

UK aid to help prevent unsafe abortions

UK aid support for the Safe Abortion Action Fund (SAAF) will also give some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable women and girls access to safe abortion.

It will also give urgent care and counselling for women dealing with the often devastating consequences of unsafe abortion and improve their access to contraception and family planning services.

Unsafe abortion disproportionately affects the world's most vulnerable women and girls, with 97% occurring in the world's poorest countries.

International Development Minister Baroness Sugg said:

We know that when girls and women can access all the information and safe healthcare services they need, lives are saved and unsafe abortions are prevented.

Limiting women's choice only increases the number of unintended pregnancies. Restricting access to abortion doesn't mean it happens less frequently, it just makes it less safe.

This UK aid funding can make the crucial difference between giving women and girls access to safe options or forcing them to resort to unsafe alternatives.

Millions of women and girls in developing countries still can't get the contraception they tell us they want. It's either too expensive, too difficult to access, particularly in remote, rural areas, or too taboo. Myths and stigma mean there is often a lack of information about contraception or safe abortion options.

As a result, 89 million women in developing countries will get pregnant, without wanting to, each year. Of these 25 million will resort to dangerous, painful backstreet abortions which can leave girls and women severely ill, disabled, or even cost them their life.

UK aid, through SAAF, will support grassroots organisations around the world to:

- increase the number of women who can access safe, comprehensive abortion care services;
- provide life-saving medical care and counselling for women dealing with the life-changing consequences of unsafe abortion;
- teach girls and women in need of abortion and abortion care services about sexual and reproductive health information and offer them

- voluntary modern contraceptive methods;
- fight dangerous myths and stigma about abortion in communities to allow girls and women to seek preventative contraception and safe abortion services, and help stop girls dying due to resorting to unsafe abortion; and
- campaign for safer legislation, policy, regulations, national curricula and services on safe abortion rights and services.

Maité Matos-Ichaso, Head of SAAF, said:

SAAF's goal is to work towards a world where women are empowered to exercise their rights and, crucially, women's lives are saved.

SAAF is unique because with the funding comes a package of interventions to give grassroots organisations the capacity to create a safe spaces for women in restrictive and fragile settings, through activities that are sustainable and relevant to the needs of the local people.

- UK aid will provide £2 million for the Safe Abortion Action Fund. SAAF is aiming to build a world where women's rights to safe and legal abortion are established and protected, women are empowered to exercise these rights and their lives are saved. It was established in 2006 as a multi-donor funding mechanism to support small local organisations working to increase access to safe abortion.
- SAAF currently supports grassroots organisations in 38 countries around the world. With this funding from UK aid, SAAF will give priority to projects that focus on the most vulnerable women and girls in the poorest countries and humanitarian settings.
- Globally there are an estimated 214 million women who want to delay or prevent pregnancy but who are not able to access or use contraception. Unintended and early pregnancy is a key cause of high maternal death rates in Africa. Having access to contraception is critical for women continuing their education and being able to take up employment opportunities.
- UK aid is a world leader in supporting women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. UK aid has committed to support an estimated 20 million total users of contraception, prevent 6 million unintended pregnancies, and so prevent more than 3 million abortions, many of which would be unsafe. It will save the lives of over 6,000 women every year – that's at least 16 women's lives every day for the next five years.