

## Zonta International supports UNFPA

8 April 2017

Zonta International is dismayed to learn of the United States' decision to withdraw funding for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), a decision that will ultimately have devastating consequences for women and girls worldwide.

For more than 10 years, Zonta International has proudly partnered with UNFPA to deliver critical life-changing and life-saving programs for the most vulnerable women and girls, improving health, eradicating violence against women and ending all forms of harmful practices.

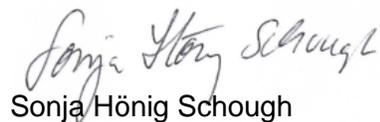
In Liberia, Zonta International has partnered with UNFPA to treat and prevent obstetric fistula by providing surgical treatment for women and girls living with this condition and reintegrating them back into their communities, equipped with the knowledge and skills to lead full and productive lives. Fistula is a devastating but preventable childbirth injury usually caused by prolonged, obstructed labor without timely medical intervention. In most cases, the baby is stillborn; and often the mother is left paralyzed. In addition to the devastating physical consequences, women suffering from fistula are stigmatized and abandoned by their families and marginalized by their communities.

In Niger, Zonta International has partnered with UNFPA to reduce child marriage, and to help adolescent girls in Niger develop their health, social and economic assets, know their rights and be in a strong position to defend them and be safer and have protection against violence. Child marriage is a form of sexual and gender-based violence with harmful physical, social and economic effects including the detrimental impact in the societies of early pregnancies. Niger has the highest child marriage rate in the world with 77 percent of girls married by age 18 and 30 percent married by age 15. Forty-two percent (42%) of adolescent girls in Niger give birth before the age of 17, a high proportion of school-aged girls are not in school and 73 percent of adolescent girls, ages 15-19, cannot read or write.

These programs are examples of UNFPA's work in making a difference for thousands of women and girls worldwide. Today UNFPA works in more than 150 countries and territories covering more than 80 percent of the world's population. Thanks to partnerships with organizations like Zonta International and the critical support of governments, UNFPA was able in 2016 to save the lives of more than 2,300 women from dying during pregnancy and childbirth and to ensure more than 1,250 fistula surgeries, among many other achievements.

Today and every day, Zonta International stands in support of UNFPA and its work to promote and protect the rights of women and girls worldwide.

Yours sincerely,



Sonja Hönig Schough  
President Chairman



Maria José Landeira Oestergaard  
International Advocacy Committee