

REVEALED

**BIG SEX
PICTURE
INSIDE**



Sex...the bigger picture

Sex is a very personal matter. We think about it. We dream about it. We talk about it. We laugh about it. We even do it (2.6 times a week on average in the UK¹).

But there's a bigger picture too.

Sex – and its consequences – has a major impact on the lives and wellbeing of everyone on the planet.

Sex is about contraception and couples' ability to plan their families. Sex is about keeping free of HIV/AIDS, chlamydia and other sexually transmitted infections. Sex is about safe pregnancy and, if necessary, about safe abortion.

Sex is about not dying in childbirth.

In fact, **poor sexual and reproductive health is one of the main causes of death and disability across the world.** Those hardest hit are women and children in the poorest countries.

In 1994 the governments of the world (including those in Europe) made a promise to help bring sexual and reproductive health to everyone by 2015. Most have so far failed to provide all the promised funding.

To make matters worse, strong political and ideological forces across Europe and the US are working to reverse the progress that has already been made, denying people their right to sexual and reproductive health and placing lives at risk.

We must act NOW to persuade governments to resist these forces and keep their promise to bring sexual and reproductive health and rights to all.

¹ Durex. 2003. *Global Sex Survey*.

Get active: 'Sex: what position will *you* adopt?'

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SEX

**FACTS
OF LIFE**

Poor sexual and reproductive health causes nearly one fifth of the world's disease and disability.

In 1994 the governments of the world made a landmark commitment to support sexual and reproductive health. The goal was to make sure people worldwide could...

...give birth in safe hands

Sexual and reproductive health means having access to health services when you need them during pregnancy and childbirth. In Africa, 60%² of women give birth without the support of trained midwives or in unsanitary conditions. This year, over half a million women will die because of complications in pregnancy or childbirth.³ Almost all of them will live in less developed countries, where complications in pregnancy are the leading cause of death and disability among women.

...have contraception when they need it

Globally, there is a massive shortage of affordable condoms and other contraception. Around 350 million couples worldwide want to plan their families, but are denied the ability to do so through lack of contraception. Every US\$1 million **not** spent on contraceptives results in 360,000 extra unintended pregnancies, 150,000 additional induced abortions and 800 more maternal deaths.⁴

...be informed and take control

Sex education saves lives. But cuts in funding mean that many vital sex education projects are under threat. Comprehensive sex education programmes have been shown to delay teenage sex. In the Netherlands, for example, where young people have access to comprehensive sex education, rates of underage pregnancies are among the lowest in Europe.⁵

...have access to safe abortion, where legal

The World Health Organisation estimates that 46 million abortions take place globally every year. Of these, well over 20 million are performed in unsafe, often unhygienic conditions, in countries where abortion is legally restricted. An estimated 68,000 women die each year from botched abortions.⁶

...stay infection free

Each year, an estimated 400 million people worldwide are infected with a sexually transmitted infection. Every day, 13,000 new people get infected with HIV.⁷ In the UK, new syphilis infections increased by 28% in 2003 and new HIV infections by 20%.⁸ Sex education and a ready supply of condoms are the two methods proven to work best in the fight to prevent sexually transmitted infections.

...have their rights respected

In the UK and Europe we take for granted our right to contraception and family planning. But around the world, over 350 million women who would like to space their families are denied access to contraceptives, resulting in 80 million unplanned pregnancies per year.⁹ International law, which guarantees access to condoms and related HIV prevention services as part of the human right to the highest attainable standards of health, is being consistently undermined by the forces of political conservatism.

Lack of sexual and reproductive health and rights condemns millions of people around the world to a life of hunger, poverty and ill-health.

2 Population Research Bureau. 2002. *Women of the World*.

3 WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA. 2000. *Maternal mortality in 2000: Estimates Developed by WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA*.

4 UNFPA. 2001. *Reproductive Health Commodity Security: Partnerships for Change – A Global Call to Action*.

5 Economic Commission for Europe. 2003. *The Statistical Yearbook of the Economic Commission for Europe 2003*.

6 WHO. 2004. *Global and regional estimates of the incidence of unsafe abortion and associated mortality in 2000*.

7 UNAIDS. 2003.

8 UK Health Protection Agency.

9 UNFPA. 1997. *State of World Population 1997*. Alan Guttmacher Institute. 1999. *Sharing Responsibility: Women, Society and Abortion Worldwide*.

