



Department  
for International  
Development



Rt Hon Priti Patel MP  
Secretary of State

Right to Life

Via email to: [petitions@citizengo.org](mailto:petitions@citizengo.org)

Our ref: 171109

20 September 2017

Dear Right to Life,

Thank you for your email of 29 July about safe abortion and international aid.

I hope it is helpful if I first clarify the new commitments the UK Government made at the family planning summit. The UK will invest an average of £225m each year over the next 5 years, which will support approximately 20 million women in some of the world's poorest countries to choose to use modern contraceptives.

The new commitments made on family planning will reduce the demand for abortions, by giving women access to vital information on family planning and contraception. There are 214 million women around the world who do not want to get pregnant but are, for a number of reasons, not using modern contraception. Over the next 5 years, our investment will prevent over 6 million unintended pregnancies and prevent more than 3 million abortions, many of which would be backstreet abortions that kill women and girls. This will save the lives of 6,000 women every year.

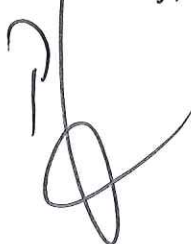
To give you some specific examples of the programmes we will be supporting, these include a programme in Ethiopia which will reach 670,000 more users of family planning over the next 4 years; a programme to support the Ugandan government's efforts to increase modern contraception, which will avert more than 800,000 unintended pregnancies up to 2022; and in Nigeria where our support for family planning commodities will reach 120,000 more family planning users. But millions of girls and women in humanitarian settings - war zones, disasters or refugee camps - are also not using contraception, because these services

are just not prioritised or offered. Countries at risk of crises also need to be resilient and prepared. The family planning summit presented a strong case for why family planning is a life-saving activity, that women and girls in crises need and want it, and that it is possible to deliver services in emergencies and in protracted crises. Just one example is in North East Nigeria where we are helping to train more female health workers.

More generally, the government's position on safe abortion in developing countries follows what is proven to work in reducing women's deaths from unsafe abortion. I emphasise that we do not support abortion as a method of family planning. The evidence shows that restricting access to abortion services does not make abortions less common – it only serves to make them less safe, risking women's and girl's health and lives. That is why the UK includes safe abortion as one part of its wider work on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and why, in my speech to the family planning summit, I also said that the UK would continue to support safe abortion.

I understand that our views on safe abortion may still differ, but I hope I have given you a clearer sense of what we are doing to protect women in countries where there is little information and access to safe methods of family planning, and how this investment will save and transform women's lives around the world.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. Patel', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP  
Secretary of State