



Department
for International
Development



Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP
Secretary of State

To supporters of the Go Citizen Campaign regarding
abortions in Africa

Our ref: 186909

September 2018

Thank you for your recent email to the Prime Minister regarding abortion in Africa. I have been asked to reply as the Secretary of State for International Development.

The UK Government is clear that the best way to avoid abortion is through giving information and contraception to enable people to decide whether, when and how often to have children. Therefore, the primary aim and vast majority of our investment in reproductive health is to increase uptake of voluntary family planning, which helps reduce the demand for abortion. This includes the £200million support for the Women's Integrated Sexual Health (WISH) programme which the Prime Minister announced during her recent visit to Kenya.

Voluntary family planning enables women and girls to avoid a life of early, multiple and dangerous pregnancies and births. It helps them complete their education, take up economic opportunities and have control over their lives. However, there is still a substantial gap between the number of women who don't want to get pregnant and the number who can access contraception. A significant number of these women are at risk from death and disability because they are accessing unsafe abortions. In this context, where abortion is legal, our support can prevent the backstreet abortions that would otherwise risk lives.

In Africa, an estimated 58million women of reproductive age want to avoid pregnancy but are, for a variety of reasons, not currently using modern contraception. To help meet this need, the WISH programme will support at least 6million couples to have consistent access to contraception each year in some of the world's poorest countries. This will stop over 8 million unintended pregnancies, reduce the number of abortions that are sought and prevent the deaths of over 24,000 mothers. The WISH programme is implemented according to the national legal and policy guidelines of the countries where it is implemented and will also support enhanced health and outreach facilities to improve access to health services for the poorest

I would like to reassure you that the UK Government does not promote abortion as a method of family planning. This has been the policy position of successive UK governments since the International Conference of Population and Development in 1994. Indeed, through our actions and programmes, including WISH, we are working to increase access to modern methods of contraception which help reduce demand for abortion. Our vision is a world where all women and men are able to exercise choice over the size and timing of their families, where no woman dies giving birth and where all new-borns survive and thrive.

Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP
Secretary of State for International Development