

Letter to Stephen Harper:

[Date]

Dear Mr. Harper,

We are a group of Coalitions, Organizations and Concerned Individuals from across Canada that ask you to reverse your decision to exclude funding for reproductive health care that includes safe abortion services, from Canada's G8 maternal/child health package.

In developing countries:

- 19-20 million women resort to unsafe (usually illegal) abortions every year.
- Thirteen percent of all pregnancy-related deaths are due to unsafe abortion, amounting to about 70,000 deaths per year.
- Eight million women experience complications serious enough to require treatment, but three million of those women never receive medical treatment.
- In Africa, 700 women died for every 100,000 abortions due to unsafe abortions

Half of all women in the world will have at least one abortion during their lives. Sadly, 220,000 children worldwide lose their mothers every year from abortion-related deaths. These children are ten times more likely to die within the next two years. Children under a year old have an 80 percent chance of dying in childhood; and of those under five, more than half will not reach adulthood. Failure to fund safe abortion services will lead to the deaths of countless children, as well as mothers.

Failure to fund safe abortion exacerbates the trauma of women and girls in many parts of Africa where rape is a sexual weapon. As stated by Rose DiManno of the Toronto Star in April 2010 that: "As a result of war and sexual violence, abortion in Africa is indeed a matter of post-violation contraception. For countless women and girls, abortion could provide the slim hope of returning to a life grossly interrupted."

Canada has made UN global commitments to help provide the full range of reproductive health services, including safe abortion where legal, as well as management of complications from unsafe abortions and has consistently funded such services.

Of note, Canada was the signatory to an international consensus adopted at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in which 179 governments including Canada committed to providing universal access to a full range of safe and reliable family planning methods by 2015. In June 2009 Canada again co-

sponsored a landmark resolution at the U.N Human Rights Council recognizing maternal mortality and morbidity as a pressing human rights concern. Just last year, all G8 leaders in Italy including Canada endorsed the Consensus for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health. This stipulates that “comprehensive family planning advice, services and supplies are “critical to improving maternal, newborn and child health.”

Importantly, Mr. Harper you have repeatedly stressed that accountability will be the focus of the Canadian G8. Given this priority, we hope that accountability will apply to Canada’s past promises and commitments – at the United Nation’s Human Rights Council, at the ICPD and at the Fourth World Conference on Women among others.

Aid agencies and healthcare clinics in developing countries typically provide a comprehensive range of reproductive healthcare, because this is the most efficient and cost-effective way to save the most lives. But now, in order to receive funding from Canada, groups will have to separate their programs, creating costly administrative headaches and barriers. Further, groups who refuse to be complicit in the unnecessary deaths of women who have abortions may decide to forfeit Canadian funding entirely, thereby reducing or even eliminating their ability to provide other basic healthcare.

We urge you to immediately pledge to fund the full range of reproductive healthcare for women, including safe abortion where legal, and quality post-abortion care for women injured from illegal, unsafe abortion. That action would de-politicize your otherwise-admirable G8 initiative to improve maternal/child health, but most importantly, it would save the lives of countless women and children.

Sincerely,

Sources:

Guttmacher Institute. Facts on Induced Abortion Worldwide. October 2009.
http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/fb_IAW.html

Guttmacher Institute (Singh S. et al). Abortion Worldwide: A Decade of Uneven Progress. 2009. <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/AWWfullreport.pdf>

World Health Organization (DA Grimes et al). Unsafe Abortion: The Preventable Pandemic. October 2006.
http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/unsafe_abortion/article_unsafe_abortion.pdf

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Guttmacher Institute. 2009. [Adding It Up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Family Planning and Maternal and Newborn Health.](#)

World Health Organization, Unsafe abortion: global and regional estimates of incidence of unsafe abortion and associated mortality in 2003, Fifth edition. 2007.
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