

The Guttmacher Institute's Future

Strategic Plan for 2005-2010

Executive Summary

Approved by the Guttmacher Institute's Board of Directors,
June 23, 2005

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Mission

The Guttmacher Institute advances sexual and reproductive health through an interrelated program of social science research, policy analysis and public education, designed to generate new ideas, encourage enlightened public debate, promote sound policy and program development, and, ultimately, inform individual decision-making.

The core role and mission of the Guttmacher Institute continue to be valid and relevant. The needs and political challenges in the sexual and reproductive health field will continue, and may in some cases grow during the period of the Plan. The Institute's combination of policy-relevant research and evidence-based advocacy continues to make a uniquely important contribution to efforts to improve the sexual and reproductive health of people worldwide—the ultimate goal.

Therefore, the Plan for 2005–2010 calls for innovation around the existing core mission and activities, rather than a major change in direction or objectives. Such innovation can potentially involve major new initiatives, however, and these may require a significant infusion of new resources.

Theory of Change

The Institute's Theory of Change is based on nearly four decades of experience that demonstrate that scientific evidence—when competently collected and analyzed, compellingly presented and systematically disseminated—can make a difference in policies, programs and practice. The core audiences for the Institute's steady supply of reliable data analyses and ideas are influential agents for change within the interconnected arenas of academia, public policy and the media. They include policymakers, advocates, health professionals, researchers, the media and other power brokers and opinion leaders.

Important Environmental Factors

• *Signs of progress.* In large part as a result of im-

proved access to a wider range of safe and effective methods, contraceptive use has become the norm throughout the United States. Improved access has also narrowed ethnic, racial and income gaps in contraceptive use. Largely because of more widespread and more effective contraceptive use, abortion rates have been steadily declining for three decades. The teen pregnancy rate has also been declining and is now at its lowest level in 30 years—down almost 30% from the peak in 1990.

Internationally, virtually all governments support family planning services to some degree. In the developing world, 60% of married women now use a contraceptive method, and in every region, couples want smaller families. Although devastating in its impact, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has nonetheless helped to focus needed attention and resources on sexual and reproductive health issues, and has contributed to an increase in condom use and some reduction in risky sexual behavior. In most of the industrialized world, access to safe, legal abortion has essentially eliminated abortion-related maternal mortality and morbidity. Abortion laws have been liberalized in more than a dozen developing countries in recent years.

• *Threats to progress.* The resurgence of social conservatism in the United States is a direct consequence of the progress achieved in recent decades. The current political influence of social conservatives poses a direct threat to domestic and international sexual and reproductive health programs. Overseas, the growing participation of conservative Christian organizations in U.S. foreign aid programs is likely to lend further support to local fundamentalist religious groups that oppose enlightened sexual and reproductive health policies and programs in many developing countries. Rising levels of federal funding for abstinence-only programs have provided an incentive for states to adopt sex education curricula that teach abstinence until marriage as the only acceptable standard of behavior and exclude any

information on contraceptive methods other than failure rates. Abstinence until marriage and marital faithfulness are also major components of the president's global AIDS initiative. Conservative groups have mounted a major misinformation campaign denigrating the effectiveness of condoms and are once again promoting the view that hormonal contraceptives act as abortifacients, using this argument to support legislation that gives health care providers (including pharmacists), health facilities, health insurers and employers the right to refuse women contraceptive services.

The Bush administration has consciously manipulated terms like "sound science" and "peer review," while effectively undermining the role of science in public policy. Flawed science from conservative institutions will continue to proliferate and will be increasingly subtle and difficult to counter. Few reporters or other audiences, including advocates and policymakers, have the time or methodological sophistication to find the flaws in ideologically motivated studies.

- **HIV/AIDS.** The HIV/AIDS epidemic has become the preeminent global health issue. Sexual and reproductive health infrastructures are well positioned to make a major contribution to HIV/AIDS prevention, testing, counseling and, possibly, treatment. At the same time, new health infrastructures dedicated to HIV/AIDS testing, counseling and treatment are a potential source of sexual and reproductive health services and referrals. In part because of U.S. conservative attacks on prominent sexual and reproductive health organizations, the potential contribution of these groups to the HIV/AIDS prevention effort is not being fully exploited.

