



CHANGE Matters

Dear Advocate,

We've just welcomed Congress back to Washington, D.C., and we are bracing ourselves. We've seen promises of job creation and debt reduction morph into all-out assaults on women's health and rights overseas and here at home. While reopening old struggles diverts time and energies from advancing this agenda, we are not without our champions in Congress, our network of advocates, or our own victories.

We are working to connect global and domestic women's organizations in response to the attacks. Many in Congress have demonstrated that they hold women's health and rights abroad and at home in equal contempt, so we are coordinating our advocacy efforts accordingly. While global and domestic movements have traditionally operated separately, we've reached a point where we can't afford a fragmented movement.

Your support, as always, is critical. We'll look to you again this fall to defend against further attacks—as a united group, we have quite a voice.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Serra Sippel".

Serra Sippel
President, Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)

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Female Condoms and Prevention for Women: Congressional Briefing and Documentary Premiere

"Every time the female condom is not available, people are at risk."-- Chilufya Mwaba-Phiri, Zambia Health Education and Communications Trust

In June, CHANGE and UNAIDS hosted two female condom advocates from Zimbabwe and Zambia to meet with U.S. legislators, U.S. administration officials, and local Washington, D.C., health department officials. At a Congressional briefing and interagency meeting at the Office of Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC), they shared their experience and expertise on female condom programming. Chilufya Mwaba-Phiri, from the Zambia Health Education and Communications Trust, and Annah Sango, a member of the International Community of Women Living with HIV and alumnus of CHANGE's March 2011 training for women living with HIV, discussed the best practices of [existing female condom initiatives](#) and a [woman's right to protection](#) that responds to her needs. Sabrina Heard of Washington, D.C.'s Women's Collective and also a graduate of CHANGE's March training for women living with HIV, joined the

international advocates at a screening of [Choosing Prevention](#), a documentary film by Martha Dodge on female condoms in Malawi.

The [Congressional briefing](#) and [film screening](#) were widely attended and demonstrated the interest in and demand for increased funding and support for female condoms. The advocates encountered common myths about the female condom, including during Annah's appearance on *Voice of America's English to Africa LIVETALK*, where a caller posited that only women carry HIV and are exclusively responsible for the rate of infections in Zimbabwe.

Films like *Choosing Prevention* are essential to combating myths and advancing female condom access. CHANGE is currently working with Martha to distribute the film on a larger scale.

Prevention Now! Advocacy Sub-grants in sub-Saharan Africa

Through its Prevention Now! Campaign, CHANGE has awarded four grants to local civil society groups and coalitions in Swaziland, Uganda, Malawi, and Zambia for short-term advocacy projects. Three out of the four grant recipients are alumni of CHANGE-sponsored female condom advocacy trainings in sub-Saharan Africa. The objective of the grant program is to significantly expand access to female condoms in the region through strategic influence of key decision makers, specifically those representing U.S. government agencies. The projects begin in October and extend through April 2012. We will provide regular updates on the progress of each project. We are no longer accepting applications for this particular round of grants. For more about the Prevention Now! Campaign visit www.preventionnow.net.

New CHANGE Fact Sheet: What Does Family Planning Have to do With HIV? Everything.

CHANGE's newest [fact sheet](#) makes the case that family planning and HIV services are intrinsically linked, and therefore services should be integrated. In anticipation of Congressional attacks on family planning funding and services, it also outlines the effects of diminished family planning resources and restrictive policies on HIV services. Compromising family planning compromises all of the United States' broader health objectives. The fact sheet has been endorsed by HIV, maternal health, and family planning advocates, including Pathfinder, TAG, Family Care International, Health GAP, and the International Community of Women Living With HIV—Global.

Action Council for Women's Health and Rights

Global and domestic policy regarding the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls are intrinsically linked, as demonstrated by this year's attacks on abortion rights and access to birth control both at home and abroad. It is essential that global and domestic women's organizations support each other's efforts to counteract the current assault. CHANGE is currently launching an Action Council on Women's Health and Rights that would provide a joint forum for global and domestic groups to support and strengthen each other's efforts. To be included in updates on the Action Council, please submit your organization's information [here](#).

Washington Update

Budget

The House Appropriations subcommittee tasked with the foreign assistance budget adopted a funding bill that would be devastating to women's health and rights if passed by Congress. It includes a 25 percent cut to international family planning and reproductive health from last fiscal year, the elimination of the U.S. contribution to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and a legislative codification of the Global Gag Rule. The funding bill still has to be approved by the full House.

