

## Attachment 2.9 Reproductive Health, HIV and AIDS Policy

Version 2.2

### Introduction

ChildFund Australia understands that reproductive rights are central to human rights and women's rights, with a profound impact on poverty in general, and health and well-being. Family planning, including access to appropriate, affordable and safe contraceptives and products, is one of the most cost-effective approaches to reducing maternal and child mortality and improve women's lives. Ensuring that women and men have access to comprehensive reproductive health services and advice helps to reduce numbers of unplanned pregnancies, adolescent pregnancies, and sexually transmitted infections.

ChildFund supports the principle that women have rights over their body and that these rights should be protected. We believe women have the right to make informed decisions to determine if, when, and how often, they have children. This reflects our desire to prevent child and maternal deaths and the value we place on women's rights, safe motherhood, healthy families and children's development.

HIV (and AIDS) as a sexually transmitted infection has a profound impact on children and their caregivers, and on social and economic development. Communities affected by poverty are particularly vulnerable when they lack access to information, resources and services, such as those which support reproductive health care and prevent transmission of HIV. Often these vulnerabilities increase in time of disasters.

ChildFund Australia recognises that access to primary health services, household income, and education – particularly for women – impact on an individual's ability to act on their reproductive choices. We aim to integrate and align our sexual and reproductive health projects with other projects in programs that are designed to advance health and well-being.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the ChildFund Australia Gender policy.

### Key Principles

**Freedom to choose:** Women should freely decide the number, spacing and timing of their children and have access to the information and means to exercise this choice. Women and men should have access to the widest possible range<sup>1</sup> of safe and effective family planning methods and should participate fully in defining the family planning services they need.

**Reduce the need for abortion:** Family planning activities should make the prevention of unwanted pregnancies the highest priority, with every attempt being made to minimise the need for abortion.

**Inclusivity:** Reproductive health activities should be non-discriminatory and available to all, including women, men, youth, people with disability and people living with HIV or AIDS.

**Health focused:** Programming should actively work towards improving the quality and accessibility of care and education in family planning and reproductive health programs to promote safe pregnancy and childbirth, thereby improving the health of the mother and infant.

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<sup>1</sup> Subject to the national laws of the relevant nation concerned.

## Policy Statement

ChildFund Australia is committed to all people of reproductive age having the opportunity to determine the number, spacing and timing of their children and having access to quality health services. ChildFund Australia will work to prevent HIV transmission, and to improve the quality of life and health outcomes for those infected and affected by HIV and AIDS, particularly children and their caregivers. We will encourage the active participation of people living with HIV and AIDS, and their organisations, in our programs and projects.

## Policy Commitments

ChildFund Australia will:

- include reproductive health projects in programs if appropriate, either mainstreamed or as targeted projects.
- align all sexual and reproductive health projects to be inclusive of youth.
- aim to mainstream HIV and AIDS interventions into other health projects and emergency response; or to implement targeted projects where it is a significant public health issue.
- respect and abide by in-country laws and policies and those of Australia, including the DFAT document *Family Planning and The Aid Program: Guiding Principles* (2009).
- work to reduce child and maternal deaths and morbidity and support the principle of women's sovereignty over their bodies.
- aim for youth, men, women and people with disability to have information on and access to safe, effective, affordable and culturally acceptable contraception, so they can act on informed choices to prevent unplanned pregnancies and the transfer of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV and AIDS.
- make the prevention of unplanned pregnancies a high priority in all reproductive health projects, with every attempt being made to minimise the need for the termination of pregnancies.
- aim to ensure that women of reproductive age who choose to terminate pregnancies have access to safe abortion services and appropriate follow-up treatment/support.
- work with communities to promote the capacity of couples and individuals (especially women and youth) to make informed decisions on the number, spacing and timing of their children.
- Strengthen, and where necessary build, local capacity for the delivery of safe and effective reproductive health programs and services.
- advocate for equitable access to reproductive health services and contraception regardless of sexual orientation, marital status, religion, age or disability.
- consider mainstreaming HIV and AIDS initiatives into other projects and programs, such as voluntary HIV testing, counselling, antiretroviral therapy, prevention of mother-to-child transmission, provision of post-exposure prophylaxis, supporting access to condoms, health and support services.
- ensure the HIV status of any person benefiting from, or participating in, ChildFund Australia programs is not revealed without their consent.

## Guidance Notes

Consult the International Program Team for support documents, such as templates, resources and checklists, to assist with the implementation of this policy.

**Document Information**

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