Actions to Improve Global Reproductive Health

The Obama Administration offers great promise for the global health community. Improving health care in developing countries would save countless lives, while enhancing how the United States is viewed abroad. Indeed, recent polls show Americans rank health as a top priority for development assistance.

To strengthen the United States’ leadership in this arena, EngenderHealth has identified five top actions to improve global reproductive health:

1. Repair the Damage from the Global Gag Rule
   The Global Gag Rule—reinstated by President Bush in 2001—had terrible consequences on poor women and their families. Twenty countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East lost U.S.-donated contraceptives, and many organizations and clinics were forced to reduce services, lay off staff, or shut down entirely. President Obama lifted the Gag Rule on January 23, but much work needs to be done to rebuild infrastructure that crumbled over the last eight years, reopen clinics, and train and equip health care staff.

2. Commit $1 Billion to Family Planning
   While U.S. aid for international HIV programs has risen exponentially, funding for family planning has stagnated. In fact, when adjusted for inflation, the U.S. budget for global family planning is about the same as it was in 1974. Meanwhile, an estimated 201 million women in developing countries want to delay or limit births but lack access to contraception—and this demand is expected to grow 40% by 2050. EngenderHealth calls for the U.S. government to increase resources devoted to family planning to $1 billion, from the $545 million allotted in 2009.

3. Support Smart HIV Prevention Programs
   The President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) made the United States a leader in responding to the global HIV pandemic. While PEPFAR has made significant progress, its impact and reach could be even greater. Three key ways to achieve this include: integrating HIV prevention with other reproductive health services, like family planning; no longer requiring organizations to sign an antipornography pledge, which limits...
RESPOND to Expand Contraceptive Choices Worldwide

Experts agree: Family planning saves lives, reduces poverty, and spurs development. Yet, even though there is need, contraception remains out of reach for millions of couples in developing countries. To increase access to high-quality family planning services, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is supporting the five-year global RESPOND Project, led by EngenderHealth.

In particular, RESPOND will concentrate on expanding availability of those family planning services known to be the most effective: long-acting contraception (intrauterine devices and hormonal implants) and permanent methods (vasectomy and female sterilization). Although safe, convenient, and cost-effective, these methods remain underutilized in developing countries.

RESPOND will reach populations most in need of services, including women receiving postpartum or postabortion care, people living with HIV, and youth. One strategy for doing this will be to integrate family planning with HIV prevention and treatment, as well as with maternal health and social services.

Ensuring that clients can make informed, voluntary decisions about family planning and that high-quality medical standards are met will be priorities.

At all levels (from hospitals to single-room clinics to mobile outreach units), RESPOND will strengthen the quality of family planning services while increasing awareness of these services among clients. The project will also advocate for supportive policies, effective programs, and sustained funding.

EngenderHealth’s RESPOND partners are: Cicatelli Associates, Inc; Family Health International; Futures Institute; Johns Hopkins University Center for Communications Programs; Meridian Group International, Inc.; and the Population Council.

“RESPOND will bridge the gap between global knowledge and action so access to and choice of the most effective contraceptive methods can be a reality where they are needed most.”

—Lynn Bakamjian, Project Director, the RESPOND Project

4. Invest in Maternal Health

Every minute, a woman dies due to pregnancy or childbirth, and thousands more endure devastating injuries—almost all of which are preventable or treatable. The United States could help save the lives of more than 500,000 women a year by: increasing access to contraception so that all pregnancies are planned and wanted; ensuring the availability of emergency obstetric care; and boosting supplies of low-cost drugs, like antibiotics and magnesium sulfate (Epsom salts), that can make the difference between life and death.

5. Support the Reproductive Health of Young People

As the largest generation in human history comes of age, the need for family planning and reproductive health services has never been greater. Expanding these services for young people, as well as improving opportunities for both boys and girls to go to school, decide who and when to marry, and find decent work, are prerequisites for sustainable global development.

As President Obama stated in his inaugural address, we share a common humanity, and “all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness.” Visit www.engenderhealth.org to learn how EngenderHealth is leading campaigns to help make this vision a reality, and how you can get involved.

22 million number of abortions that could be averted by providing contraception to the 201 million women worldwide with unmet need
In Brief

EngenderHealth was awarded a three-year, $11 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to coordinate the Maternal Health Task Force Project, a global initiative aimed at shaping a collective effort to advance maternal health worldwide. Bringing together partner organizations, the Task Force will mobilize advocates and serve as a catalyst to address one of the most neglected areas in global health.

Male circumcision is increasingly recognized as an important practice for preventing HIV. EngenderHealth is partnering with Family Health International and the University of Illinois at Chicago on the Male Circumcision Consortium to improve and expand access to voluntary adult medical circumcision services in Kenya, as part of an overall strategy for reducing HIV infections in men. Working closely with the Kenyan government, the Consortium focuses on Nyanza Province, which has the country’s highest HIV prevalence.

