



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

**FAMILY PLANNING AND THE AID PROGRAM:
GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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FAMILY PLANNING AND THE AID PROGRAM: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Australia recognises that access to family planning is one of the most cost effective approaches to reducing maternal and child mortality.

Australia is committed to the International Conference on Population and Development's goals of 'achieving universal access to family planning by 2015'.

Improving access to appropriate, affordable and safe contraceptives and products is an important component of effective family planning services. By ensuring women and men have access to comprehensive family planning services and advice, Australia aims to reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies and thereby minimise the need for women to resort to abortion.

These *Guiding Principles* aim to serve as a comprehensive reference document for the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) staff and partner organisations who are implementing activities involving reproductive health and family planning. This Guide sets out the Government's approach and outlines the principles organisations should adhere to in order to ensure that family planning activities are of the highest quality.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

1. **Read the *Guiding Principles*:** they summarise the Government's approach to supporting family planning activities in the aid program.

- See page 3 for the *Guiding Principles*
- See page 4 for information on *Implementing the Guiding Principles*

2. **Confirm that the program is a family planning activity.**

- See page 6 for the definition of a family planning activity.

3. **DFAT programs and partners should consider the *Design Principles* before commencing implementation.**

- See page 6 for the *Design Principles*.

4. **For further assistance** please contact DFAT's Health Policy Section on (02) 6178 4000.

FAMILY PLANNING AND THE AID PROGRAM: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Australian aid program's guidelines for family planning reflect the International Conference on Population and Development's (ICPD) Programme of Action, adopted by 179 governments in Cairo in 1994. Australia supports a comprehensive approach to family planning and reproductive health activities based on the following guiding principles.

- Women and men should freely decide the number, spacing and timing of their children and have access to the information and means to exercise this choice.
- Women and men should have access to the widest possible range of safe and effective family planning methods and should participate fully in defining the family planning services they need.
- Family planning activities should be non-discriminatory and available to all.
- Australia's assistance should actively work towards improving the quality of care in family planning and reproductive health programs by (but not limited to):
 - providing the same range of reproductive health and family planning services for women in developing countries as are supported for women in Australia, subject to the national laws of the relevant nation concerned;
 - involving communities in planning programs appropriate to their needs;
 - increasing the choice of family planning methods available;
 - improving the skills and competence of family planning service providers;
 - providing accurate information and confidential counselling for clients;
 - providing follow-up advice and services to clients;
 - ensuring affordable, acceptable and accessible services; and
 - making the prevention of unwanted pregnancies the highest priority, with every attempt being made to minimise the need for abortion.

IMPLEMENTING THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The *Family Planning and the Aid Program: Guiding Principles* is the central document underpinning the design and implementation of family planning and reproductive health activities in the aid program. DFAT staff and implementing partners should be familiar with and share a common understanding of the guiding principles.

In addition the Government has two specific criteria on supporting family planning activities. The criteria should be read together.

1. Providing the same range of family planning services for women in developing countries as are supported for women in Australia, subject to the national laws of the relevant nation concerned.

The Guidelines support the same range of family planning and reproductive health services for women in developing countries as are supported for women in Australia, consistent with the national laws of the partner country concerned and in line with the ICPD *Programme of Action*. The Guidelines place a gestational term limit on abortion of up to 20 weeks.

Family planning and reproductive health services in Australia include:

- provision of accurate information and confidential counselling for clients;
- access to safe and effective contraceptives;
- postnatal checks and contraception;
- pregnancy tests and information regarding pregnancy options;
- safer sex information;
- assessment, testing and treatment of sexually transmissible infections;
- assessment and management of vaginal infections and vulval problems;
- menopause information and treatment;
- assessment and management of menstruation and bleeding problems;
- pap tests, breast awareness information; and
- safe and professional abortion services (both medical and surgical).

2. Consistent with (1) above, women in developing countries should have access to the types of contraceptives available to women in Australia, subject to the laws and regulations of the relevant country concerned. For agencies using aid program funding for reproductive health programs, the *Interagency List of Essential Medicines for Reproductive Health* is the reference document to be used for products and pharmaceuticals.

