

# WHY THE UNITED STATES SHOULD RESTORE FUNDING FOR THE UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (UNFPA)



**UNFPA supports critical family planning and reproductive health programs in developing countries and humanitarian settings**

**UNFPA acts as the world's largest provider of contraceptives, in service to 46 low-income countries with the highest unmet need for family planning services**

**Congress must maintain funding for UNFPA programs**

Founded in 1969, UNFPA is the leading multilateral organization mandated to address sexual and reproductive health. UNFPA's core programs expand access to contraception and reproductive health care for poor and marginalized communities, including refugees and displaced persons. In total, UNFPA provides assistance to over 155 countries.<sup>1</sup>

## **SUPPORT FOR FAMILY PLANNING**

An estimated 214 million women in developing countries want to prevent or delay pregnancy, but face significant barriers to using modern contraceptives.<sup>2</sup> UNFPA seeks to address this need through its commitment to the freedom of individual choice in family planning, stating that “all couples and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education and means to do so.”<sup>3</sup> The agency ensures that people have the ability to exercise this right by working with health and policy systems, governments and advocates to train midwives, strengthen reproductive and maternal health systems as well as provide access to comprehensive sexuality education.<sup>4</sup>

## **RESPONSE TO HUMANITARIAN CRISES**

UNFPA is a global leader in providing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and gender-based violence (GBV) services in humanitarian settings devastated by the effects of conflict and natural disaster. In 2017 alone, UNFPA reached 10.8 million people with SRH services and 3.9 million people with GBV services in 53 and 51 crisis-affected countries, respectively.<sup>5</sup>

During conflict, natural disasters and other emergencies, displaced women and girls experience heightened vulnerability to unwanted pregnancies, rape, sexual exploitation, as well as early and forced marriage. In response, UNFPA creates safe spaces for crisis-affected women and adolescent girls, trains personnel to provide care and equips service delivery sites with emergency reproductive health kits. These kits are comprised of contraceptives, supplies for safe childbirth (including

personal clean delivery kits for pregnant women), post-rape care, and prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.<sup>6</sup>

## **PROVISION OF LIFE-SAVING SUPPLIES AROUND THE WORLD**

UNFPA works to improve the delivery of SRH commodities through UNFPA Supplies, a flagship program established in 2007, which focuses on widening access to modern contraception and life-saving medicines for maternal health. This program seeks to improve contraceptive choice by increasing availability of a mix of modern methods to women and girls, ranging from long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) to condoms. In 2017, commodities provided by UNFPA Supplies averted an estimated 7.5 million unintended pregnancies and 2.3 million unsafe abortions.<sup>7</sup>

UNFPA Supplies also helped prevent an estimated 18,000 maternal deaths by supplying women in developing countries with basic, inexpensive medicines, such as misoprostol and oxytocin to prevent postpartum hemorrhage, and magnesium sulfate to treat preeclampsia and eclampsia.<sup>8</sup>

Through this initiative, UNFPA acts as the world's largest provider of contraceptives, in service of 46 low-income countries with the highest unmet need for family planning services.<sup>9</sup>

## **GLOBAL LEADER FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS**

UNFPA organized the landmark International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994, and it monitors ongoing implementation of the conference's Programme of Action. Today, it is an important advocate for improving the status of women and girls. The agency plays an active role in efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—specifically Goal 3, which calls for good health and well-being, and Goal 5, which calls for gender equality and female empowerment.

UNFPA is a leader in organizing campaigns to treat and prevent obstetric fistula and end harmful practices, including female genital mutilation as well as child, early and forced marriage.<sup>10</sup>

## INCONSISTENT U.S. SUPPORT

The United States helped establish UNFPA and was the agency's largest donor until 1985, providing nearly one-third of its total annual funding.<sup>13</sup> However, the U.S. contribution to UNFPA is a frequent target of Republican administrations and members of Congress who oppose family planning, women's rights or the United Nations more broadly. For example, from fiscal years (FY) 2010 to 2019, a Republican-controlled House Appropriations Committee repeatedly approved prohibitions on any U.S. contribution to UNFPA.<sup>14</sup> Fortunately, these prohibitions were not enacted into law due to strong bipartisan support among the committee's counterparts in the Senate, and funds for the agency continued to be appropriated.<sup>15</sup>

In March 2017, the Trump-Pence administration announced its erroneous determination to cut off all funding to UNFPA, despite a USD 32.5 million appropriation in the FY 2017 omnibus approved by Congress.<sup>17</sup> An identical determination was made in FY 2018 and will likely continue for the duration of the administration.<sup>18</sup> When contributions to UNFPA are denied based on the Kemp-Kasten Amendment, U.S. law requires that the funds appropriated be used for bilateral family planning, maternal and reproductive health programs.<sup>19</sup>