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FIDELITY

**IS 35%
FAITHFUL OK?**

In 1994, at the International Conference on Population Development (ICPD), 179 countries agreed an action plan to bring sexual and reproductive health services to all by 2015.

The wealthy nations of the world agreed to donate one third of the cost of a 20 year plan of action (which by 2015 is projected to cost roughly US\$22 billion a year). The remaining two thirds would come from the developing countries themselves.

But fine words have not been backed up by deeds. The governments of Europe and other developed countries have not met their financial targets. It is estimated that between 1996 and 2001, only 35% of the money promised by developed nations was delivered.¹⁰

The consequences of failing to act are disastrous.

More unintended pregnancies, more unsafe abortions, higher maternal deaths, more infant and child mortalities and more illness and death caused by sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.

“Annual assistance for population and reproductive health programmes is nearly US\$3 billion short of the level agreed at the ICPD.¹¹ It is urgent that donor countries increase not just their official development aid but also the proportion that goes to reproductive health and rights in particular.”

Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director, UNFPA, 2004

¹⁰ Population Action International. 2004.

¹¹ International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), Cairo 1994.

**BROKEN
PROMISES =
MORE**
UNINTENDED PREGNANCIES
UNSAFE ABORTIONS
INFANT & CHILD MORTALITIES
MATERNAL DEATHS
SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS
HIV/AIDS

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SEXUAL HEALING

**SUPPORTING SEXUAL &
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH**

“The eradication of extreme poverty and hunger cannot be achieved if questions of sexual and reproductive health are not squarely addressed.”

Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General, 2004.

World development and poverty reduction starts with sexual and reproductive health and rights:

- when people can plan their families, each child is more likely to be wanted. Smaller families mean parents have more time and resources to devote to each child
- without basic reproductive health services, women will continue to die unnecessarily just because they are pregnant. And more babies and young children will lose their mothers and be placed at greater risk of dying in infancy themselves
- investing in sex education and safer sex awareness programmes is the best way stop more people getting infected with HIV/AIDS
- young people are most at risk from unplanned pregnancies, unsafe abortion, sexually transmitted infections and sexual violence. By investing in sexual health services and education, these risks can be dramatically reduced.

Sexual health services are cost effective too. In Latin America, every dollar spent on family planning saves the government US\$12 in health and education costs. In Egypt, every US\$1 invested in family planning saves the government more than US\$31 in spending on other health services.¹²

“Sexual and reproductive health is so central as a human right. It improves people’s lives, gives them control, and lets them take up educational, economic and political opportunities. It contributes to reducing poverty, reduces inequality between men and women, and – if the right social policies are also in place – enables economic growth.”
Hilary Benn MP, Secretary of State for International Development, 2004.

12 Alan Guttmacher Institute and UNFPA. 2003. *Adding It Up, the Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health Care.*

**IN EGYPT
EVERY US\$1
INVESTED IN
FAMILY PLANNING
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ON OTHER
HEALTH SERVICES**

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DANGEROUS SEX POSITIONS

**POLITICS
& RELIGION**

Two examples of the growing opposition to sexual and reproductive health for all:

Bondage – US government policy is systematically undermining support for comprehensive sexual and reproductive health programmes in the developing world.

Since 2001, the US government has withdrawn funding from hundreds of local sexual health organisations working in some of the world's poorest areas because they continue to advise and counsel on abortion.

Under the so called 'gag rule', the US government refuses to give aid to any foreign organisation offering abortion services, counselling on abortion, or even simply mentioning abortion as one of a range of options.

