Equality, Mexico
Cotidiano Mujer, Uruguay
El Area Salud, Economía y Sociedad del CEDES/Health, Economy and Society Department of CEDES, Argentina
El Centro de la Mujer Peruana "Flora Tristan"/The Center for Peruvian Women "Flora Tristán", Perú
El Closet de Sor Juana/Sister Juana's Closet, Mexico
Equidad de Género: Ciudadanía, Trabajo y Familia/Gender Equity: Citizenship, Work and Family, Mexico
Equilibres & Populations, France
Espacio Espiral, Promoción Cultural Desarrollo Sustentable y Equidad/Espacio Espiral, Cultural Promotion, Sustainable Development and Equity, Mexico
European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development, Belgium
Falia Editions Enfance, Senegal
Federación Argentina de Medicina General, Argentina
Federation for Women and Family Planning, Poland
Federation of Obstetrics and Gynecological Societies of India (FOGSI), India
Feminist Majority, USA
Femmes-Santé-Développement (FESADE)/Women-Health-Development, France
Foundation PH Suisse/Partnerships in Health, Switzerland
Fundación Arcoiris/Rainbow Foundation, Mexico
Fundación ESAR, Colombia
Fundación Huésped, Argentina
Fundación Oriéntame, Colombia
Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer (FEIM)/ Foundation for Studies and Research on Women, Argentina
Girls' Power Initiative, Nigeria
Global AIDS Alliance, Global
Global Doctors for Choice, Global
Groupe de Recherche sur les Femmes et les Lois au Senegal/Research Group on Women and Law in Senegal, Senegal
Grupo de Información en Reproducción Elegida (GIRE)/Information Group on Reproductive Choice, Latin America
Grupo de Interés Español en Población, Desarrollo y Salud Reproductiva/Spanish Interest Group on Population, Development and Reproductive Health, Spain
Healthy Teen Network, USA
Human Rights Watch, Global
Ibis Reproductive Health, Global
INCREASE, Nigeria
Iniciativas Sanitarias de Uruguay, Uruguay

Initiatives for Sustainable Human Empowerment, Ghana
Institute for Reproductive and Family Health, Vietnam
International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW), Namibia
International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW), UK
International Consortium for Medical Abortion, Global
International Planned Parenthood Federation Africa Regional Office (IPPF-ARO), Africa
International Planned Parenthood Federation South Asia Regional Office (IPPF-SARO), South Asia
International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network (IPPF-EN), Europe
International Women's Health Coalition, USA
Investigación en Salud y Demografía (INSAD)/ Research in Health and Demography, México
Irish Family Planning Association, Ireland
Jamaica Family Planning Association, Jamaica
Jovenes por la Elección y el Placer/Youth for Choice and Pleasure (JEYP), Argentina
Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), Kenya
Kisumu Medical and Education Trust (K-MET), Kenya
Law Students for Reproductive Justice, USA
Marie Stopes International, Global
Mujer y Salud en Uruguay (MYSU)/ Women and Health in Uruguay, Uruguay
Namibia Planned Parenthood Association
National Abortion Federation, USA and Canada
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, USA
National Council of Jewish Women, USA
National Council of Women's Organizations, USA
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, USA
National Network of Abortion Funds, USA
National Women's Health Network
Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center, USA
Network for Justice and Democracy, Nigeria
Network of East-West Women (NEWW), Poland
Network of Zimbabwean Positive Women (NZPW+), Zimbabwe
Norsk forening for seksuell og reprodutiv helse og rettigheter (NSRR)/Norwegian Association for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
Northwest Women's Law Center, USA
Our Bodies Ourselves, USA
Partnership for Development Center, Moldova
Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health (PRCH), USA
PLANeS Schweizerische Stiftung für sexuelle und reproduktive Gesundheit/ Swiss Foundation for Sexual and Reproductive Health, Switzerland
Planned Parenthood Federation of America, USA
Planned Parenthood Los Angeles, USA
Population Action International, USA
Population and Sustainability Network, UK
Population Council Mexico, Mexico
Programme on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights, University of the Free State, South Africa
Promoting Human Rights and Education in Bangladesh (PHREB), Bangladesh
PROMSEX, Peru
PSI, USA
PSI-Europe, Netherlands
Red por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos en México (DDESER)/ Network for Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Mexico, Mexico
Red Uruguaya de Autonomías (RUDA), Uruguay
Reproductive Health Access Project, USA
Reproductive Health Matters, UK
Reproductive Health Training Center, Moldova
Rutgers Nisso Groep, The Netherlands
School of Public Health, Maseno University, Kenya
Secular Coalition for America, USA
Seimos planavimio ir seksualines sveikatos asociacija/Family Planning and Sexual Health Association, Lithuania
Senosa - Flemish Centre of Expertise on Sexual Health and HIV, Belgium
Sex & Samfund, The Danish Family Planning Association, Denmark
SEXADO, Argentina
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), USA
Sierra Club, USA
Social Sectors Development Strategies (SSDS), USA
Sociedad Científica de Sexología y Educación Sexual de Colegio Médico/Scientific Society of Sexology and Education of Medical Society, Argentina

Society for Health Promotion Links, Bangladesh
Southwest Women's Law Center, USA
Southwest Women's Law Center, USA
Stichting Marieke Bevelanderhuis/Foundation Marieke Bevelanderhuis, The Netherlands
Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU), Sweden
The Civil Liberties and Public Policy Program (CLPP), USA
The Family Life Association of Swaziland, Swaziland
Traction Action Fund, USA
Traction, USA
Union de L' Action Feminine/The Union for Women's Action, Morocco
Union for Reform Judaism, USA
Väestöliitto, the Family Federation of Finland, Finland
Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA)
Moçambique, Mozambique
Women Thrive Worldwide, USA
Women's Initiative for Self Empowerment (WISE), Ghana
Women's Health Research Unit, School of Public Health & Family Medicine, University of Cape Town, South Africa
World Population Foundation, Global
Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, Global