



February 12, 2009

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State

Dear Madam Secretary:

As members of the Reproductive Health Response in Conflict (RHRC) Consortium, we congratulate you on your confirmation as Secretary of State, and thank you for your longstanding support of humanitarian assistance and women's rights. We applaud your comments made during your Senate confirmation hearing regarding the centrality of these issues to our nation's foreign policy and interests worldwide. As you assume your new responsibilities, we hope that you will reaffirm our national commitment to comprehensive reproductive health care as a critical component of humanitarian response. We applaud President Obama's decision to restore funding for UNFPA, which in the last several years has been given an important role in the U.N. humanitarian system for ensuring access to reproductive health supplies and services in humanitarian settings.

Reproductive health care is life-saving, especially for the more than 20 million women and girls displaced by conflict. We have lost important ground over the last eight years in providing strong global leadership and adequate U.S. funding for essential reproductive health services in humanitarian settings and during post-conflict rebuilding. It is therefore critical that this issue receive significant attention in U.S. humanitarian policy and assistance programs from the new Administration. We see the following issues as priorities for action in order to improve the delivery of reproductive health care to women and girls affected by war:

- Affirm U.S. support for comprehensive reproductive health care as a key component of humanitarian and early recovery assistance programs. Increase U.S. funding for these activities and encourage other donors to do the same.
- Restore strong U.S. support for the implementation of international standards on emergency reproductive health services at the onset of a humanitarian crisis. These essential services, known as the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for Reproductive Health, were first articulated in 1997 and established as a Sphere Standard in 2000. Increased support from the U.S. and other donors for the MISP will save lives.
- Once emergency reproductive health needs are addressed, move to the delivery of comprehensive reproductive health education and services as soon as possible as put forth in the Inter-Agency Field Manual on Reproductive Health in Refugee

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Situations. Ensure that comprehensive care is provided throughout the period of displacement and ensure a smooth and full transition from relief to development funding so that women and girls continue to have access to vital reproductive health care when they return to their home areas.

We remain very grateful for your outstanding leadership on issues related to the protection of women and girls whose lives have been upended by conflict, and we look forward to working with you to increase the range of quality comprehensive reproductive health services for refugees and other displaced persons around the world. We would be happy to meet with you, or an appropriate member of your staff, to discuss these issues in further detail.

With very best wishes,



Karen Frederickson
President, American Refugee Committee



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