- **Abortion.** The effort to stigmatize and restrict access to abortion will continue. Although Guttmacher staff consider it unlikely that *Roe v. Wade* will be overturned during the period of the Plan, parental consent requirements, new logistical barriers, refusal clauses, growth numbers of crisis pregnancy centers and misinformation about the long-term safety of abortion will impede access, particularly for young and low-income women. Abortion rights opponents can be expected to use emotional issues like fetal pain to keep the focus on the rights of the fetus rather than the needs of women and their families.

Internationally, civil society coalitions of women's rights groups and medical professionals have used new evidence on unsafe abortion to push through major liberalizations in abortion law in some countries. But in

many countries, basic data on the incidence of unsafe abortion and its consequences are lacking, and without solid information, political action will be difficult to mobilize.

- **Technological and research innovation.** Advances in contraceptive technology, assisted reproduction, genetic counseling and the prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) will present new opportunities for improving sexual and reproductive health. They also call for ensuring that new innovations are safely and equitably distributed. As research questions have become increasingly complex and focused on the "whys" behind the "what", the ongoing development of research methodologies make it possible to respond to these needs.

- **The communications revolution.** The proliferation of media outlets means that the Institute's intended audiences have more sources of information than ever before. While this revolution in communications creates enormous opportunities for disseminating information, specialization and segmentation also make it difficult to deliver a consistent message to a broad audience. Outreach needs to be increasingly targeted and customized to reach media consumers who are increasingly split into narrow interest areas and receive information from a variety of sources. The trend will complicate the Institute's effort to project a strong and consistent organizational brand. The revolution in communications caused by the Internet will continue, and reliance on Web-based information will become increasingly common.

- **Demographic change.** In the United States and much of Europe, media stories about the "birth dearth" have created the perception that the population problem has been solved. One result may be less public support in the future for publicly subsidized family planning services, including U.S. foreign assistance for family planning. Of special importance for sexual and reproductive health programs is the historically unprecedented number of young people entering their reproductive years. Yet sexual and reproductive health service and education programs designed to meet their needs remain controversial in many parts of the world. Growing disparities between rich and poor globally, and increasing diversity in the United States, also warrant attention.

- **Changes in health care financing and delivery.** In the United States, the rising number of people without health insurance, combined with the economic recession,

sion of the early 2000s, is creating additional demand for subsidized sexual and reproductive health services. Federal and state funding for family planning supplies and services has not increased in inflation-adjusted dollars and is at 1980 levels in real terms. It is likely that social conservatives at the federal, state and local levels will expand attacks on Medicaid and other public health “safety net” programs. Medicaid currently provides 60% of the funding for publicly supported contraceptive services.

Characteristics of the Guttmacher Institute Relevant to the Planning Process

The Institute is widely recognized for its high-quality social science research. The Institute provides essential, policy-relevant information about U.S. and global trends in sexual behavior, contraceptive use, unintended pregnancy, abortion and HIV/STIs that is routinely quoted by advocates on both sides of the issues, legislators, government agencies, international organizations, health professionals and the media.

The Institute is also widely known for its insightful policy analysis. The Institute’s integrated program of research and policy advocacy creates an ongoing creative tension that, although requiring constant attention, is central to the Institute’s effectiveness and unique contribution. It serves to keep research staff focused on studies that can move the policy process forward, and makes policy and communications staff careful in their use of evidence.

A consistent organizational image, appropriately promoted, will address the currently limited recognition of the Institute among target audiences and therefore increase the impact of the organization’s work. A media audit confirms that the Institute’s research findings are well reported but notes that the Institute is most often cited for its data, rather than for its policy expertise, and that the results of its international research are not as well covered as they could be. The Institute is not taking full advantage of new online and ethnic media.

