

Cosponsor the Support UNFPA Funding Act

The United Nations Population Fund, also known as UNFPA, is the U.N. agency dedicated to sexual and reproductive health and rights. For decades, anti-choice politicians in the U.S. Congress and White House have attempted to restrict or eliminate the agency's funding. From 2017 to 2021, the Trump administration withheld all funding to UNFPA, a decision that was reversed by President Biden in a January 2021 presidential memorandum.

UNFPA works to advance sexual and reproductive health care in more than 150 countries around the world. This is approximately three times the number of nations that the U.S. government supports through its bilateral family planning and reproductive health programs, including many contexts where the United States does not or cannot directly engage. Therefore, investing in UNFPA extends the reach of U.S. funds, complements U.S. family planning and reproductive health programs and bolsters U.S. global health and gender equality goals, such as decreasing maternal mortality and morbidity and preventing child marriage.

Congress must reaffirm the U.S. partnership with UNFPA by passing the Support UNFPA Funding Act.

Advancing sexual and reproductive rights and gender equality

Established more than 50 years ago, UNFPA provides sexual and reproductive health care and information — such as voluntary contraception, safe maternity care and comprehensive sexuality education — to women and young people.¹ These services are critical to ensure that individuals are able to exercise their human rights, including their right to health and reproductive rights. Additionally, sexual and reproductive health services support the advancement of gender equality by providing women and girls the resources to make decisions about their own futures and enable them to pursue educational and economic opportunities.

Fundamental to UNFPA's mission is its work to end the global unmet need for family planning. As of 2020, 218 million women in low- and middle-income countries have an unmet need for modern contraception, which UNFPA aims to address by providing access to voluntary and rights-based family planning information, supplies and care.² These services support everyone's right to determine if they want to have children, the timing of growing their family and its size, as well as to freely choose their partner.

UNFPA also plays an important role in the global effort to end maternal mortality, which remains a leading cause of death among women of reproductive age. In addition to providing contraceptive services, which reduce the number of unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions, the agency trains midwives, provides essential medicines and supplies and supports emergency obstetric and newborn care programs.

The work of UNFPA is particularly important in humanitarian crises, where the agency provides

lifescaping reproductive and maternal health services and leads global coordination efforts on gender-based violence prevention and response — including provision of medical and psychosocial support to survivors. The agency also partners with UNICEF to end harmful practices like child marriage and female genital mutilation. These human rights violations undermine human dignity and have life-long impacts on the health and lives of those affected.

Responding to COVID-19

During the pandemic, UNFPA has not only sought to ensure that reproductive health services, such as family planning, remain available and accessible, but it has also played an important role in supporting health systems. This has included the agency strengthening its own capacity to respond to the pandemic by delivering critical supplies — such as ventilators and personal protective equipment — to health care workers, as well as promoting innovative approaches to providing care, such as online outreach and telemedicine.³

BECOME A COSPONSOR OF THE SUPPORT UNFPA FUNDING ACT

We urge you to prioritize the health and rights of women, girls and their communities by cosponsoring the Support UNFPA Funding Act.

This bill:

1. Authorizes funds to be made available for the core work of UNFPA, including ending maternal deaths, gender-based violence and harmful practices; addressing unmet need for family planning; and supporting U.S. national security and humanitarian efforts;
2. Makes it the policy of the United States that everyone has a basic human right to "... determine freely whether, when and with whom to have children," and to attain high-quality sexual and reproductive health care;
3. Recognizes access to contraception and reproductive health care as necessary for advancing the status of women; and
4. States that financial support for UNFPA's core and humanitarian work is a vital part of the U.S. commitment to global health, development and human rights.

To be added as a cosponsor of the Support UNFPA Funding Act, please reach out to staff in the office of Representative Chrissy Houlahan.

Sources

¹ United Nations Population Fund. (n.d.). About us. <https://www.unfpa.org/about-us>

² Guttmacher Institute. (2020, July). Adding It Up: Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health 2019. https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/adding-it-up-investing-in-sexual-reproductive-health-2019.pdf

³ United Nations Population Fund. (2020, June). Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic: UNFPA Global Response Plan. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/UNFPA_Global_Response_Plan_Revised_June_2020_.pdf