

# FACTSHEET: THE GLOBAL GAG RULE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**Under the Global Gag Rule, the U.S. is turning its back on the human rights of women and girls around the world. Denying access to abortion does not stop women and girls from seeking abortion services, it just makes the procedure less safe and contributes to maternal mortality. The Global Gag Rule undermines fundamental human rights to life, health, equality, information, privacy and expression.**

## WHAT IS THE GLOBAL GAG RULE?

On January 23, 2017, in one of his first actions as President, Donald Trump reinstated and expanded the Mexico City Policy, now officially known as “Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance” (and referred to as the “Global Gag Rule” or the “GGR” throughout this document).<sup>1</sup> Under this policy, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) incorporated outside the United States and receiving U.S. global health assistance funds for grants or cooperative agreements are prohibited from using this money or any of their own funds from any other sources to perform or actively promote abortion as “a method of family planning.” The prohibition includes providing referrals and counselling for women seeking an abortion as “a method of family planning” or advocacy to make abortion safe and legal as “a method of family planning.”<sup>2</sup> The GGR states that the only abortions that are not considered “a method of family planning” are those in the cases of rape or incest, or if the life of the pregnant woman would be endangered if the fetus were carried to term.<sup>3</sup> Non-U.S. NGOs receiving U.S. government health assistance funds will now be required to certify that they do not perform or actively promote abortion as a method of family planning as a condition of receiving assistance from the U.S. government.<sup>4</sup>

Non-U.S. NGOs are placed in the difficult position of losing vital funds that support a range of health services they provide, or accepting the funds but undermining their patients’ well-being by not being able to provide the full range of lawful sexual and reproductive health services and information. Complying with the GGR may also undermine

compliance with national laws related to the provision of health care, such as guaranteeing referrals and ensuring evidence-based counselling. The current GGR applies to a wide range of global health assistance provided by the U.S. government, impacting funds for contraception, safe motherhood, treatment of HIV/AIDS, Zika, Ebola and other infectious diseases<sup>5</sup> - affecting \$8.8 billion in U.S. foreign aid.<sup>6</sup>

The rule does not directly apply to U.S. NGOs, presumably because such an application would violate the U.S. Constitution. If U.S. NGOs engage in abortion-related activities, as long as such activities are not supported with U.S. funds, they will continue to remain eligible for global health assistance from the U.S. government. However, U.S. NGOs that receive global health assistance are required to enforce the GGR on their non-U.S. NGO partners.

## HUMAN RIGHTS



**EQUALITY**



**HEALTH**



**LIFE**



**PRIVACY**



**INFORMATION**



**EXPRESSION**