The Institute relies for funding on private foundations; several U.S. government agencies; a few European foreign aid agencies; international organizations such as the World Bank, UNFPA, WHO and UNAIDS; other organizations; and several thousand individual contributors. Opportunities for expanding support significantly from some of these sources may be limited, but others could grow significantly. The Institute has an involved and knowledgeable Board that is well-versed in the Institute’s areas of interest, yet is not an effective fundraising body.

Priority Issues

The Institute’s focus over the next five years reflects its continuing commitment to certain core areas of work and recognition of the need to increase emphasis on some existing issues and on areas of concern that emerge from the current environment.

Core areas of sustained activity include trends in abortion, contraceptive use, unintended pregnancy and men’s needs; unmet need for contraceptive services; adolescent sexual behavior, sex education and adolescent access to services; and changes in health care financing and delivery.

Areas of increased emphasis include the links between sexual and reproductive health and broader development goals, the role of abortion in women’s lives, the causes of contraceptive failure, economic barriers to services for some groups, the causes of declines in adolescent pregnancy and contraception in the era of HIV/AIDS.

Areas of new interest include the health consequences of abstinence-only sex education, the role of reproductive and sexual health in the stability of relationships, inequalities in access, the interaction of technology with behavior and sexual rights as human rights.

Research Activities and Outputs

Guttmacher research—encompassing the collection of empirical data, the analysis of existing data sets and the synthesis of policy-relevant research findings—brings to light important public health problems and tracks the progress (or lack thereof) in solving them. By generating new evidence and ideas, the Institute brings scientific evidence to bear on public debate, policymaking and program development. Finally, it arms advocates with the evidence they need to influence policymakers and mobilize public support.

Large surveys and quantitative analyses will continue to be the most important component of the Institute’s research program. Efforts will be made to streamline the research process, so as to have results vetted and ready for dissemination more quickly. Research efforts to be undertaken over the next five years will provide new estimates of abortion, the costs of unsafe abortion, unintended pregnancy, contraceptive failure rates, unmet need for contraception, access to contraceptive and HIV-prevention services, and trends in adolescent sexual and reproductive health in the United States and other countries. During the planning period, the Institute will place greater emphasis on the small group of sexually active women who do not use

any form of contraception (but account for half of all U.S. unintended pregnancies) in an effort to understand their reasons for nonuse and what might lead them to become successful contraceptive users in the future. Because qualitative research (e.g., in-depth interviews and focus group discussions) is a valuable complement to quantitative research, the Institute will also continue to augment its activity and competence in this kind of research.

The Institute will make a greater effort to place individual sexual and reproductive health choices in the broader context of relationships between sexual partners, family connectedness, community values and the health care system. The Institute may also seek support to undertake a longitudinal study that follows a cohort over many years to provide important new evidence on issues such as the relative impact, over time, of abstinence-only sex education. Such an effort would require a major multiyear funding commitment or a major institutional partnership. The Institute will increase emphasis on vulnerable subgroup populations in partnership with organizations that have specialized expertise and credibility within these communities. The Institute also recognizes the growing demand for state-level data from U.S. policymakers and advocates, and will attempt to provide additional data, ensuring that such data are comparable and consistent across sources.

Public Education

The Guttmacher Institute intends to continue publication of its two peer-reviewed journals, *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* and *International Family Planning Perspectives*, as well as *The Guttmacher Report on Public Policy*. The editorial independence of the journals will be preserved, even if this means lost revenue from U.S. government sources or other funders. In addition, the Institute will publish and widely disseminate a series of reports over the next several years covering policy- and program-relevant findings from Protecting the Next Generation (the Institute's extensive study of adolescent sexual and reproductive behavior in Africa); from a number of studies on unsafe abortion; and from analyses of the new U.S. National Survey of Family Growth.

The Institute will expand a new initiative designed to increase the impact of its work by packaging research findings and policy analyses on key issues; reaching out to editorial boards; exploiting new media outlets and new interactive technologies; and generating more international media coverage. Resources available on the Guttmacher Web site will also increase

and may include early electronic publication of new data sets and scientific findings. The Institute also intends to improve the site's search capacity and increase use of electronic mailing lists with special attention to state-level and international colleagues. The Institute will implement an initiative designed to project a consistent, positive identity as the leading independent think tank on sexual and reproductive health.

