

## Gag Trumps Women's Rights

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2017, Donald Trump signed an order affecting millions of women globally, eagerly shadowed by a party of men. The Mexico City policy, also referred to as the global gag rule, has been a Republican favourite since Reagan's introduction of it in 1984. Whilst every democratic president has revoked the policy upon taking office, the ascension of a Republican candidate has promptly brought it back into practice. In 2003, the rule stated that U.S.A.I.D and the U.S. State Department would not provide financial aid to non-governmental organisations that perform abortion, or even promote it as a family planning option. Donald Trump's induction into presidency has inevitably re-established the Mexico City policy, albeit with a twist. Trump has amplified the rule to include funding cuts to organisations from *all* U.S. governmental departments and agencies. To put this in numbers, a rule that previously cut back family planning by a seemingly enormous five hundred and seventy-five million dollars will now restrict this foreign aid by nine and a half *billion* dollars. To the new president, the policy provides a simple technique to support pro-life sentiments nationally, however international consequences are nothing short of catastrophic.

Before even delving into the complexities of the policy and discussing the quantitative statistics, a glaring error can be seen. Thrice over, wealthy Caucasian men have enforced a rule that primarily concerns women in disadvantaged regions. There is absolutely no reasoning that can support this as the correct way to go about creating rules regarding abortion, or any issue to do with women and their bodies. The Mexico City policy is a violation of the basic right of women and girls, one that is protected under international law, to be able to choose whether, when and how many children they have.

The United States is the single largest donor to women's health programs internationally. However, even with the looming threat of such significant budget cuts, the majority of non-governmental family planning organisations are resistant to the United States' strong recommendation to withhold any mention of abortion in their programs. These NGOs are more than aware of the dangers of removing the procedure as an option. Without the availability of safe opportunities, women are much more likely to resort to potentially very harmful ways of terminating birth, including hitting their stomachs, consuming toxic liquids like Tansy oil or probing. Marie Stopes International is an Australian organisation that refused to adopt the rulings of the Mexico City policy upon Trump's signing, even if the financial effects were bound to be felt fully, and heavily. Six and a half million unintentional pregnancies, two hundred million one hundred thousand unsafe abortions and twenty-one thousand seven hundred maternal deaths are expected to occur in Trump's first term,

only considering

assist in the prevention of sexually-transmitted infections. Under the gag rule, the children would not have access to even this.

The Mexico City policy is d

Population Reference Bureau. (2005, June 1). *Unsafe Abortion: Facts & Figures*. Retrieved from Population Reference Bureau: <http://www.prb.org/pdf05/unsafeabortion.pdf>

Talbot, M. (2017, January 25). *TRUMP MAKES THE GLOBAL GAG RULE ON ABORTION EVEN WORSE*. Retrieved from New Yorker: <http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/trump-makes-the-global-gag-rule-on-abortion-even-worse>

Terkel, A., & Bassett, L. (2017, January 24). *Donald Trump Reinstates Ronald Reagan's Abortion 'Global Gag Rule'*. Retrieved from Huffington Post: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/01/23/donald-trump-reinstates-ronald-reagans-abortion-global-gag-rul/?utm\\_hp\\_ref=au-homepage](http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/01/23/donald-trump-reinstates-ronald-reagans-abortion-global-gag-rul/?utm_hp_ref=au-homepage)

Watch, H. R. (2017, March 7). *Trump's 'Mexico City Policy' or 'Global Gag Rule'*. Retrieved from Human Rights Watch: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/07/trumps-mexico-city-policy-or-global-gag-rule>