



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

July 15, 2005

The Honorable Andrew Natsios
Administrator
United States Agency for International Development
Ronald Reagan Building
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington D.C. 20523-1000

Dear Mr. Administrator:

As Members of Congress who advocate for the faith community, we write to express our deep concern about the way in which the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is implementing the Communities Responding to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic (CORE). As a pillar of the Administration's faith-based outreach abroad, CORE is an innovative initiative that partners USAID with faith communities to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

CORE's operating consortium is composed of five groups including CARE USA, the World Council of Churches (WCC), the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), the International HIV/AIDS Alliance (the Alliance), and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health/Center for Communication Programs. We draw your attention to the first four organizations because their policies often run contrary to U.S. HIV/AIDS policy and frequently promote policies that are offensive to people of faith.

Most disconcerting is the consortium's primary contractor, CARE USA. The President of CARE, Peter Bell, has signed public attacks on the Administration's pro-life policies, calling them "undemocratic" and "unethical"—and this is only the beginning of CARE's opposition to American policy.¹

CARE's programs in India, most notably the Sonagachi Project in Calcutta, have promoted a pro-prostitution agenda. Samarjit Jana, CARE's Assistant Country Director in India, is one of the world's leading crusaders for the legalization of prostitution and for the *right* of HIV-infected prostitutes to have sex without a condom.²

¹ Peter Bell and ten other signers issued a press release on February 23, 2003 opposing the Administration's pro-life policy. This statement can be found at <http://www.planetwire.org/details/1263>.

² Samarjit Jana is a member of the Board of Directors of the Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP), an advocacy group for the legalization of prostitution. NSWP maintains a policy that one hundred-percent condom use by prostitutes is undesirable because it would forfeit the "human and civil right" against mandatory sexually transmitted infection testing. This and other NSWP policies can be found at <http://www.nswp.org/safety/100percent.html>.

In Lesotho, CARE used USAID funding to campaign for a so-called “rights-based” approach to prostitution—in other words, for the legalization of prostitution and its cultural acceptance as a legitimate form of employment.³ Despite the Administration’s policy directive that all grantees of taxpayer monies for work overseas must pledge to oppose the legalization of prostitution, CARE continues to lead the CORE consortium.⁴

We are also concerned about the policies of ICRW, another CORE member. In 2001, ICRW held a conference to plan strategy for an agenda that included the legalization of prostitution. Its pro-prostitution stance is so radical that ICRW even objected to the late Senator Paul Wellstone’s Trafficking Victims Protection Act (S.1842, 106th Congress) because “the legislation does not currently distinguish between forced prostitution and voluntary prostitution. Thus [ICRW argued] it may be used as a punitive measure against voluntary sex workers.”⁵

ICRW also holds other policy views that most faith-based groups would find offensive. ICRW president Geeta Rao Gupta is a strong critic of abstinence programs, arguing that “the traditional norm of virginity for unmarried girls that exists in many societies, paradoxically, increases young women’s risk of infection because it restricts their ability to ask for information about sex out of fear that they will be thought to be sexually active.” Gupta also objects to the “stigmatizing [of] sex workers” because it “increase[es] their vulnerability to infection and violence.”⁶

The Alliance is the third CORE consortium organization of concern. The Administration’s own policy may prohibit this group from receiving government grants because of its veiled support for the legalization of prostitution. The Alliance appears to be at the vanguard of prostitution legalization efforts through its many activities. In one instance, it employs two highly placed associates of the Network of Sex Work Projects, an outspoken pro-prostitution advocacy group. In another instance, the Alliance purposefully organizes with pro-prostitution groups.⁷ Nonetheless, USAID is working with the Alliance to implement the Administration’s HIV/AIDS policy among faith-based groups.

The fourth disturbing CORE consortium member is the WCC. With a reputation for more than half a century of unrelenting criticism of the United States, WCC consistently seeks to undermine American foreign policy.