The *Interagency List of Essential Medicines for Reproductive Health* (the List) presents the current international consensus on the selection of essential reproductive health medicines, listing the most efficacious, safe and cost-effective medicines that are readily available globally. The List has been developed by the World Health Organization in collaboration with major international and non-governmental organisations active in the field of reproductive health, including the World Bank, the International Planned Parenthood Federation, John Snow, Inc., PATH, Population Services International and the United Nations Population Fund. Included in the Interagency List is Mifepristone, also known as RU486. The List notes, where permitted under national law, the administration of Mifepristone requires close medical supervision. This is consistent with the law in Australia.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The *Guiding Principles* reflect the International Conference on Population and Development's Programme of Action, adopted by 179 governments in Cairo in 1994. The Programme of Action defined reproductive health as "...a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its function and processes"¹.

The ICPD calls for countries to support the following principles.

- Ensure that comprehensive and factual information and a full range of reproductive health care services, including family planning, are accessible, affordable, acceptable and convenient to all users.
- Enable and support responsible voluntary decisions about child-bearing and methods of family planning of their choice, as well as other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility which are not against the law and to have the information, education and means to do so.
- Meet changing reproductive health needs over the life cycle and to do so in ways sensitive to the diversity of circumstance of local communities.
- Make appropriate steps to help women avoid abortion, which in no case should be promoted as a method of family planning, and in all cases provide for the humane treatment and counselling of women who have had recourse to abortion.
- Ensure, in circumstances where abortion is not against the law, such abortion should be safe.
- In all cases, women should have access to quality services for the management of complications arising from abortion. Post-abortion counselling, education and family-planning services should be offered promptly, which will also help to avoid repeat abortions.

DEFINITION OF A FAMILY PLANNING ACTIVITY

For the purpose of these guidelines, family planning activities are those that involve:

- family planning services including counselling on managing fertility, delaying pregnancy, birth spacing etc;
- training of health workers in the practice of family planning;
- providing and distributing contraceptive supplies;
- developing and distributing information, education and communication materials relating to family planning;
- biomedical and contraceptive research and development;
- family planning as part of voluntary counselling and testing and prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV services; and
- capacity building for organisations that deliver family planning services.

¹ *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development*, United Nations, New York, 1996, paragraph 7.2.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The *Design Principles* are intended to be used as a tool that may assist partner organisations when designing and implementing activities that include a family planning component.

1. Are there any partner government policies which limit the ability of women and men to make free and informed choices about timing of childbirth and family size? If yes, how will these be addressed to ensure the activity provides a voluntary approach to family planning?
2. Are there any local, social, cultural and economic issues that impinge on the family planning component of the activity? If so how will they be addressed?
3. How will women and men (in the recipient country) be involved in the design and management of the activity's family planning component?
4. How will the different roles and status of women and men as they affect the family planning component of the activity be addressed?
5. What family planning methods will be available in the place where the activity will occur? Will the available family planning methods be accessible and affordable to prospective clients?
6. What follow-up arrangements will be provided for those who wish to change or cease using a family planning method? What arrangements will be made in regard to providing confidential services for clients?
7. What arrangements exist in regard to continuity of contraceptive supplies following completion of the activity?
8. Will the activities (such as revolving funds or income generating activities) be accessible to people, regardless of numbers of children or contraceptive status?
9. What arrangements will be put in place for monitoring and evaluation against the *Guiding Principles*?
10. Are there any issues relating to the family planning component of this activity that need to be addressed before the activity can proceed? Consider if any of these issues represent major risks.

MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION

A clause committing partner organisations to adhere to the Guidelines will be included in all DFAT agreements.

DAC Code

The DAC (Development Assistance Committee) code 13030 designates that an activity includes a family planning component. All Australian aid funded activities that involve a family planning component should be assigned this code. The 13030 code may be assigned as a primary or secondary code. An activity with even a small family planning component should be assigned a secondary code of 13030. Secondary codes can be given a weighting of low, medium or high depending on the impact the activity has on family planning.