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US Policy to Destroy \$9.7M USAID Contraceptives Raises Human Rights Concerns

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The US government plans to incinerate more than \$9.7 million worth of contraceptives funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), currently stored in a warehouse in Belgium. These supplies have been held since a freeze on foreign aid was imposed.

The Department of State confirmed that the contraceptives, which include birth control pills, injections, implants, and intrauterine devices (IUDs), will be destroyed at a medical waste facility in France. The government is expected to spend over \$160,000 on the incineration process.

This decision follows a “preliminary” move by the State Department to destroy contraceptives classified as “abortifacient,” meaning they may induce abortions. However, USAID officials maintain that none of the supplies in storage meet that classification, as federal law prohibits USAID from purchasing such products.

The destruction plan stems from the Kemp-Kasten amendment, which restricts US funding to programmes associated with coercive abortion or involuntary sterilization. The State Department also noted it has avoided an additional \$34.1 million in taxpayer expenses by cancelling pending orders originally placed under the Biden administration.

While officials have defended the policy, human rights advocates and international health organisations have raised serious concerns about the consequences for reproductive rights and healthcare access, especially in African countries reliant on US aid.

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) estimates the destruction will leave around 1.4 million women and girls across Africa without access to essential contraceptives. Access to family planning services is recognized internationally as a critical human rights issue, closely tied to women’s health, autonomy, and economic participation.

French reproductive rights groups and family planning organizations have called on authorities to intervene and prevent the incineration, but officials say they lack the legal power to stop the destruction.

Approximately 77 % of the contraceptive supplies are earmarked for five African nations: Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Mali, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Tanzania alone accounts for more than 40 % of the stockpile set for destruction.

Marie-Evelyn Petrus-Barry, Africa regional director of IPPF, described the decision as “appalling and extremely wasteful,” emphasizing that these medical supplies are vital in areas with limited reproductive healthcare options and humanitarian challenges.

The Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition estimates the incineration could result in 362,000 unintended pregnancies and 161,000 unplanned births. These outcomes increase

the risk of unsafe abortions and place additional strain on health systems.

The IPPF warns that Tanzania will face a shortage of over one million injectable contraceptives and 365,100 implants, meeting only about 72 % of annual demand. Mali will lose more than 1.1 million oral contraceptives and nearly 96,000 implants, covering roughly 24 % of its yearly needs.

Zambia and Kenya are also expected to experience significant shortfalls, with Kenya losing access to nearly 14 % of its annual contraceptive supply.

The destruction of these supplies raises broader questions about US commitments to global health and human rights, particularly regarding women's access to reproductive healthcare and autonomy. Human rights experts highlight that restricting access to contraception can undermine fundamental rights recognized by international conventions, including the right to health and the right to make decisions about one's own body.

The policy decision reflects ongoing tensions between US foreign aid regulations and international public health objectives, with potential long-term impacts on the health and well-being of vulnerable populations in recipient countries.