³ CARE’s USAID-funded “Sexual Health and Rights Project” (SHARP), which has described itself as having a “rights-based focus” and being concerned with stigma and discrimination against prostitutes. “Like Plastic That Blows In the Wind, Mobile Sex Workers in Southern Africa,” *Research for Sex Work*, Volume 5, June 2002. [Http://hcc.med.vu.nl/artikelen/robinson.htm](http://hcc.med.vu.nl/artikelen/robinson.htm)

⁴ “As a condition of entering into the referenced agreement, the recipient agrees that it is opposed to the practices of prostitution and trafficking because of the psychological and physical risks they pose for women, men and children;” found in “Acquisition & Assistance Policy Directive 04-04,” issued January 15, 2004; available at http://www.usaid.gov/business/business_opportunities/cib/pdf/aapd04_04_original.pdf

⁵ “Global AIDS Advocacy Consultation: Vulnerable Populations Brief,” International Center for Research on Women, March 24, 2001; formerly available at http://www.ird-renew.org/atf/cf/{8548C466-7ECE-4AF1-B844-49C289CE5165}/Human_Rights_Report.pdf

⁶ “Gender, Sexuality, and HIV/AIDS: The What, the Why, and the How,” presentation to the XIII International AIDS Conference, Durban, South Africa, July 12, 2000, at 2, 4.

⁷ Cheryl Overs, founder of Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP), and Paulo Longo are employed by the International HIV/AIDS Alliance and simultaneously maintain their links to the Network of Sex Work Projects. A clear example of the Alliance’s pro-prostitution advocacy can be found at, <http://archives.healthdev.net/sex-work/msg00203.html>.

A study published in 2004 by the well-regarded Institute on Religion and Democracy surveyed WCC's public statements on human rights over the past several years. The report discovered that 21% of all WCC complaints about human rights were directed against the United States and 43% were directed against Israel, though WCC cited no human rights violations in China.⁸ Apparently, WCC believes that China is not culpable for any violation of human rights, while the United States and Israel account for two-thirds of the world's violations. This is a distortion of the meaning of "human rights."

Astonishingly, such propagandistic condemnation is not an isolated incident. WCC issued a statement which linked the tsunami in the Indian Ocean to the U.S. refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol on Global Warming.⁹ After September 11, WCC General Secretary Konrad Raiser attacked the U.S. war against terrorism as "outside the rule of law," and claimed that our anti-terrorism efforts have led to the "harsh suppression" of the "people's struggles for social justice" because they appear as "potential manifestations of terrorism." Raiser also dismissed the tragedy of September 11, stating that it would "create a sense of solidarity in pain with those who had been exposed to the structural violence of a global economic system which serves the interests of a minority of rich people and countries."¹⁰

Last year, three of USAID's CORE consortium members (CARE, the International HIV/AIDS Alliance and the World Council of Churches) joined with eight other organizations to produce a so-called "Code of Good Practice for NGOs Responding to HIV/AIDS," which includes statements antithetical to American policy. The document states that, "In the context of individual behavior change, abstinence, fidelity and use of condoms all have a role to play in reducing HIV transmission. However, it is critical that abstinence and fidelity are not promoted as the preferred approach, with condoms as a last resort, thereby stigmatising [sic] condom use."¹¹

The code also calls for "the full range of prevention options" to be available to injecting drug users "in a manner that is free of judgment," including "utilising [sic] non-injecting methods of drug use and effective use of sterile injecting equipment."¹² The code states that "the illegality and stigma associated with injecting drug use invariably lead to discrimination against people who use drugs and create barriers to accessing services" and protests the "failure to protect the human rights of people who inject drugs," linking it to the "undermining [of] HIV prevention efforts."¹³ If the sponsors of this code seriously believe that legalizing drug use and making drugs and equipment available—protecting the "human rights" of drug users—will prevent the spread of HIV, then we cannot understand why USAID would contract with these organizations.

⁸ Erik R. Nelson & Alan F.H. Wisdom, "Human Rights Advocacy in the Mainline Protestant Churches (2000-2003): A Critical Analysis," The Institute on Religion and Democracy, at 12.

⁹ Peter Kenny, "Christian Leaders Urge Politicians: After Tsunami, Heed Climate Change," Episcopal News Service, December 30, 2004.

