

February 27, 2009

The Honorable Peter Orszag
Director
Office of Management and Budget
Executive Office of the President
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Orszag:

We, the undersigned organizations, respectfully request that you increase bilateral and multilateral international family planning and reproductive health (FP/RH) assistance funding in President Obama's FY 2010 budget to \$1 billion, including \$65 million for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). This level of investment will go a long way to helping achieve our nation's development, humanitarian, and national security objectives around the world—and restore United States leadership on these issues.

In recent years U.S. leadership on FP/RH has been undermined by funding cuts and harmful policy restrictions. Despite a growing need for these programs, in part stemming from an increase of more than 300 million women of reproductive age since 1995 in the developing world alone, U.S. funding (adjusted for inflation) is 40 percent less than it was in FY 1995.

The number of women in the developing world who are at risk of unintended pregnancy continues to expand. Today, there are over 200 million women who would like to limit or space pregnancies but have no access to modern contraception—and demand for contraception is projected to increase by 40 percent in the next fifteen years.

The need to significantly increase U.S. support for FP/RH is widely recognized and supported. Members of the environmental community, including over 30 organizations that are members of the Green Group, have called for \$1 billion for international FP/RH programs in their White House transition recommendations (“Transition to Green”), as have over 100 organizations involved in producing recommendations from the Global AIDS Roundtable. “Making the Case for U.S. International Family Planning Assistance,” a newly-released publication written by the five former directors of USAID's Office of Population and Reproductive Health Program under five Presidents of both parties, echoes the calls by the broader development community for significant increases in FP/RH assistance. In fact, their report calls for \$1.2 billion in FY 2010 for U.S. international FP/RH programs.

Members of the House and Senate have also voiced their support for increasing U.S. funding to \$1 billion annually in order to tackle the unmet need for FP/RH. Last year, for example, 91 House Members signed a letter to the House Appropriations Committee in support of the \$1 billion funding level. Similarly, in July 2008 a group of Senators, including then-Senators Obama and Clinton, signed a letter to the Senate Appropriations Committee endorsing an increase to \$1 billion in the FY 2009 State-Foreign Operations Appropriations bill. (Please see attached letter.)

Boosting funding for these programs in the revised FY 2010 budget request from the current FY 2008 level of \$464 million to \$1 billion would return the United States to its historic leadership role in the international community and move us closer to paying our fair share of donor commitments necessary to fill the unmet needs for family planning and reproductive health. Most importantly, this funding level is needed to save women's and infants' lives, reduce unintended pregnancies and abortion, lower HIV infection rates, slow the depletion of natural resources, and foster more peaceful, stable societies.

It is well past time for the United States to renew its commitment to make a real investment in family planning – and few investments assure as positive a return. Providing modern contraceptives to fill this unmet need for family planning would avert an estimated 52 million unintended pregnancies each year, thereby preventing 142,000 pregnancy-related deaths; 505,000 children from losing their mothers, and 22 million abortions in the developing world. In fact, universal access to contraceptives could prevent nearly half of all maternal deaths and a significant proportion of infant deaths.

In addition to improving the health of women and families, renewed investment in family planning and reproductive health, coupled with investments in girls' education and economic development programs for women, can help to improve the global environment. Although high levels of consumption in the world's wealthy countries account for many of the most serious global environmental problems, the net increase in world population of 80 million people annually greatly increases the stress on renewable natural resources—such as clean air, arable land, fresh water, fisheries, and forests—and on valuable plant and animal species threatened with extinction. Failure to provide people with the information and services to make their own choices about childbearing will make solutions to all of these challenges significantly more difficult to achieve.

In advocating for this substantial increase in funding for family planning and reproductive health, we do so with the knowledge that there must be a broader, more integrated approach to global health generally and to FP/RH specifically. In addition to increased funding for FP/RH, there must also be greater effort to integrate this work with HIV/AIDS prevention and other primary health care interventions. We need to move away from funding “stove pipes,” which prevents more cost-effective and successful collaboration among programs on the ground. Accordingly, maternal health programs; the prevention, testing and treatment of STIs, including HIV; programs to prevent and respond to violence against women; post-abortion care; and sexuality education should all be part of a comprehensive FP/RH program.

Finally, investments in family planning and reproductive health, in conjunction with investments in education, environmental stewardship and economic development, help create stable and strong societies. Unintended pregnancies due, in part, to lack of access to family planning, are a major driver of global population growth. In countries with significant unmet need for contraceptives, high fertility rates result in “youth bulges”—a high proportion of young people with little or no hope of education and employment. Countries that lack the means to provide the most basic needs of their people—food, water, housing education, employment—are at significant risk of instability and conflict. According to Defense Secretary Gates, “*over the next 20 years certain pressures – population, resource, energy, climate, economic, and environmental – could combine with rapid cultural, social, and technological change to produce new sources of deprivation, rage, and instability.*”

As former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has stated, *family planning builds stronger families, stronger communities and stronger countries*. That is why the diverse organizations represented here have endorsed a funding level of \$1 billion for international family planning and reproductive health programs. We strongly urge you to include this higher funding level in the President's FY 2010 budget request for international affairs programs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Jewish World Service	NARAL Pro-Choice America
Americans for UNFPA	National Audubon Society
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals	National Council of Jewish Women
Catholics for Choice	National Council of Women's Organizations
Center for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA)	National Organization for Women
Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)	Pathfinder International
Family Health International	Population Action International
Feminist Majority	Population Connection
Global Health Council	Population Institute
International Planned Parenthood Federation/Western Hemisphere Region	Population Services International
International Women's Health Coalition	Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)
Ipas	Sierra Club
Izaak Walton League of America	Union for Reform Judaism
John Snow, Inc.	United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
	Women's Refugee Commission
	Women Thrive Worldwide

cc:

The President
Secretary of State Clinton
Deputy Secretary of State Lew
The Honorable Howard Berman
The Honorable John Kerry
The Honorable Patrick Leahy
The Honorable Nita Lowey

Enclosure