

Committee: World Health Organization

Issue: Combating Unsafe Abortions

Student Officer: Dimitra Meri

Position: Deputy President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Dimitra Meri and I will be serving as the Deputy President of the World Health Organization in the 2nd ACGMUN Conference. I am 15 years old, currently in the 10th Grade, at Costeas-Geitonas School. This is my second time chairing in a MUN Conference. I am really excited to be given this position and I reassure you that during the sessions we are going to enjoy a fruitful and constructive debate. I hope that this conference will be an unforgettable one and thus your participation is of great importance. It is essential to mention that everyone is more than welcome to contact me at my email address (meridimitra@gmail.com) if there is any query concerning this topic. I will be glad to answer your questions in order to help you submit as good resolutions as possible. I look forward to reading your proposals and solutions concerning the topic and I hope that you are all going to have an amazing time during these three days.

Best regards,
Dimitra Meri

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Many pregnancies are caused accidentally or due to sexual abuse. Consequently, many women decide to end their pregnancy for economic, social or personal/ psychological reasons. It is a very complex procedure, which may be harmless, or lead to infertility, other health related problems or even death. It is estimated that 25% of all pregnancies are ended with an abortion. This issue is a crucial and very sentimental one since every year many women lose their lives because of the improper conditions under which this procedure occurs. Every woman should have the right to give an end to her pregnancy without putting her health or even life in danger.

Many people consider that abortions should not take place. It is believed that doctors have no right to give an end to a baby's life and thus many people discourage their nation from combating unsafe abortions. Unfortunately, 4.7% – 13.2% of maternal deaths are caused by un-safe abortion. Especially in African and Asian countries the number of deaths caused by such abortions is augmenting every year. Hence, the international community should take action, motivate the people and improve the conditions under which abortions take place.

In general, unsafe abortions occur in the developing world. Developing countries do not usually recognize abortions as a legal activity. Thus, abortions are not performed by properly trained staff and with the use of the necessary equipment. Consequently, the abortions are characterized unsafe and may have various consequences on the woman's physical and psychological stability.

In the long run, as the fertility of a woman who has had an unsafe abortion is reduced, the general fertility of a nation can be lowered as well. This has an economic impact and in combination with local beliefs and religions, an unstable environment is created.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Abortion

Abortion is the deliberate termination of a human pregnancy, most often performed during the first 28 weeks, according to the Oxford Dictionaries.

Unsafe Abortion

Unsafe abortion is defined as a procedure for terminating an unwanted pregnancy either by persons lacking the necessary skills or in an environment lacking the

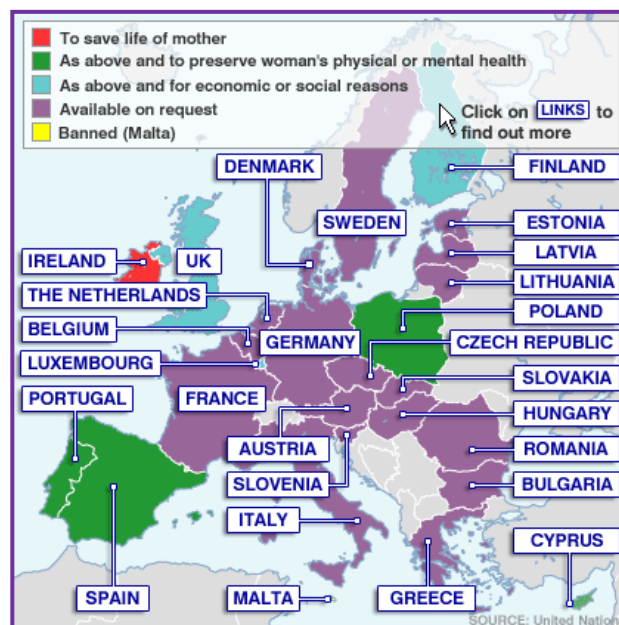
minimal medical standards or both (based on WHO, the Prevention and Management of Unsafe Abortion (WHO/MSM/92.5).

Maternal Mortality

Maternal Mortality is when a woman after (within the first 42 days after the termination of the pregnancy) or during the pregnancy loses her life. Unsafe abortions are a cause of the augmentation of maternal mortality ratio.

Maternal Morbidity

Maternal morbidity is the medical complications or problems such as infections that may be caused after or during the termination of a pregnancy. When we are talking about maternal morbidity after an abortion then the abortion could be characterized as an unsafe one.



#1 The picture shows how abortion is dealt with as an action by European Countries

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Current Situation Worldwide

In Europe most countries recognize abortions as legal actions, however, in some countries abortions are prohibited by law. Most of the European countries do not encourage abortions after the first semester of pregnancy. This can only occur under specific circumstances such as putting the woman's life in danger, having other health related problems or for social and economic reasons. There are still countries though, like Malta, which, do not permit abortions to be performed even if the woman's health is in danger. Generally, 30% of pregnancies in Europe are terminated with the rate being higher in Eastern Europe. This percentage is the biggest worldwide, however, the European continent has the lower number of unsafe abortions being performed every year.

Of the 10 countries where mothers are most at risk, only Afghanistan is outside Africa.

Highest lifetime risk of maternal death

	MMR	Lifetime risk
1 Niger	1800	1 in 7
2 Sierra Leone	2100	1 in 8
3 Afghanistan	1800	1 in 8
4 Chad	1500	1 in 11
5 Angola	1400	1 in 12
6 Somalia	1400	1 in 12
7 Liberia	1200	1 in 12
8 DR Congo	1100	1 in 13
9 Guinea-Bissau	1100	1 in 13
10 Rwanda	1300	1 in 16

#2 The situation in some less economically developed

100.000 women in Africa die during this procedure. In Africa, in 11 out of 54 countries, an abortion is under no circumstances permitted. Even though there are some countries where abortion is legal still a very few number of women will get the chance to have a safe abortion. This applies to Asia, as well, especially to developing nations in the Middle East. In Asian countries the number of deaths from unsafe abortions remains high.

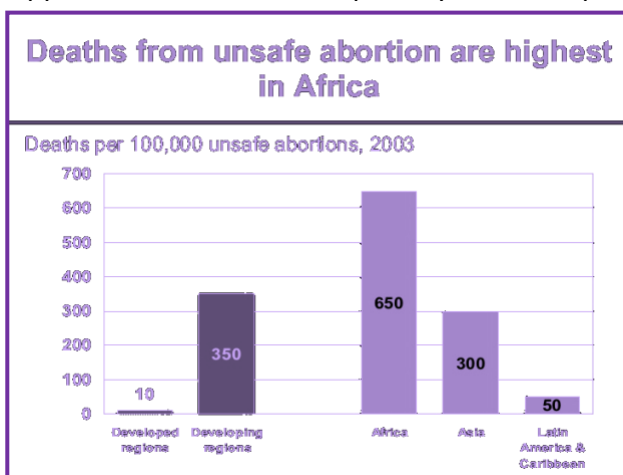
In America the situation is not as good as expected. Except for the United States that have decreased the number of unsafe abortions to a very minor percentage per year, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean face a huge issue. At the beginning of 2016, due to the epidemic of Zika virus, many women were infected during abortions under unsafe conditions. It is estimated that in 2014, 10% of maternal deaths were caused by unsafe abortions.

Methods of abortion

Specific methods of abortions are used according to the period in which women decide to have an abortion.

If the pregnancy is decided to be ended in the first trimester, there are two options: having a medical abortion procedure or a surgical abortion procedure. As far as the medical abortion procedures are concerned, they may have some effects and dangers. There are many types of such processes, which usually last a couple of

In developing countries, the conditions under which abortions are performed are not the ones required and they are characterized as dangerous. More specifically, about 25 million abortions are performed in developing countries each year, 8 million of which have low safety standards. In Africa, the amount of unsafe abortions is the highest one in the whole world. Unfortunately, 110 out of



#3 The rate of unsafe abortions in Africa

weeks. In some cases, antibiotics are also provided in order to avoid any type of infection. Medical abortion procedures can be performed with an injection, consumption of pills etc., and may have minor effects such as vomiting, fever or nausea or more serious effects like infections, according to the type of medical practice. As for the surgeries, there are many types that can occur, but it depends on the stage of the pregnancy. Surgeries are mainly responsible for the infertility caused by abortion procedures.

During the second semester no medication can be provided in order to end the pregnancy. Surgeries usually are performed. Finally, during the third semester or late term abortion, which is the worst timing to decide to end the pregnancy since the baby is considered “viable” (able to survive outside the womb), is mainly done through a surgery. The dangers concerning the woman’s health in this case are very high. Due to the high risks in some countries the abortion during that time of the pregnancy is illegal.

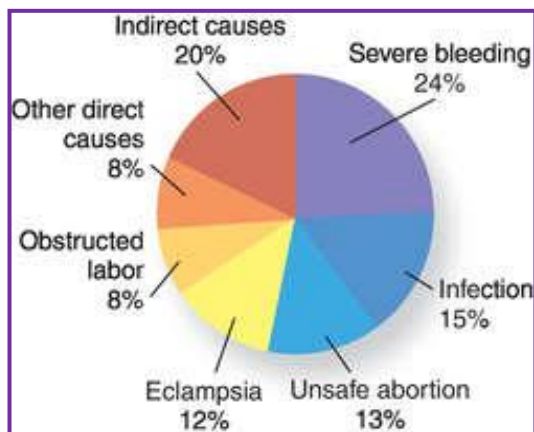
Consequences of unsafe abortions

An unsafe abortion may have several consequences concerning the physical recovery and wellbeing of the woman, as well as her social life. If the necessary medical practices are not done and if the person performing the abortion does not have the skills required then the consequences may be: incomplete abortion, bleeding or any type of infection. If the necessary treatment is not provided immediately then the infection could lead to infertility, health related problems and chronic pain. According to the World Health Organization, unsafe abortions could lead to:

