FSRH Statement on the Reinstatement of the Mexico City Policy or the ‘Global Gag Rule’

6th February 2017

As the largest professional membership body in the UK working to improve standards in sexual and reproductive healthcare, FSRH is concerned about the impact on women of President Trump’s reinstatement of the Mexico City Policy or the ‘Global Gag Rule’.

The signing of this executive order will mean that any global health and family planning programmes that receive US government funding will be prohibited from providing information about, and access to, abortion care.

FSRH believes that women should be able to exercise their right to access, safe, high-quality sexual and reproductive healthcare, including information and signposting to abortion care and provision of abortion and post-abortion care services.

As both UN Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 5 recognise (1), universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare is crucial in reducing maternal mortality and empowering women and girls across the world to achieve their familial, educational and professional ambitions.

There is no evidence to suggest that restricting access to abortion reduces abortion rates. In fact, a recent study in The Lancet found that rates of abortion incidence remain similar regardless of whether or not access to abortion care is restricted. (2) Instead, restricting access to abortion drives women and girls to seek unsafe abortion care; the UN reports that the average unsafe abortion rate in countries with restrictive abortion policies is more than four times higher than in countries with liberal abortion rates.

With 47,000 women and girls dying each year from complications following unsafe abortions and deaths due to unsafe abortion accounting for 13% of all maternal deaths (3), restricting the provision of safe, legal abortion care will have a profound negative impact on the health and wellbeing of women and girls worldwide, hitting vulnerable women and girls across the developing world the hardest. The World Health Organization estimates that 21.6 million women experience an unsafe abortion each year - 18.5 million of these occur in developing countries, a figure likely to rise with the withdrawal of funding from key reproductive healthcare programmes. (4)

Dr Asha Kasliwal, FSRH President, said:

“FSRH is extremely concerned about the implications the Mexico City Policy will have on the health and opportunities of women and girls across the world.

Access to information about, and provision of, safe, legal, abortion care is a fundamental part of reproductive healthcare. Likewise, empowering women and girls with all of the necessary information and choice to plan and space their pregnancies is a key enabler of maternal health and progress towards gender equality.

In light of this worrying development for women across the world, FSRH has joined 68 other organisations to call upon the UK Government to politically and financially champion comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights. (5)

FSRH will continue to support its membership to work towards a world where quality sexual and reproductive healthcare is accessible to all.”

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Notes to editors:

- The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH) is the largest UK professional membership organisation working at the heart of sexual and reproductive health (SRH), supporting healthcare professionals to deliver high quality care. It works with its 15,000 plus members, to shape sexual reproductive health for all. It produces evidence-based clinical guidance, standards, training, qualifications and research into SRH. It also delivers conferences and publishes The Journal of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care. For more information please visit: www.fsrh.org

- (1) United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Available at: http://www.unfpa.org/sdg


  This study reports that in countries where abortions are legal on a woman’s request, 34 women in every 1,000 have one. In countries where abortions are always illegal or legal only if a woman’s life is in danger, 37 women in every 1,000 have one

- (3) World Health Organization Preventing unsafe abortion Available at: http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/unsafe_abortion/magnitude/en/

- (5) Petition to Priti Patel, UK Secretary of State for International Development to champion comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights: https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/defend-women-s-healthcare-across-the-world?bucket=email-blast-27_1_2017_blast1&source=twitter-share-email-button&time=1485792479


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