



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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JUN 10 2008

The Honorable John D. Dingell  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter of April 15, 2008, concerning the Population Information Online (POPLINE) database.

Following are responses to questions you raised and requests for documents set forth in your letter:

**1. All records relating to the awarding of the POPLINE database to Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.**

Records related to the award of the INFO Project and the POPLINE databases are enclosed.

**2. All records of communications between Johns Hopkins and the U.S. Agency for International Development relating to the POPLINE database.**

Records of communications between Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health and USAID related to the POPLINE database are enclosed.

**3. All records relating to the identification of the "information in the database that did not follow criteria that POPLINE has for the site."**

There are no records responsive to this request because all communications relating to the identification of information in the database were conducted by telephone. On February 15, 2008, USAID staff noticed that certain materials from *A: The Abortion Magazine* were posted on the POPLINE database. That same day, USAID staff contacted the Director of the INFO Project by telephone voicemail and inquired about the criteria used for selecting materials for inclusion in POPLINE. The Director of the INFO Project returned the phone call and discussed the issue with USAID staff. Records of subsequent communications between USAID and Johns Hopkins University relating to the issue are submitted in response to Question two above.

**4. All records relating to the decision to make “abortion” or any other word or term a “stop word” in the POPLINE database.**

There are no records responsive to this request because USAID was not involved in the decision to make “abortion” or any other word or term a “stop word” in the POPLINE database. As with all USAID cooperative agreements, unlike contracts, recipient organizations substantially determine the parameters of program activities consistent with the objectives and scope of the agreement as well as U.S. law and policy. Recipients of cooperative agreements and program activities are restricted by the objectives and scope of the program USAID is funding. The INFO Project and the POPLINE database administrators made, and continue to make, all decisions about search terms and “stop words”, as well as the selection criteria for inclusion of documents in the POPLINE database. Moreover, USAID officials did not request or instruct Johns Hopkins University to make “abortion” or any other word or term a “stop word” in the POPLINE database, although Johns Hopkins University did inform USAID that they had decided to do so.

**5. The names and titles of those officials in USAID who asked for or approved the decision to make “abortion” or any other word or term a “stop word” in the POPLINE database.**

No USAID official asked for or approved the decision to make “abortion” or any other word or term a “stop word” in the POPLINE database.

**6. Please identify in writing the “criteria that POPLINE has for the site” that identified abortion-related items as inappropriate for the database.**

The INFO Project has maintained written selection criteria for POPLINE since the Project’s start in 2002. The INFO Project’s “POPLINE: Selection Criteria for Collection Development as of 2002” and “POPLINE: Selection Criteria 2007” provided to USAID by the Project are enclosed.

**7. A written explanation as to whether USAID rules permit administrators of a federally-funded database to restrict certain search terms.**

As noted above, as with all USAID cooperative agreements, recipient organizations substantially determine the parameters of program activities consistent with the objectives and scope of the agreement as well as U.S. law and policy. Under a cooperative agreement, a recipient organization would make decisions relating to specific search terms. USAID has no rules relating to the restriction of search terms in databases.

**8. A list of all other databases funded by USAID and maintained by non-Government entities.**

As we discussed with your staff, providing a total list of USAID-supported databases would require a survey of all USAID Missions overseas as well as the remainder of USAID Bureaus in Washington. With your staff’s concurrence, we are enclosing a list of databases funded by USAID’s Bureau for Global Health and maintained by non-governmental organizations.

Please note that we are including in our response to the Committee’s request sensitive documents that should not be disclosed to those who do not have a need to know. These documents would be exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”) and other applicable law.

In this instance, some of the documents we are providing contain deliberative process materials and potential trade secrets. The deliberative process materials include documents evidencing the Agency’s process of assessing

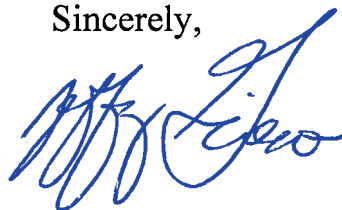
POPLINE. The agency avoids unlawful disclosure of deliberative process materials to encourage frank evaluations and discussions of such information by agency staff, the disclosure of which would surely chill such deliberations; and additionally protects the public from confusion resulting from disclosure of deliberations that ultimately may not have been the basis for agency final decisions.

Some of the information provided in the enclosed set of documents of implementing partner submissions also raises potential trade secret concerns about improper disclosure of the partner's business or proprietary information. The Agency respects its partners' lawful interests in confidential business and proprietary information to avoid any competitive harm to our potential or actual business partners. Improper disclosure of such information would have a chilling effect on firms' willingness to participate in future Government acquisitions. All these concerns, of course, are reflected in the mandates of laws limiting disclosure. Some of this information is particularly sensitive at this time because a Request for Applications for work substantially similar to that described in some of the documents provided here is currently open for bid.

In light of the above, I respectfully ask that the Committee on Energy and Commerce not release any of the enclosed documents outside of the Committee, or that access be limited to Members and staff who have an official need to know their contents.

Thank you for your interest in USAID's family planning program. If we can be of further assistance, please let us know.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey J. Grieco  
Assistant Administrator  
Bureau for Legislative and  
Public Affairs

Enclosures:

1. Records related to award of the INFO Project and the POPLINE database
2. Records of communications between Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health and USAID related to the POPLINE database
3. "POPLINE: Selection Criteria for Collection Development as of 2002" and "POPLINE: Selection Criteria 2007"
4. A list of databases funded by USAID's Bureau for Global Health and maintained by non-governmental organizations

cc:

The Honorable Bart Stupak  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

The Honorable Joe Barton, Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable John Shimkus, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations