

**International Women's Day
March 8, 2010**

Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) and Planned Parenthood affiliates have been promoting women's health for 94 years in the United States, and for more than 40 years around the world. Building on Planned Parenthood's work in the U.S., which links services and advocacy, the PPFA International Program supports local organizations in the Philippines and in 10 countries in Africa and Latin America to provide high-quality health services to women; advocate for laws, policies, and funding that ensure access to women's health services and information; and bolster the right of women to reproductive health care.

We believe in a fundamental truth — women's access to reproductive health services in the U.S. and around the world is critical to the continued social and economic progress of women, families, communities, and societies. PPFA trusts women and believes that, if given access to safe, affordable, and comprehensive reproductive health care, women will make the best decisions for their lives, families, communities, and societies.

Women and girls around the world have made significant progress over the past decade. The use of contraception has increased; more young women are attending school for longer periods of time; and increasing numbers of women are active in government, including elected legislative bodies. Despite this progress, work remains to ensure that all women can lead healthy and productive lives.

Of all internationally recognized indicators of social development, reproductive health has shown some of the least progress over the past decade. More than 200 million women want to use contraception but do not have access to it. Every year more than half a million women die from pregnancy-related causes and 20 million have unsafe abortions. The vast majority of this burden is in developing countries and bringing PPFA's experience to bear in these settings is crucial.

PPFA has a 90-year track record delivering health services to diverse populations. Our international work builds on this body of experience to increase access to needed services for women and young people. In Nicaragua, for example, our partners have trained youth peer educators who provide education and contraceptive services to their peers. Like our youth advocates in the U.S., these young people are contributing to building the healthiest generations of young people in human history by leading the efforts in their communities to increase reproductive health information and services.

PPFA recognizes that advocates outside of the U.S. face growing opposition similar to and sometimes funded by anti-choice movements in the U.S. In Kenya, for example, our partner has been fighting for the removal of language in that nation's draft constitution that would severely restrict women's access to safe abortion services. We support advocacy networks like this one that put pressure on policymakers and governments to provide needed services and to protect reproductive rights in law and policy.

Drawing on our decades of experience abroad and our extensive network of advocates in the U.S., PPFA works in Washington, DC, to urge our government to make women's health in international policy a priority. We are enthusiastically supporting President Obama's record budget request of \$590 million for international reproductive health and family planning through USAID and \$700 million for maternal and child health, which is now making its way through the appropriations process.