Communities across South Africa participated in “Men As Partners® Week” from March 20–28, 2009. The national campaign, held annually and organized by EngenderHealth’s South Africa office, is designed to motivate boys and men to take action against HIV and gender-based violence. This year’s theme was personal transformation, and events included community-based workshops, mural painting, and voluntary HIV counseling and testing drives.

For more information visit www.engenderhealth.org/inbrief

---

Supreme Mfalapitsa: Bringing Change through Song and Outreach

A vocalist and songwriter, Mogomotsi “Supreme” Mfalapitsa had been singing about social issues since he was 17. So when he heard about the Men As Partners® (MAP) program, he was eager to participate in a workshop and found himself at ease discussing issues usually discomforting to others. “In a society where men are supposed to be tough, I learned early that as a man it’s okay to cry, ask for help, and find other ways to solve conflict without the use of violence,” he noted. “I saw how negative stereotypes impacted boys and men, and I wanted to show them that you don’t have to follow that path.”

Supreme soon found another way to use his voice: as a MAP “Transformation Agent” for EngenderHealth. For three years, he has been talking with young men on the street about gender equality and HIV prevention, as well as leading workshops and organizing rallies nationwide to call attention to these issues. He credits his parents for inspiring him to be an activist. His father—a freedom fighter in South Africa’s liberation movement—and his mother both instilled in him belief in Ubuntu, a traditional African concept of common humanity. To help motivate young men to stop violence against women and prevent HIV, Supreme often reminds them of Ubuntu, which forbids the abuse of others.

While promoting health among young men, Supreme has become an expert on another important issue: male circumcision to prevent HIV. He was a keynote presenter on the topic at the International AIDS Conference in Mexico in August 2008, and he has traveled to Ethiopia, Kenya, and Switzerland as a youth advisor for the World Health Organization.

“Working with EngenderHealth has taken me places and introduced me to people that helped me improve myself in many ways. I can be my best helping young men see women as equals, seek out health services, and improve the quality of their lives.” He added, “And I have gained so much inspiration for my songs!”

Visit www.engenderhealth.org/supreme to watch Supreme performing a song he composed about the impact of HIV.

---

“MAP workshops and rallies are so successful because they are engaging and nonthreatening—easy to understand, personalize, and apply in your own life.”

—Supreme Mfalapitsa

60% the reduction in a man’s risk of acquiring HIV through heterosexual sex if he is circumcised
A Lasting Legacy

There are many ways to support EngenderHealth’s work, both today and in the years to come. Remembering EngenderHealth in your will, estate plan, or other long-range financial arrangement is a powerful commitment that enables us to carry out our mission. It also gives you the satisfaction of knowing that your support for EngenderHealth, a global leader in family planning and reproductive health care, will continue well into the future.

By naming EngenderHealth as a beneficiary of your estate, you can make a meaningful contribution to our future without diminishing available assets today. And besides sustaining EngenderHealth’s programs, your gift can provide financial and tax benefits for you and your heirs.

Create a lasting legacy of health, hope, and opportunity at EngenderHealth. To learn how, contact Danielle Fitzgerald by phone at 1-800-564-2872, ext. 8006, or by e-mail at dfitzgerald@engenderhealth.org.

Have you already made plans to support EngenderHealth in the future? Please let us know so we can extend our appreciation and welcome you as a member of our Legacy Society.

President
Ana Langer, M.D.

Board of Directors
Stasia A. Obremskey, M.B.A., Chair
Francine Coeytaux, M.P.H., Chair, Executive Committee
Nafs Sadik, M.D., Vice Chair
Brenda J. Drake, J.D., Secretary
Mary K. Stevens, Assistant Secretary
Karen N. Horn, Treasurer
Robert D. Petty, Assistant Treasurer

George F. Brown, M.D., M.P.H.
Charles S. Carignan, M.D.
Rosemary Ellis
Ana Maria Goldani, Ph.D.
Uma Lele, Ph.D.
Margaret Neuse, M.P.H.
Virginia Ofosu-Amaah
Jeffrey O’Malley
Frances H. Snedeker
Michael Stevens
Belle Taylor-McGhee
Cecily C. Williams, J.D.
Wendy L. Wysong, J.D.
Janice Hansen Zakin, M.D.

EngenderHealth is a leading international reproductive health organization working to improve the quality of health care in the world’s poorest communities. EngenderHealth empowers people to make informed choices about contraception, trains health professionals to make motherhood safer, promotes gender equity, enhances the quality of HIV and AIDS services, and advocates for positive policy change. The nonprofit organization works in partnership with governments, institutions, communities, and health care professionals in more than 25 countries around the world.

Update is published two times a year and may be reproduced without permission, provided the material is distributed free of charge and the publisher is acknowledged.

www.engenderhealth.org