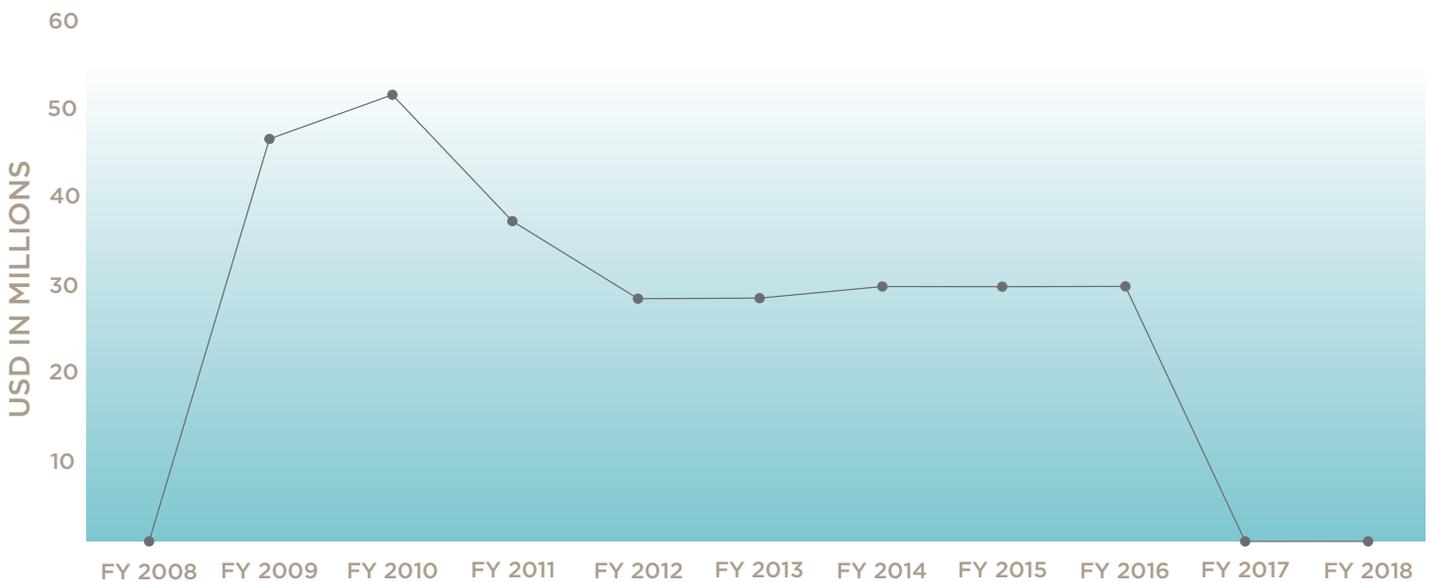
## WHAT IS THE KEMP-KASTEN AMENDMENT?

Enacted in 1985, the Kemp-Kasten Amendment is a legislative restriction that prohibits the provision of U.S. foreign aid to any organization "that supports or participates in the management of a program of coercive abortion or involuntary sterilization," as determined by the president. Since its passage, the amendment has been used by various Republican administrations as a pretext to defund UNFPA, based on repeatedly disproven claims about UNFPA's work in China and alleged support for the country's coercive population control policies.

UNFPA opposes coercion in any form and does not fund abortion services, although it recognizes unsafe abortion as a major cause of maternal mortality.<sup>11</sup> It seeks to reduce unsafe abortions and related deaths by improving access to contraception and treating the complications of unsafe abortion.<sup>12</sup>

The U.S. contribution to UNFPA complements and strengthens our bilateral international family planning program. Most Americans from across the political spectrum agree that the U.S. has a role and moral obligation when it comes to the health of women and girls around the world.<sup>20</sup> Cutting off these lifelines of support puts effective programs—and the lives of women and girls—at risk.

## U.S. FUNDING FOR UNFPA (FISCAL YEARS 2008-2018)<sup>16</sup>



## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

**The U.S. Congress must maintain robust funding for UNFPA.** Congress should appropriate funding at the U.S.'s fair share level based on the ICPD Programme of Action. This will make a strong statement to the Trump-Pence administration that Congress continues to support the work of UNFPA. Maintaining consistent appropriations will also ease the re-establishment of funding for UNFPA in the future, should a different Kemp-Kasten determination be made.

## ENDNOTES

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