

Facts about the AusAID Family Planning Guidelines

- Funding for family planning has decreased from \$6.8 million in 1995/6 to \$2.28 million in 2006/7 since the introduction of the AusAID Family Planning Guidelines. Family planning funding in the Australian aid budget has decreased by 84% from 1995 to 2007 (0.44% to 0.07% of total aid).
- Under AusAID's Guidelines no information about safe abortion can be given and no service provided even in countries where abortion is legal.
- Across the world, a woman a minute dies in childbirth or from pregnancy related complications. 99% of maternal deaths occur in the developing world.
- The Guidelines act as a demonstrable disincentive for Australian aid providers to identify, plan and deliver sexual and reproductive health programs.
- The Guidelines were developed in 1996 when the Liberal Government of the day needed the support of the powerful independent Senator Brian Harradine to achieve partial privatization of the national telecommunications network, Telstra.
- The Minister for Foreign Affairs has the power to strike out the Family Planning Guidelines which are embedded in AusAID policy, not in legislation or regulation.
- Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially Goal 5 (Improve Maternal Health), but also Goals 3 (Gender), 4 (Reduce Child Mortality), and 6 (Combat HIV, malaria and other diseases) requires a comprehensive approach to the provision of sexual and reproductive health services.
- Unsafe abortions account for 13% of maternal deaths globally. Children who lose a parent are three to ten times more likely to die within two years than those with both parents.
- Australia should not deny the rights we have to women in the developing world where those rights are within the law. In Papua New Guinea alone maternal death rates have increased by more than 56% over the last few years according to UN statistics.
- As a signatory to the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (1979) Australia is contravening its international commitments. The ICPD states: "in circumstances where

abortion is not against the law, health systems should train and equip health service providers and should take other measures to ensure that such abortion is safe and accessible” (8.25). 2009 is the 15th anniversary of the ICPD.

- As one of his first acts as US President, Barack Obama removed the contentious Mexico City Policy, the Global Gag, which prevented non-government organisations from using US dollars to either educate about unsafe abortion, or provide safe abortions, overseas. Australia is now the only country in the world to limit overseas aid funds in this way.
- International Women’s Day is on the 8th March 2009. This is a day to both celebrate the achievements of women around the world and highlight the barriers that many still face to an equal and safe life. Accessible and safe reproductive health care is one such barrier.