¹⁰ Mark Tooley, "World Council of Churches Leaders Oppose War on Terrorism," Institute on Religion and Democracy, March 8, 2002.

¹¹ "Renewing Our Voice: Code of Good Practice for NGOs Responding to HIV/AIDS," issued by ActionAid International, CARE USA, Global Health Council, Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS, Grupo Pela Vidua, Hong Kong AIDS Foundation, International Council of AIDS Service Organizations, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Harm Reduction Association, International HIV/AIDS Alliance, World Council of Churches, December 2004, at 66.

¹² Ibid. For alternative non-injection methods to use heroin, see e.g., "H is for Heroin," The Harm Reduction Coalition, found at <http://www.harmreduction.org/pubs/PUBSpdfs/heroin.pdf>, at 5-8.

¹³ Ibid, at 35.

Furthermore, the code advances the legalization of prostitution, stating that “the stigma associated with sex work in many countries around the world creates significant barriers to sexual health and HIV prevention efforts among sex workers and their clients... Supporting sex workers, including through collective action, empowers them to negotiate transactions, and address the health and social contexts that increase their vulnerability to HIV infection.”¹⁴ Apparently, the code considers the legalization of prostitution to be a way to improve HIV prevention efforts.


Such policy statements are clearly contrary to American foreign policy and offensive to a vast majority of religious adherents the world over—though they are made by contractors for the Administration’s central faith-based response to the HIV/AIDS policy.

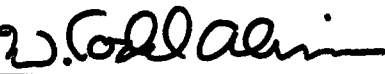
Any reasonable pre-award evaluation by USAID of its contractors should have confronted the records of CARE, ICRW, the Alliance and WCC. If such an evaluation failed to uncover the concerns we have enumerated above, we must question USAID’s procedures for selecting its contractors. We would be most concerned, however, to learn that USAID had initiated its collaboration with these CORE consortium members with full knowledge of their policy positions.

U.S. government outreach to the range of faith-based communities delivered by anti-American, anti-abstinence, pro-prostitution and pro-drug use groups should not be allowed to undermine the work of the Administration. Organizations entrusted with taxpayers’ money and charged with a mission to represent our nation to people abroad must themselves represent the values inherent in American foreign policy.

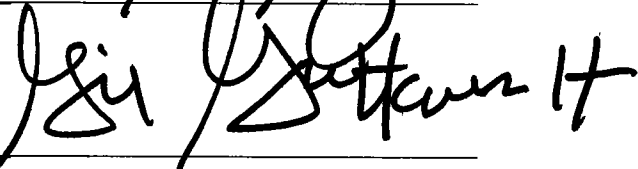
Thank you for considering these views, and for your work to ensure that people of faith may participate fully in the public square.

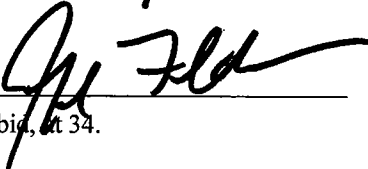
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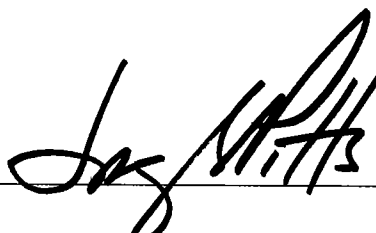


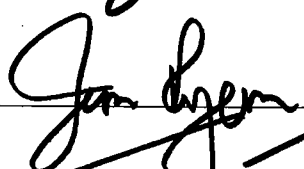


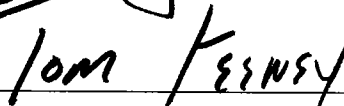


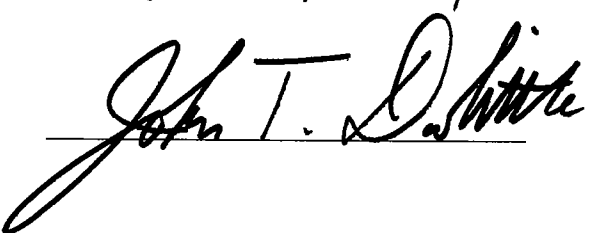












¹⁴ Ibid., at 34.

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