

# Conflict-affected countries receive less aid dedicated to reproductive health

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Low income, conflict-affected countries such as Afghanistan, Sudan and Somalia receive less development money for reproductive health than countries that are not experiencing conflict, according to a new study in this week's *PLoS Medicine*.

United Nations indicators show that countries affected by conflict have greater reproductive health needs than those unaffected by conflict. There are several reasons for this disparity, such as war destroying health infrastructure and increasing the risk of sexual violence. Yet there is little information about the amount of international aid spent on reproductive health in poor countries that are experiencing conflict, even though many of these countries are dependent upon aid for basic health services.

In the new study, Preeti Patel of King's College London, Bayard Roberts of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and colleagues tried to address this gap in knowledge. The researchers quantified the amount of aid spent on reproductive health in low-income conflict affected countries, and compared this figure with the amount spent in poor countries that were not affected by conflict.

The researchers identified the 18 countries that are considered to be the least economically developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that had undergone conflict in 2005. Using information on development assistance from databases maintained by the OECD and the United Nations, they found that an average of US \$20.8 billion dollars of official development money was disbursed annually to these 18 countries. Out of this total, they found that US \$509.3m (or 2.4%) was allocated to reproductive health. This amounts to just US \$1.30 for each person per year in the eighteen countries undergoing conflict. In contrast, people in countries receiving aid that had not experienced conflict

received 50% more for reproductive health issues.

In a related expert commentary on the new study, Paul Spiegel and colleagues of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who were not involved with the study, say, "If the world is to meet the Millennium Development Goals, especially those related to child mortality, maternal health, and HIV/AIDS, then reproductive health issues related to conflict and post-conflict settings must be better understood and addressed in a more equitable manner than is currently the case." They also say that Patel and colleagues "have made a significant contribution to allow us to move forward."

Citation: Spiegel PB, Cornier N, Schilperoord M (2009) Funding for [Reproductive Health](#) in Conflict and Post- Conflict Countries: A Familiar Story of Inequity and Insufficient Data. *PLoS Med* 6(6): e1000093. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1000093 [medicine.plosjournals.org/perl...journal.pmed.1000093](http://medicine.plosjournals.org/perl...journal.pmed.1000093)

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