



FACTSHEET: Banning Abortion Funding is Good Foreign Policy

In 1973, the U.S. passed the Helms Amendment barring U.S. foreign aid from funding abortions or motivating anyone to commit abortion. Some now argue to ignore or reinterpret Helms to fund abortions in certain cases. They misrepresent international humanitarian law to claim a right to abortion for rape in disaster/conflict situations even in countries where abortion is illegal.

This would open the door to abortion with no restrictions or safeguards, since monitoring would be virtually impossible, especially in regions that lack basic sanitation and health care.

It would imperil humanitarian efforts, endanger women, stigmatize children already outcast from society and [discriminate against faith-based groups](#) that won't do abortions.

Abortion may discard evidence of a crime, but doesn't erase women's pain and stigma. Aid should focus on assisting women and their children with medical and economic challenges, and to rise above their outcast status.

1. Ignoring nations' sovereignty can have undesirable consequences.

Funding abortions will create ill-will and distrust in nations where people need outside assistance, with the most vulnerable facing the greatest harm.

In countries where abortion is illegal, the U.S. would be funding criminal activity. Abortion may also violate cultural and religious customs. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), abortion providers should be mindful "whether there is likely to be violent opposition from within the refugee or displaced community."¹

Rumors regarding vaccinations have incited the murders of dozens of health care workers. A backlash against advocacy for LGBT rights has led countries to pass harsh laws against

¹ Reproductive Health in Conflict and Displacement: A guide for programme managers. World Health Organization, 2000. p. 57

homosexuality.²

2. Altering Helms will result in late-term and other dangerous abortions.

Every abortion in war-ravaged areas is unsafe, exposing women to health risks. Conditions do not allow for effective oversight or regulations. Basic sanitation, access to medical facilities, gestational limits on abortions, protection against forced abortions, and other legal and medical safeguards are non-existent in these regions and not instituted by altering Helms.

Helms prohibits U.S. funding to procure abortion equipment like manual vacuum aspirators (MVAs). Altering Helms will lead to a proliferation of abortion equipment in remote regions, to be used by anyone on anyone, where adequate monitoring is impossible.

3. Poor women will be harmed

Abortion does not erase the rape or its stigma. Funding abortion will divert resources and attention from the true needs of women and their children. Aid efforts will be tempted to provide quick abortions over life-saving options that assist women and their children with enduring needs for security, education, and acceptance.

Women raped in conflict have been subjects for experimental abortion techniques. In 1972, Harvey Karman pioneered his “supercoil” (a ball of plastic razors) for second-trimester abortions in post-conflict Bangladesh under the sponsorship of Planned Parenthood before teaming up with Kermit Gosnell to bring the abortion technique to the U.S. in what became known as the “Mother’s Day Massacre.”

4. What women want and victims need.

Women with children conceived from rape in war told a U.N. panel they need security from conflict, medical and psychological care, housing, education, acceptance and skills for them and their children. They did not ask for abortion.³

Children conceived by rape in war are already vulnerable. Offering abortion as a legitimate option will further stigmatize these children as human beings who do not have an inalienable right to life. It reinforces the notion they are not human beings with rights that require protection.

5. Aid should focus on both mother and child.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, hospitals, communities and [schools](#)⁴ are created for outcasts. Their example motivates local people to treat all without discrimination. Panzi

² Uganda’s President Museveni initially leaned against a bill toughening penalties on homosexuality. When he signed it, Museveni said, “I would like to discourage the USA government from taking the line that passing this law will ‘complicate our valued relationship’ with the USA as President Obama said. Countries and Societies should relate with each other on the basis of mutual respect and independence in decision making. Africans do not seek to impose their views on anybody. We do not want anybody to impose their views on us.”

<http://www.newvision.co.ug/news/652797-museveni-responds-to-obama-on-anti-gay-bill.html>

³ http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/CD/DRC_Reparations_Report_en.pdf

Hospital in DR Congo cares for 1,200 women per year who were raped. “Many of the women I’ve met actually go on to give their babies names like Luck, Joy, and Innocence,” reports Dr. Lee Ann DeReus.⁵

A Rwandan mother, whose husband and seven children were massacred, named her daughter conceived by rape “who comes from God.”⁶

Jules Shell of Foundation Rwanda, which supports children conceived from rape during the genocide, said:

“No matter how horrific these stories, or how complicated their feelings were toward their children, every single mother we spoke to had the courage and the dream to stand up and fight for a better future for their children.”