Local non government organisations (NGOs) either accept US aid and agree to be gagged, or refuse to be bound by the gag rule and lose vital finances:

- **Marie Stopes International: Ethiopia** (MSI: Ethiopia) used to receive around US\$450,000 a year from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to run community based sexual health programmes. Because it refused to sign the gag rule, MSI: Ethiopia now receives nothing and has had to cut services
- with the support of **Interact Worldwide**, the Bangladesh Women's Health Coalition was planning a new adolescent health centre in a tribal area. These plans were dropped after the gag rule caused proposed funding to be withdrawn, leaving thousands without access to modern health services
- in Romania, where abortion is legal and common, the **Societatea de Educatie Contraceptiva si Sexuala** (SECS) used money from USAID to increase the use of modern

contraception and help prevent abortions. The gag rule has forced SECS to separate its family planning services from those that involve abortion, making it more difficult for women to obtain contraceptive information and services.¹³

The danger: this policy denies people's rights and access to family planning, sex education and sexual health services. This is likely to cause **more** unwanted pregnancies, and therefore more unsafe abortions, not fewer.

For two years running the US administration has withheld its annual payment to the United Nations Population Fund. This money (estimated at US\$34 million a year) could have prevented two million unwanted pregnancies, 800,000 induced abortions, 4,700 maternal deaths and 77,000 infant and child deaths per year.

The Missionary Position – Some political and religious groups are seeking to undermine European support for sexual and reproductive health worldwide.

Powerful political and ideological forces are pressurising governments to weaken their support for sexual and reproductive health:

- at the 2002 UN Summit for Children, US delegates argued that the right to comprehensive sex education should be removed on the grounds that sex education was likely to promote promiscuity. They were defeated at this summit but continue to actively promote their agenda – and could succeed in the future
- in the European Parliament, opponents of reproductive health (influenced by American fundamentalists) successfully blocked an increase in the budget for sexual

and reproductive health in developing countries in 2002. Some of the damage was undone the following year, but it's evidence that such views have both power and support and may yet prevail

- in April 2004, a report by the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee (calling for recognition of sexual and reproductive health as a human right) had to be watered down because of strong opposition from conservative forces
- there is now a conservative majority in the European Parliament, following the 2004 elections across an enlarged European Union. Some influential member states have strongly conservative views on sexual and reproductive health, influenced both by the Vatican and the current US administration. The Chair of the Women's Committee, for example, is staunchly anti-choice and has claimed that AIDS is God's vengeance for homosexuality. This could affect the balance of views across Europe as a whole and threaten continuing European funding for sexual and reproductive health programmes.

The danger: Europe is traditionally one of the largest funders of sexual and reproductive health programmes in the developing world. If that support were to fail, the consequences to the health and welfare of millions of people would be disastrous.

Strong European support is needed if people across the world are to achieve sexual and reproductive health. Make sure your MP works to guarantee sexual and reproductive health for all by 2015.

¹³ Population Action International, et al. 2003. *Access Denied, US Restrictions on International Family Planning.*

Get active: 'Sex: what position will you adopt?'

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COLD SHOWER

**SEXUAL
ABSTINENCE**

Abstinence is being promoted as the only way to prevent unplanned pregnancy and HIV transmission.

One third of US government funding for HIV/AIDS prevention (approximately US\$1 billion) is now 'ring fenced' for abstinence only programmes.¹⁴

Sexual abstinence is certainly **one** way in which people can protect themselves from infection or unwanted pregnancy. But it should form **part** of a comprehensive sex education package frequently known as **ABC** (**A**bstain, **B**e faithful, use a **C**ondom).

The US Administration, however, now openly prefers an 'abstinence only' agenda, with 'no sex before marriage' advocated as the **only** solution to global sexual health problems.

There is no evidence that abstinence only programmes can work:

- in the US, the incidence of sexually transmitted infections amongst young people who have pledged to abstain from sex before marriage is **as high as those who haven't made the pledge**
- in communities where more than 20% of young adults have taken virginity pledges, sexually transmitted infection rates are actually 3.4% higher¹⁵
- research shows that those who take virginity pledges break them within an average of 18 months (still well before marriage in most cases). When they do have sex, one third are less likely to use contraceptives to protect themselves¹⁶
- advocates of abstinence only programmes have attempted to distort scientific fact to support their case. The head of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for the Family, Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, asserted in a 2003 BBC interview that HIV can permeate microscopic pores in condoms, a claim for which there is no scientific basis whatsoever

- in the Philippines, US\$888,000, previously allocated for contraceptive programmes, has been redirected to *Couples for Christ*, an organisation promoting abstinence and natural family planning methods only.

