

Population and Reproductive Health

Program Overview

Since the inception of the David & Lucile Packard Foundation in 1964, the Foundation's grantmaking has sought to protect and promote reproductive rights. Today, the Foundation's Population and Reproductive Health program remains grounded in its founders' three interrelated beliefs:

1. Rapid population growth puts pressure on the environment and hinders development;
2. Access to family planning enhances health and quality of life for women and their families; and
3. A woman's right to safe abortion is an essential component of reproductive health services and should be protected.

The Challenge

Today, more than 220 million women worldwide want information about, and services that provide modern contraceptives, yet they lack both. Annually, nearly 290,000 women die because their pregnancies are too soon, too close to each other, too frequent, or happen in unsafe conditions. Women and young girls who lack access to quality reproductive health information and services are more likely to give birth at very young ages, to have high fertility rates, and to have poor health outcomes as a result. The increasing *youth bulge* exacerbates this challenge and poses the question of how best to reach this growing youth population. Women and young people are left without the information and services they need to make informed decisions concerning their life and well-being.

Our Strategy

The Population and Reproductive Health program is committed to promoting reproductive health and rights, and stabilizing population growth. Our program has a deliberate focus on improving quality of reproductive health information and services and a special emphasis on serving and engaging young people. We believe that young people have the best potential for building and sustaining a movement of change.

We will use evidence and experience from our focus geographies and partner with global research and advocacy organizations, especially youth-led networks, to shape the global discourse at the regional and global levels around reproductive health and rights.

Our Subprograms

The Population and Reproductive Health program seeks to expand access to and improve the quality of a broad array of services, including comprehensive sexuality education, voluntary family planning/contraception and safe abortion. We focus our efforts in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and the United States. In each region we make grants to strengthen service delivery, build leadership and advocacy capacity and change social and cultural norms that prevent women and youth from seeking services they need to make healthy reproductive decisions.

South Asia

In South Asia, we will continue our deep investment in Bihar, India; support a multi-donor focused initiative in Karachi, Pakistan; and make targeted

investments in Uttar Pradesh, India and Myanmar, as well as regional initiatives where there is a strategic opportunity.

Women and girls from marginalized communities bear the greatest burden of poor sexual and reproductive health due to their disadvantaged social status and limited educational and economic opportunities. A significant proportion of girls are forced into early marriages and pregnancies, and have frequent childbearing while lacking access to quality sexual and reproductive health information and services. These inequities within a rapidly growing youth population are known to cause intergenerational compromises to quality of life.

This subprogram seeks to improve the quality of voluntary family planning/contraception and reproductive health services for women and young people, scale-up comprehensive sexuality education in schools and communities and improve access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services in the public sector; improve access to safe abortion in the public and private sectors; and build local and regional movements to increase political will and improve policies and financial resources to support reproductive health.

Sub-Saharan Africa

The Sub-Saharan Africa subprogram makes deep investments at the national level in Ethiopia and in the region of Oromia, Ethiopia. The portfolio also includes targeted investments in Kenya, Rwanda and Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and in regional advocacy efforts.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the lack of access to quality reproductive health information and services as well as social and economic pressures on women often lead to early marriage, early childbearing and a large family size. In addition, in many Sub-Saharan countries, roughly 25–40 percent of the population is below 15 years of age, posing a challenge to governments who will need to provide educational and economic opportunities as well as appropriate sexual and reproductive health information and services to them. The inequities and obstacles to care, combined with a rapidly growing youth

population, exacerbate poor health outcomes and weaken already overburdened systems.

We support efforts that: improve the quality of and expand access to voluntary family planning and reproductive health services, including safe abortion and post-abortion care for women and young people; expand access to comprehensive sexuality education in schools and communities; and build local and regional movements to advance political and financial support for family planning and reproductive health.

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United States

Our US subprogram supports efforts at the national level and in Louisiana and Mississippi to advance reproductive health and rights, especially for women and young people.

Today, more than half of all U.S. women of reproductive age (15–44) live in a state that is hostile to abortion rights. Opposition to comprehensive sexuality education, contraception and abortion continues unabated, and a growing number of state level restrictions limit the window of time for an abortion, increase the cost of care and create unnecessary hardship for women seeking care.

At the national level, we support policy advocacy, litigation and innovative strategies not only to defend reproductive rights, but to pilot more proactive strategies and policies. At the state-level we support efforts that: expand access to comprehensive sexuality education and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services through youth-focused advocacy and the establishment and evaluation of model programs; improve the quality and reach of voluntary family planning/contraception services; and protect access to safe abortion by building state-based advocacy

capacity and addressing the clinic and provider shortage.

Our Progress

The Foundation's longstanding commitment to comprehensive sexuality education, voluntary family planning and safe abortion, combined with our experience and credibility in the U.S. and internationally, provides us with an opportunity to make a significant difference.

The Population and Reproductive Health program has been instrumental in seeding and accelerating progress on reproductive health and rights, often under the most challenging of circumstances. From

Ethiopia's use of modern contraception doubling during the last strategy period, to young girls in Bihar starting to make informed decisions about when to marry, when to have children and how many children to have, our efforts have contributed to improving access to services, mobilizing political and financial commitment and enabling women and girls to make informed decisions.

Learn More

To learn more about our subprograms, visit our website at: www.packard.org/population-reproductive-health.