

FIGO calls for reinstatement of funding for UNFPA following cuts to UK Government's overseas aid budget

In November 2020, it was announced that the UK Government would [cut its overseas aid budget](#) from 0.7% gross national income to 0.5%. It has now been revealed that this cut [includes an 85% drop in funding to UNFPA's flagship programme](#) for family planning. The UK Government will drastically reduce its agreed contribution of £154 million to just £23 million, with devastating consequences for women and girls, health care workers and health systems globally, especially given the COVID-19 pandemic's [impact on the availability of contraceptive services and supplies](#).

UNFPA's global programmes – including the UNFPA Supplies Partnership – increase the availability of contraceptives and dismantle barriers to services for women and girls. There are more than [217 million women in developing regions](#) with an unmet need for contraception and family planning services. Meeting this need in its entirety would avert 67 million unintended pregnancies each year. But without the funding from the UK Government, UNFPA will be unable to prevent up to 250,000 maternal and child deaths, 14.6 million unintended pregnancies and 4.3 million unsafe abortions.

FIGO position on the issue

FIGO considers reproductive autonomy, including access to contraception and safe abortion services, to be a basic and non-negotiable human right. These rights are prerequisites for reproductive health. Making safe and effective contraceptive methods easily accessible results in fewer sexually transmitted infections, fewer unintended pregnancies, fewer women and girls dying in pregnancy and childbirth – including from unsafe abortions.

The UK Government's announcement to reduce its contribution to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services further exacerbates the threats facing women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has [already disrupted contraceptive use](#) for up to 12 million women and resulted in 1.4 million unintended pregnancies across 115 low- and middle-income countries during 2020 alone.

The UNFPA Supplies Partnership delivers a choice of modern contraceptives and lifesaving maternal health medicines into the hands of women and girls who need them most. A cut in UK funding will directly and disproportionately impact these women and girls – particularly those living in poverty and in other marginalised groups.

Through our member societies, FIGO has helped to effect change at national and local levels to improve access to SRHR services – we have seen the positive impact such programmes bring to the lives of millions of people. We also know the barriers and routes to successful family planning counselling. Successful counselling requires funding and infrastructure that is context specific, using local knowledge and local partners reaching women at every point of service care. At a time when pressure is exceptional – [not least due to the COVID-19 pandemic](#) – reductions in the availability of family planning services will have a large impact on health and care systems that are already overburdened and understaffed.

[Sustainable Development Goal 3.7](#) aims to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes. A denial of SRHR, which includes

access to family planning and safe abortion, directly reflects gender inequalities and the lack of prioritisation in resources and investment for the human rights of women and girls.

SRHR are fundamental to women and girls achieving their right to live with human dignity and in the exercise of their right to their bodily autonomy – the ability for women to choose if and when they have children is central to their empowerment, as well as to reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development.

FIGO commitments

As part of FIGO's commitment to supporting universal health coverage (UHC), we strive to see zero unmet need for family planning information and services, as well as universal availability of effective, affordable and safe contraceptives.

FIGO calls on the UK Government to reinstate its overseas aid budget to all core health and care services, including UNFPA's Supplies Partnership. These are vital programmes that have wide reaching implications on the health and rights of women and girls around the world.

For more than 65 years, FIGO has collaborated with our member societies and the world's top health organisations to work towards the improvement of women's health and rights globally. We will continue to:

- share evidence of the success of family planning services with our national member societies and as part of our national and global advocacy efforts
- encourage and support national member societies to examine opportunities to ensure the continued provision of family planning services, in particular in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)
- continue to advocate for the provision of family planning services in all countries.

About FIGO

FIGO is a professional organisation that brings together more than 130 obstetrical and gynaecological associations from all over the world. FIGO's vision is that women of the world achieve the highest possible standards of physical, mental, reproductive and sexual health and wellbeing throughout their lives. We lead on global programme activities, with a particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia.

FIGO advocates on a global stage, especially in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pertaining to reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health and non-communicable diseases (SDG3). We also work to raise the status of women and enable their active participation to achieve their reproductive and sexual rights, including addressing female-genital mutilation (FGM) and gender-based violence (SDG5).

We also provide education and training for our Member Societies and build capacities of those from low-resource countries through strengthening leadership, good practice and promotion of policy dialogues.

FIGO is in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO) and a consultative status with the United Nations (UN).

For enquiries

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