



Accessibility and Awareness in Sexual and Reproductive Health Among the Youth

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Over the past several decades, there has been constant pushback against the organization, Planned Parenthood and recently it is from the federal level. Two years ago, the Trump administration reinstated the Mexico City Policy or the Global Gag Rule, and it subsequently place a threat against the program, Title X, and Planned Parenthood as a whole. As a result, many people will lose access to preventative care and health treatments they need to safeguard their sexual and/or reproductive health. Young people under age 25 nationally and abroad will be affected the most from this policy. It is important to support Planned Parenthood in their fight to keep Title X alive and pushback against the Global Gag rule, so Planned Parenthood health services can be extended to young people living abroad in foreign countries. Attempts to prohibit information, treatment, prevention, and resources to protect one's sexual health is not a national, but also a transcontinental crisis that negatively affects young people across the globe. Therefore, the Global Gag Rule should be rescinded so Planned Parenthood's services can be expanded globally and protect everyone's health from being expose to any life-threatening diseases.

To start off, the Global Gag Rule has been a topic of discussion since the 1980s under Ronald Reagan's presidency, where he instated the initial Global Gag Rule policy. Under this legislation, Planned Parenthood lost millions of dollars in funding. The Global Gag Rule was lifted under Barack Obama's presidency, which enabled Planned Parenthood to operate as normal with a surplus government funding. Yet in recent years, the Trump administration re-instated the Global Gag Rule. This will subsequently retract funding for Title X, which provides access to inexpensive contraceptives, health screenings, physical exams, and other health care services to working-class and/or uninsured individuals. The Global Gag Rule also will negatively impact people who are living abroad because they will no longer have access to any abortion-related services, regular preventative health care treatments, and any other resources regarding early and life-threatening pregnancy (Barot and Cohen, "The Global Gag Rule," Starrs, "The Trump Global Gag"). This policy has created a ripple

effect that significantly change the quality of life among individuals, not only in the U.S. but worldwide.

So far, this instatement of the Global Gag Rule has caused havoc amongst young people nationally and globally because of the dangerous health risks it causes. Most people who typically seek sexual health and reproductive health services from Planned Parenthood are individuals under the age of 25 ("Braeken and Rondinelli, "Sexual and Reproductive Health"). They are in high risk of being exposed to life threatening illness such as HIV/AIDS and experiencing more frequent cases of early age childbearing. For the same demographic living in countries abroad, young people are in much higher risk to these circumstances. Young people may live far from any medical clinics and may have a lack or limited amount of access to any resources and/or information to protect themselves from such diseases, especially if they live in war and disaster zone areas (Barot,"In a State of Crisis," Casey, "Evaluations of Reproductive Health Programs"). With all the odds raised against adolescent individuals by the laws and socio-political climate of their native countries, they are deterred to seek assistance and subjected to accept the bare minimum of the sexual and reproductive health services provided to them This occurrence also speaks on the societies' structures young people globally live in.

In most places, culture and religion are the driving factors behind the level of awareness adolescents have pertaining to their sexual and reproductive health. There are instances where individuals as young as 13-years-old are forced into marriage in regions such as Africa and some parts of Asia and the Pacific. By law in some regions, marriage is a requirement to access family planning services, or else they must gain consent from their parental or guardian figures who will allow them to go to clinics for the service they need (Igras, et al. "Investing;" Neal et al. "Trends"). Adolescents who fall victim to these circumstances typically end up in predicaments where young girls are becoming pregnant and building families in extremely toxic and unhealthy environments. Some women also fall victim to sexual violence as a result of their cultural environments, which in most cases are highly patriarchal. In



those societies, women have limited rights. They do not have a say about what happen to their bodies and they are urged to procreate and have children (in some countries, it is preferably a male child) (Igras, et al. “Investing,” Godwin, et al. “Righting the Mismatch”). This illustrates that despite all medical and technological advancements available in the world, there are still countries use traditional social constructs of gender and sex as a mode to constitute and govern people in what is permitted and what is prohibited. Often, young people living in these regions have no other choice but to adhere to the inner making of their society to survive.

The current culture in many international societies also have a limited understanding about the importance of maintaining good sexual health. This phenomenon can fall into the discussion of gender performativity. For instance, males abroad shared the ideology of being overtly sexually expressive as a part of being a masculine man. This ideology has led them to displaying risky behavior including not practicing safe sex (Pulerwitz, Julie, et al. “Proposing;”). On the other hand, religious views on use of contraceptives or engaging in sexual activity before marriage are considered taboo subjects. This is the case in places where Islam, Christianity, and/or other religious doctrines are not in separation from the state (DeJong, et al. “The Sexual and Reproductive,” Caldwell, 245, 250-253). As a result, adults living abroad are not discussing sex with their children as openly and widely as adults would do in the US. Thus, adolescents living abroad are not getting much of the right information they need regarding practicing safe sex or any information at all as their American counterparts (Morris and Rushwan, “Adolescent Sexual,” Shaw, “Access to Sexual”). Now with the rise of technology, young people use the internet to become more proactive about their sexual health since the internet is universally accessible around the world. They use social media and text to numbers systems to access more general information and advice about safe sex from mutual friends or sex education experts (Ippoliti and Kelly, “Meet Us”). Through these initiatives, young people are more likely to gain more awareness to their environment and the political climate while at the same time learning




more information on the steps, they need to take to protect themselves from unsafe abortions, unwanted pregnancies, and STIs.

Overall, the Global Gag rule has caused a ripple effect that has negatively affected adolescents worldwide. With the rise of technology, Planned Parenthood would be able to reach more individuals who need access to these health care services and clinics, but the right amount of funding to advocate its efforts. Mobile applications, infographic video clips, and digitals advertisements on the social media platforms and other parts of the Internet are growing methods implemented by Planned Parenthood to target young people globally to help increase their awareness. These methods help to improve the connectivity between young people and sex education experts to access information with ease from at the touch of their fingertips, free of judgement and condemnation; the ultimate global of Planned Parenthood.

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