

# **NEWS RELEASE**



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## **Family Planning International Welcomes President Obama's Landmark Step to Save Women's Lives**

Wellington, 27 January 2009 – Family Planning International welcomes US President Barack Obama's landmark decision to repeal the Mexico City Policy. The ending of this policy will help save the lives of millions of women, as well as promote development and economic growth around the world, including in our own Pacific region.

The Mexico City Policy is a US policy that states that no government funding be given to any overseas (non-US based) organisation that offers abortion services, including counselling, referrals, information, or engaging in public policy debate on abortion, even if the funds for those activities come from non-US government sources. This policy has prevented women around the world from gaining access to essential information and health services, with organisations losing funding for all their services, including pregnancy, safe childbirth, contraception and health examinations.

"Women are dying every day because they do not have access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights. An end to this policy represents a monumental step towards increasing women being able to realise these rights", says Jackie Edmond, Family Planning Chief Executive.

The effects of the end of this policy will be felt around the world, with the US having an influential role in shaping the global context for sexual and reproductive health and rights. Organisations operating in the Pacific will be affected. Many women in the Pacific are still not able to access quality and comprehensive information and services about planning their families and having children safely. The region continues to have high rates of sexually transmissible infections (STIs), and unintended teenage pregnancy. Several countries in the region have high rates of women dying during or shortly after childbirth.

"The sexual and reproductive health situation in the region is a critical economic, social and political challenge for us all that needs to be at the forefront of policy and programming, including New Zealand's Overseas Development Assistance," says Jackie Edmond.

### **Background**

The Mexico City Policy was first introduced by the Reagan US Administration in 1984. Former US President Bill Clinton rescinded the rule when he took office in January 1993 and former President George W. Bush reinstated it in 2001. President Barack Obama issued the repeal of the policy on 23 January 2009. It has been named the Mexico City Policy as it was unveiled at a United Nations conference in the country in 1984.

Family Planning International is a unit of Family Planning New Zealand. Family Planning International works to ensure all people can enjoy sexual and reproductive health and rights, with a particular focus on the Pacific region. **ENDS**

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