



The AusAID Family Planning Guidelines: the facts

What are they?

They are a policy document which AusAID has used to guide its family planning or reproductive health programs since 1996.

When were they devised?

In 1996 under a deal with Senator Brian Harradine where many women's reproductive rights were bargained off in exchange for his vote on Telstra including the banning of access to RU486 which was recently overturned by parliamentarians.

Why are they harmful?

1. The Guidelines mirror in many respects the US Global Gag which bans any aid money being used for abortion or organizations that are engaged in abortion activities. Under Australia's Guidelines no information about abortion can be given and no service provided even where it might be to save the life of the woman.
2. Even information about what not to do in terms of accessing unsafe abortion is banned. It is our form of the Global Gag in where women are denied education about a significant issue of reproductive health and the right to know how to protect themselves from injury and death.
3. However if a woman has accessed an abortion unsafely and is injured then she can access medical help known as post abortion care. This is expensive. Even then our aid money is not allowed to give advice on abortion or safe abortion at that time. This is illogical.
4. Only some forms of contraception are allowed to be funded with Australian aid monies (contraceptive devices registered for use in Australia). This limits options in developing countries where other forms of acceptable contraception may be available.

5. The reporting guidelines currently are overly cautious with contractors delivering family planning programs needing to frequently report in detail about exactly what they did, are doing and plan to do in this area. This scrutiny is not given to any other area of the aid program and instills a level of fear and over cautiousness that is off-putting. The net result is that few family planning programs have actually been conducted in the last ten years.

What needs to happen?

The Guidelines need to be abolished and Australia needs to follow the same protocols as other countries which guide such programs such as the World Health Organisation and the principles and practices outlined in the International Conference on Population and Development Cairo Program of Action.