

October 6, 2016

Gayle Smith
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20523

Dear Administrator Smith,

As members of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises (IAWG) we are writing to thank the U.S. government for its emergency response and humanitarian assistance for communities affected by Hurricane Matthew and to inquire about the inclusion of sexual and reproductive health supplies and services.

We appreciate USAID's longstanding leadership in addressing the sexual and reproductive health needs of women and girls around the world. As you know, women and girls have sexual and reproductive health needs even as emergencies unfold. These include pregnancy, the desire to become pregnant, avoid unwanted pregnancy, avoid sexually transmitted infections including Zika, and prevent and respond to gender-based violence. And as you know, some of these needs are more acute during emergencies. We know that gender-based violence increases during crises, and that gender-based violence increases risk of acquiring HIV.

In order to ensure that the sexual and reproductive health needs of women and girls are met in the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew, we expect that the U.S. will implement the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for reproductive health. The MISP is a coordinated set of priority activities implemented with the goal of reducing mortality, morbidity, and disability among women and girls. We cannot wait for women and girls to ask for their sexual and reproductive health needs to be met—the MISP should be seamlessly integrated into the initial response alongside shelter materials, blankets, hygiene kits, household items, and water purification equipment.

If we can be of any assistance, we stand ready to help. We urge you toward a strong and effective response to Hurricane Matthew, one that includes the sexual and reproductive health and rights that are so vital to the lives of women and girls.

Sincerely,

Serra Sippel
President
Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)