As the attacks on women's health and rights continue in the House, we are focusing on ensuring that the Senate version of the funding bill does not include harmful restrictions. CHANGE will join with the advocacy community to continue to provide our support to key members of the Senate as they battle over what will ultimately end up in a funding bill over the next few months.

Legislation

In response to the House Appropriations subcommittee's attempt to legislatively codify the Global Gag Rule, on July 25, 2011, Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NC) re-introduced the [Global Democracy Promotion Act \(HR 2639\)](#), which would legislatively repeal the Global Gag Rule. With help from the advocacy community, the legislation was introduced with an impressive 103 original co-sponsors, sending a strong message of solidarity to the House.

The Senate Appropriations Committee adopted the Lautenberg amendment, which would also legislatively repeal the Global Gag Rule, in addition to approve higher funding for international family planning and reproductive health, and ensure a U.S. contribution to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Executive Branch

The Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC) recently issued a new global [HIV prevention guidance](#). The guidance serves as the operating instructions to inform U.S.-funded HIV prevention programs overseas.

The new guidance offers the following critical breaks from the past:

- An entire section dedicated to female condoms: The guidance refers to female condoms as “an empowerment tool” and cites studies proving demand for and efficacy of female condoms.
- A reduced emphasis on abstinence-only programming: The guidance drops much of the limiting language from the old guidance, including reserving condom programs for “high-risk” individuals and limiting condom distribution to youth 15 and over.
- Improved language on youth: The guidance emphasizes youth friendly services that provide comprehensive knowledge on ways to protect against HIV and acknowledges the growing consensus that programs need to provide a range of tools and address numerous barriers to achieve HIV prevention among youth. It also notes strong evidence of the potential efficacy of youth interventions such as voluntary male circumcision, condom use, and HIV testing and counseling.
- A focus on marginalized populations: Throughout the guidance, marginalized populations are specifically addressed, including describing a comprehensive prevention package for these populations.

While we applaud the advances with the new guidance, critical gaps remain that undermine optimal prevention programming--such as neglecting a full endorsement of the integration of family planning programs and HIV prevention programs and not prominently incorporating principles of the Global Health Initiative (GHI), the country's new and innovative approach to meeting its global health commitments. Overall, the guidance indicates progress and we commend the Obama administration for taking a significant step in the right direction.

Global Health Initiative

CHANGE is continuing to challenge GHI leaders to advance sexual and reproductive health through their words and actions. Recently, CHANGE was pleased to hear GHI director Lois Quam specifically name sexual and reproductive health in a speech marking the planet's population expansion to 7 billion.

CHANGE's GHI accountability project to monitor GHI implementation is in full swing. Following baseline reporting in Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Guatemala, CHANGE has recruited and engaged two nongovernmental groups in each country to assess GHI implementation from the perspective of civil society organizations committed to sexual and reproductive health and rights. The groups are: Women's Health and Rights Coalition, Nigeria; Girl Power Initiative, Nigeria; Consortium of Reproductive Health Associations, Ethiopia; Network of Ethiopian Women's Associations, Ethiopia; IncideJoven, Guatemala; and Guatemalan Women Doctors Association, Guatemala.

In early 2012, CHANGE will issue “report cards” on each of our target countries to highlight GHI success stories and challenges in advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights.

CHANGE in the Media

Huffington Post: [As Congress Returns, Women Will Need Courageous Leaders](#)
Voice of America, *ENGLISHTOAFRICA LIVETALK*: [Female Condoms and HIV](#)

Staff Changes

CHANGE welcomed three new staff members this summer, increasing the breadth and depth of our strength as a team. [Tiffanie Luckett](#) joined us as our first director of development, [Erika Vjih](#) joined us as our new program assistant, and [Hortense Hunter](#) is our new office manager. We're glad to have them on board, in addition to having Kiki Kalkstein in her new role as associate for advocacy and outreach.

Support CHANGE

As we move toward the end of 2011, we hope you will consider [supporting CHANGE](#) with a financial contribution.

Any way you choose to contribute, your support strengthens our efforts to ensure U.S. foreign policies and programs promote the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls worldwide. For federal employees, CHANGE is part of the Combined Federal Campaign, #62113.