“These children may represent a dark period of our history but they also represent the light and the hope for a better future. Together we have an opportunity to right the wrongs of the past.”

For some, their children are their only family, their pride and support in old age.

6. International humanitarian law does not establish a right to abortion in cases of rape in conflict situations.

Nothing has changed in the Geneva Conventions or international humanitarian law to suggest the U.S. is violating international law. Some advocates say Security Council resolutions 2212 and 2106, adopted in 2013, which mention sexual and reproductive health services establish abortion as a right in cases of rape in situations of conflict.⁷ The resolutions do not address abortion and indeed could not.⁸

In the UN those terms have been defined only in the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). It excludes any notion of abortion as a right under any circumstance, even casting it in a negative light, and states the terms can only be associated with abortion where abortion is legal.⁹

⁴ <http://www.globalgiving.org/projects/educate-congolese-children-born-of-rape/>

⁵ <http://www.ncfr.org/professional-resource-library/daring-make-difference-dr-congo-lee-ann-de-reus-tedxpsu>

⁶ http://www.macumbainternational.com/eng/2_4.php

⁷ The UN Population Fund adopted this stance in the recent report Framework of Actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014, p.38 available at http://icpd_beyond2014.org/uploads/browser/files/icpd_global_review_report.pdf (accessed March 5, 2014).

⁸ The operative paragraph in SC 2106 asks the United Nations and donors to provide “sexual and reproductive health” in conflict situations. SC 2122 does not contain any operative paragraphs addressing sexual and reproductive health, but mentions the provision of a “full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including regarding pregnancies resulting from rape” in a non-operative paragraph.

⁹ Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994, paragraphs 7.6, 8.25, and 13.4(b).

7. Creating a de facto policy that abortion is a solution to the egregious crime of rape further stigmatizes children born of rape, and perpetuates prejudice.

Experts have identified children born of war as a vulnerable group whose rights under international law are routinely dismissed and who are therefore in need of special protections.¹⁰

Suspending the Helms amendment in cases of conflict zones would undermine the nascent efforts of scholars and practitioners to foster greater advocacy on behalf of international aid organizations. Experts have furthermore found that addressing the needs of these children through the framework of sexual violence hinders rather than helps that effort, because it "further reinforce[s] the idea that they are primarily consequences of rights violations rather than human beings themselves with rights that also require protection."¹¹

Targeting certain populations for abortion based on their father's ethnicity can further advance the concept of ethnic purity, validate and perpetuate hatred and prejudice, and harm reconciliation efforts.

8. Faith-based organizations will be discriminated against.

Altering Helms will result in discrimination against faith-based groups that will not commit abortion. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops was denied grant renewal for an anti-trafficking program, despite being the superior grantee, because they do not offer abortion.

9. The Helms Amendment is understood as banning funding for abortion under any circumstance.

Since its enactment in 1973, the Helms amendment against abortion "as a method of family planning" has never been interpreted as exempting abortion for rape.

10. Reinstating Mexico City Policy will suspend programs.

A subsequent administration will likely reinstitute the Mexico City Policy, halting funding to international groups that promote or perform abortion. This can create turmoil among USAID programs.

11. Most Americans do not support taxpayer funding of abortion.

A CNN poll found 56% oppose and only 39% favor taxpayer funding of abortion.¹²

12. Negative global views on abortion.

A Pew poll found not a single nation in 40 surveyed believe abortion is morally acceptable.¹³

¹⁰ See R. Charli Carpenter, *Forgetting Children Born of War: Setting the Human Rights Agenda in Bosnia and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 2 and also R. Charli Carpenter, Ed., *Born of War: Protecting Children of Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones* (Bloomfield, Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 2007) 223.

¹¹ R. Charli Carpenter, Ed., *Born of War: Protecting Children of Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones*, 211.

¹² <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2014/03/06/cnn-poll-wide-divide-over-abortion/>

¹³ <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/04/15/global-morality/>