Action for Policy and Program Change

The skillful balance of objective research and fact-based advocacy is one of the Institute's major strengths and a characteristic that helps distinguish it from other organizations in the field. To increasingly push new ideas and evidence into the policy process, over the next five years, the Institute will conduct a greater number of briefings for policymakers, national advocacy groups and state-level activists. The Institute will also enhance its ability to respond rapidly to flawed research studies emanating from conservative groups. There is an urgent and growing need to bring existing scientific evidence to bear on fast-moving legislative, regulatory and legal developments, and on misleading media coverage of breaking news about sexual and reproductive health trends and technology. Although some cases call for new research or analysis, others may require only a critical assessment of the flaws in a new study. In many cases, research already exists that can be synthesized and translated into user-friendly language. Materials will be made available as needed to advocacy networks at the state and national levels, in Europe and in the developing world.

An important innovation that will enhance the Institute's rapid response capability is the designation of key staff members and senior fellows as resource persons on specified subjects, with responsibility for monitoring developments in the field and reviewing emerging research findings from other institutions. Cross-divisional issue teams will be an important source for generating new ideas and identifying new priorities for research, communications and advocacy.

The Institute will also begin to build an enduring network of decision-makers and advocates in international organizations and foreign countries who can translate research findings into policy and program change, and will seek their feedback in the same way the Institute now does from state-level stakeholders. In those countries or regions where it undertakes major research projects, the Institute intends to work more intensively with local and regional partners to expand the dissemination of findings and recommendations to a

much broader array of important decision-makers and opinion leaders within the country and region.

Much of the Institute's work bears directly on matters important to achieving healthy and harmonious intimate relationships and supportive families. Showing how Guttmacher goals align with the broader aims of economic growth and development, poverty alleviation, social justice, supportive institutions, individual liberty, strong families and healthy relationships will increase public support for sexual and reproductive health. The Institute can strengthen these connections by drawing out the relationships between sexual and reproductive health and broader development goals more explicitly in its existing research, public education and advocacy work; undertaking work specifically targeted to these connections; and building alliances with a broad spectrum of organizations interested in these issues.

Collaborations and Alliances

Successful collaborations are already an essential component of the Institute's research and advocacy programs at home and abroad, and the Institute expects to build on these existing partnerships over the next five years as it undertakes research in such areas as adolescent sexual and reproductive behavior and unsafe abortion. Domestically, the Institute benefits from its longstanding collaboration with the Planned Parenthood Federation of America and with a number of other sister organizations in the United States and Western Europe, and has recently established collaborations with a number of international agencies. As the planning period begins, the Institute is taking initial steps toward formal institutional collaborations with the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University and the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University. Over the next five years, the Institute also plans to implement a major international collaboration with Ipas on unsafe abortion.

Evaluating Success

The Institute's efforts to measure its success over the planning period will include several types of evaluation metrics, including *outputs* of the Institute's research, public education and public policy divisions; *proxy indicators* that measure the use made of the outputs by change agents; *intermediate outcomes*, such as changes in public policy that result in increased access; and *ultimate outcomes* related to improved sexual and reproductive health, such as declines in adolescent pregnancy.

Operational and Resource Requirements

The Guttmacher Institute is a solid, well-managed organization with a strong corporate culture. The Institute has a highly qualified and committed staff and Board of Directors, many loyal funders, a diversified funding base and modest financial reserves. But there are steps the Institute can and will take to make itself an even stronger institution. In an effort to make the Institute a better place to work, we will focus on relieving workloads, overcrowding and inefficiencies, and on the need for professional development and greater diversity. To increase financial stability we will seek multiyear support for broad program areas; implement guidelines for the use of general support funds; expand outreach to wealthy individuals, new foundations, European donor governments and international organizations; attempt to grow the endowment; expand involvement in development efforts by board and staff; and undertake contingency planning.