

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 24, 2002

The Honorable Andrew Natsios
Administrator, Agency for International Development
Ronald Reagan Building
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20523

Dear Administrator Natsios

As Members of Congress who have worked hard to make sure that taxpayer dollars are not used to provide or promote abortion, we are deeply disappointed that the Agency for International Development (AID) recently awarded the Population Council \$65 million. The Population Council is not only a promoter of abortion, it is also a provider of abortion, including holding the US patent on the chemical abortion pill mifepristone, commonly known as RU-486. It is an outrage that the Population Council is receiving monetary support from the Bush Administration.

On March 23, 2002, President Bush declared his opposition to subsidizing abortion when he told reporters, "I said we're not going to use taxpayers' money to fund abortion, and I'm going to make sure we're not using taxpayers' money to fund abortion." In addition, President Bush issued an executive order on January 23, 2001 that reinstated the Mexico City Policy. The Mexico City Policy prevents any population funding from going to foreign organizations that provide or promote abortion.

If the Population Council was a foreign nongovernmental organization and was applying for population funding instead of HIV/AIDS funding, it would be ineligible under US law because it both supports and provides abortion. According to their web site, "[In Asia and other regions] Council work in abortion includes both medical abortion and postabortion care." The United States should have a central role in postabortion care, but giving \$65 million to an organization that specializes in medical abortions is unconscionable.

The principle behind the Mexico City Policy is that the American public does not want to subsidize abortion, and we do not want to send a mixed message to other countries by paying abortion providers to be our international aid surrogates. Even though the Mexico City Policy only covers population funding, the same principle of not wanting to support, or appear to support, abortion with taxpayer funds should apply to HIV/AIDS funding. This is especially true when dealing with an organization like the Population Council that has been on the front lines of promoting RU-486.

It is important to note that the Mexico City Policy goes beyond preventing US funding from directly paying for abortion; it prevents indirect funding by saying we will not fund even noncontroversial programs if run by organizations that promote or provide abortion. The Mexico City Policy prevents taxpayer subsidy of abortion in other countries and prevents a mixed message on abortion by saying that our grantees cannot be our international representatives on one hand and promote abortion on the other. This is especially applicable for the Population Council award because while their Horizons program does not appear to directly promote abortion, the Population Council as a whole does provide and promote abortion.

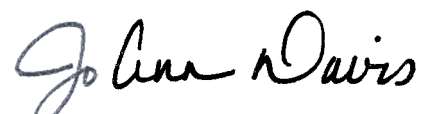
In addition, the \$65 million AID provided to the Population Council is intended to fund the Horizons global HIV prevention program. We have reviewed Horizon's recommendations for preventing HIV among youth entitled "Reducing HIV Infection Among Youth: What Can Schools Do?" and we are extremely disappointed that it focuses only on condom promotion. Nowhere in the Horizons recommendations is abstinence mentioned, recommended or supported. It is completely ignored as an intervention to reduce HIV/STDs among youth. This is despite the fact that abstinence and delaying sexual debut has proven to be highly successful in reducing HIV rates in Uganda and Zambia. Abstinence until marriage, as you know, is also the Administration's stated priority in HIV/STD prevention. In order for us to have a greater understanding of AID's current funding priorities, we request a breakdown of the amount of AID funds that are being used to fund or promote research or implementation of abstinence-only programs as well as "safe" sex programs, including the cost for purchasing of condoms and other contraceptives.

We are also very concerned that Horizons, according to its own website, is doing research in brothels, including research on women and girls who are being held against their will in Svay Pak, Cambodia, a notorious bastion of sex trafficking. Horizons' website says about these women, "Brothel owners maintain strict control over the sex workers, who cannot leave the brothel without permission. The women do not always have the power to decide which clients to accept and whether or not condoms are used." We question the ethics of any organization that conducts research on women and girls in this situation.

We are deeply concerned about the \$65 million award to the Population Council and request that it be rescinded and granted to an organization that does not support or perform abortion. In addition, we urge the Administration to make technical changes to the Mexico City Policy so, as originally intended, it will not allow any federal grants or programs to go to promoters or providers of abortion overseas. Thank you for your attention to this serious matter.

Sincerely,


CHRISTOPHER SMITH
Member of Congress


JO ANN DAVIS
Member of Congress



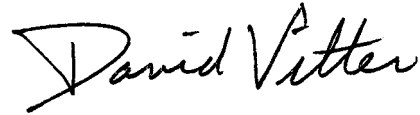
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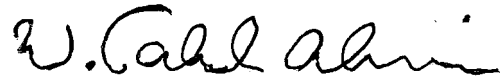
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