

Trump policy harming Uganda's health services, says rights body

Controversial. Policy is widely known as the "Global Gag Rule" because it restricts the type of information organisations can provide even with their own funds from non-US sources.

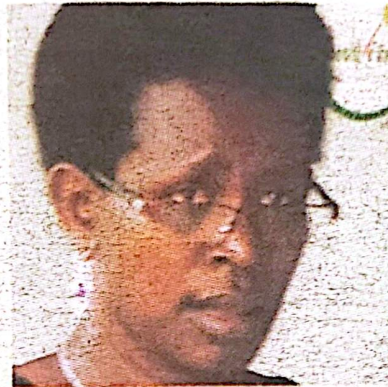
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KAMPALA. Ten months into the implementation of the expanded Mexico City Policy, also commonly known as Global Gag Rule, that was signed by US President Donald Trump, it has resulted in cuts in HIV and reproductive healthcare in Uganda and Kenya, Human Rights Watch has said.

According to a letter by the Human Rights Watch addressed to US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson late last week, the rights body observes that "the changes have resulted in a loss of training and equipment from non-governmental groups for government health clinics, and widespread confusion about implementation".

Human Rights Watch is an international non-governmental organisation that conducts research and advocacy on human rights.

On January 23, 2017, President



Dr Diana Atwine

Trump issued an expanded Global Gag Rule, later renamed it "Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance" policy.

The policy requires foreign non-governmental organisations receiving US global health aid to certify they do not use their non-US funds to provide abortions except in cases of rape, incest, or to save a woman's life.

So in short, if you needed to continue receiving funding from the US government, then with this expanded Global Gag Rule policy, in exchange, as an organisation or government, you cannot offer information or referrals for abortion



President Donald Trump

- even where abortions are legal - or advocate liberalising abortion laws.

This policy is widely known as the "Global Gag Rule" because it restricts the type of information organisations can provide even with their own funds from non-US sources, including restricting what a doctor can say to a patient. The US law already prohibits using US funds for abortion in foreign family planning assistance

"Our research shows that the expanded Mexico City Policy is already erecting barriers that will block people in Kenya and Uganda from the healthcare they need,"

said Skye Wheeler, a women's rights emergencies researcher at Human Rights Watch.

She added: "Because the US is the world's largest health donor, this indefensible change in policy puts the lives of many women and girls at risk."

When contacted, the permanent secretary in the Health ministry, Dr Diana Atwine, said: "As a country, we don't have pro-abortion laws, so Trump's policy will not affect us."

When asked about the private sector or the civil society world that have been depending on the US donations to promote reproductive health, Dr Atwine said she doesn't know what is happening to them.

RESTRICTIONS

Previous Republican administrations have consistently enacted versions of the Mexico City Policy, and these affected US family planning funds, approximately \$575m in Financial Year 2016. The Trump administration's policy extends the restrictions to an estimated \$8.8b in US global health assistance.

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