Promoting contraception, on the other hand, can be shown to work:

- since the Swedish government dropped its 'sex only within marriage' campaigns in the 1970s (and switched to promoting contraceptive education), the number of teenagers giving birth has fallen by 80% and sexually transmitted infections by 40%¹⁷
- the most successful HIV/AIDS prevention programmes (such as those in Uganda, where the infection rate is falling) are those that combine sex education with access to a ready supply of condoms.

The danger: denying people's right to the information they need to protect their sexual health is a recipe for disaster.

¹⁴ United States Department of State 2004. *The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief: U.S. Five-Year Global HIV/AIDS Strategy*.

¹⁵ Bearman, P. and Brückner, H. 2004. *The Relationship Between Virginity Pledges in Adolescence and STD Acquisition in Young Adulthood. After the Promise: The Long-Term Consequences of Adolescent Virginity Pledges*.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Forsberg, Margareta. 2000. *Adolescent Sexuality in Sweden – A research review 2000*.

**EDUCATION =
TEENAGE PREGNANCIES
REDUCED BY
80%**

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SEX TALK

**INTIMATE
THOUGHTS**

The impact of poor sexual and reproductive health on lives in Kenya.

Safe motherhood

"I know of many women who have died of botched abortions."

Esther, Kenya

Funding cutbacks

"There are no pills, no supplies. Sometimes three people share one packet of pills. Someone comes and says 'please, please, please,' so instead of finishing them myself I give them to my friends. If the clinic were open they would ask the clinic. Now there are just private clinics for people with money."

Jane, Kenya

"If you don't use family planning you just go on giving birth, giving birth, giving birth. But family planning is expensive. Nowadays I can't afford it. My husband says that if I get pregnant again it's my problem. If I found out I was pregnant again I would abort. I will have to borrow the money. I have five children – that's enough."

Mildred, Kenya

"Women are getting more children because they have no condoms, no pills, and no clinic to go to get advice."

June, Kenya

Sex education

"People need educating. Men believe that if you have sex with a virgin you will be cured of HIV/AIDS. One man I know infected so many girls."

Njoki, Kenya

"Most men don't want to get involved in family planning. Many refuse to use condoms."

Irene, Kenya

"Peer educators are important because they can break down myths. Young people need to be empowered to reach other young people."

Rufus, Kenya

"Some of the people around here cannot afford condoms. We give them free, so what happens to young people if this place is closed."

Diana, Kenya

NO CONDOMS PILLS CLINICS

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ROULE PLAY

**GET DOWN TO
ACTION NOW**

'You can help prevent the death and suffering caused by poor sexual and reproductive health by 'getting active' on this crucial issue.

It is important that our government is working to ensure support for sexual and reproductive health programmes and to counteract attempts to deny individuals their rights.

Get Active. MPs have a vital role to play in encouraging – and also questioning – the Government's record and activities in the field of international development.

Your elected representative is duty bound to listen to your views and respond, too. Your voice counts.

So, ask your MP the crucial question: "Sex: what position will *you* adopt?"

Your MP can:

- write to HM Treasury to request increased funding for the Department of International Development (DFID) to support its work in improving sexual and reproductive health and rights around the world
- urge the Prime Minister to take a leadership role in ensuring continued international support for sexual and reproductive health and rights.

You can:

- get on top of sexual and reproductive health and rights issues, visit www.interactworldwide.org or www.mariestopes.org.uk to stay informed and keep up to date on campaigns targeting government, companies, individuals and those with influence. Help us demand that they take action to ensure freedom and access to sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services for all.

You can find your MP's name and constituency address on the internet by logging on to <http://politics.guardian.co.uk/aristotle> or by telephoning 020 7219 4272 and giving your postcode. Alternatively, if you know your MP's name you can write care of: House Of Commons, Westminster, London, SW1A 0AA.

You've read about sexual and reproductive health – what it means, why it matters, and what you can do to help save the lives of women and children in the poorest countries.



This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The content of this publication is the sole responsibility of interact worldwide and Marie Stopes International, and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

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Now is the time to get active: 'Sex: what position will *you* adopt?'