

Billions for family planning

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While Americans debate contraception coverage, women elsewhere in the world are dying in childbirth (pregnancy is the biggest killer of teenage girls worldwide), despairing because they can't feed their children, or living with debilitating wounds incurred because of inadequate labor and postpartum care.

But last week, the British government and billionaire philanthropist Melinda Gates hosted international leaders at the [London Summit on Family Planning](#). Gates pledged \$560 million to expand contraception to women in poor countries, thus augmenting the pledges made by Britain and African leaders to \$4.3 billion. A lifelong Catholic, [Gates said](#) she cannot agree with the church's stance on contraception:

There are amazing . . . moral teachings that I do believe in, but I also have to think about how we keep women alive. I believe in not letting women die, I believe in not letting babies die, and to me that's more important than arguing about what method of contraception [is right].

To understand the amazing potential of this leap in funding, measure it against the largest single donor in family planning. That's USAID, which at present has committed \$640 million—a 40 percent increase under President Obama.

The pledges made at the summit, however, reach much further. The effort is projected to reach more than half of the world's women who lack access to contraception. That's an amazing coup: for some 120 million women, ongoing despair may give way to hope.