- Incomplete abortion (failure to remove or expel all of the pregnancy tissue from the uterus)
- Hemorrhage (heavy bleeding)
- Infection
- Uterine perforation (caused when the uterus is pierced by a sharp object)
- Damage to the genital tract and internal organs by inserting dangerous objects such as sticks, knitting needles, or broken glass into the vagina or anus.

These are the physical consequences of unsafe abortions but there are further ones as well. In a society where abortion is not accepted as a legal activity or even worse it is considered to be a crime, women face various problems concerning their social life. Sometimes, they have no respect from their society and they are treated as weak people, who have refused to participate in the realization of God’s goals. This situation, in addition to the low productivity that unsafe abortions cause, has a very negative effect on the woman’s psychology and this may be another obstacle to their recovery.

Unsafe abortions have also an impact on the global economy. Since the causes of unsafe abortions are physical and psychological, women that have done such practices need the necessary treatment. The nations, health centers, the international and local community need to pay the cost of the treatment which combines both medical practices and psychological support. All in all, the funds demanded are limitless. It is estimated, that in 2006, an amount of US\$ 553 million was spent treating serious consequences of unsafe abortions linked to physical and psychological issues.



#4 Graph explaining several issues linked to abortion

Finally, unsafe abortions are one of the basic reasons of the rise of maternal mortality and morbidity. It is obvious, that an incomplete or unsafe abortion can lead to mortality. Most frequently maternal mortality is noted, which is one of the dangers of a country's economy and social balance. Sadly, 13% of maternal mortality cases are caused by unsafe abortions.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

United States of America

During the 1950s and 1960s, in the United States, 200,000 to 1.2 million illegal abortions were performed per year. After many changes in the health system, the U.S.A. has achieved the percentage of 0.6 per 100,000 procedures. This means that unsafe abortions have nearly disappeared. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is a system of surveillance that checks the safety and legality of abortions in the United States.

India

India is a nation where abortions are legal at any stage of the pregnancy. This is the reason why the number of unsafe abortions each year, is higher than the year before. The staff is not trained properly, and no necessary medication is provided. The fact that abortions are allowed anytime during the pregnancy, in combination with the unsafe circumstances under which most abortions are performed, lead to the rise of maternal mortality and morbidity. Every two hours, a woman loses her life due to an unsafe abortion.

Ireland

In Ireland, the risk of maternal death is the lowest worldwide. This is achieved because in Ireland abortions are not permitted and they are only allowed if the woman's health is endangered. This is why more than 3.000 women from Ireland, travel to neighboring countries in order to have an abortion. For instance, in the United Kingdom abortions are allowed in order to save the mother's life or because of economic and social problems related to the pregnancy.

Guttmacher Institute

The Guttmacher Institute has been trying to combat unsafe abortions for decades in the developing countries. This institute aims to the reduction of unsafe abortions in countries where abortions are not allowed. The institute publishes articles concerning this topic, such as: why do women decide to give an end to their pregnancy, the progress of each nation regarding the amelioration of the situation, the consequences of unsafe abortions etc. It also provides statistics about the general percentage of unsafe abortions. Its action is significant and focuses on the international community.

World Health Organization

The WHO is a very active organization on this topic. Its goal is to create a world with less health-related problems. Each year WHO reports statistics concerning the number of unsafe abortions as well as means of combating this issue and of eliminating such abortions. Furthermore, many campaigns are organized with the aim of informing the public about the dangers of unsafe abortions, the result of unintended pregnancy and contraceptive use.

Maternal Death Enquiry (MDE) Ireland

MDE is a stand-alone office whose aim is to reduce the number of maternal deaths. It carries out research on this topic and publishes recommendations and statistics. One of its most current reports is the report on Confidential Maternal Death Enquiry in Ireland, Report for 2013-2015.

Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH)

One of the basic PMNCH's goals is to reduce the number of maternal mortality. This partnership is taking action worldwide in order to improve the health of all mothers, newborns and children.

BLOCS EXPECTED

It is expected to form alliances in accordance with your country's position on the topic. Nations in which unsafe abortions are performed should form an alliance together whereas those that do not have high percentage of unsafe abortions should be in another alliance. In order to be able to form "correct" alliances you have to make a research on your country's policy upon the topic. You should know if unsafe abortions are performed in your nation and what is your government's reaction to that.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
1821	America's first statutory abortion regulation
1963	The Society for Human Abortion is established in San Francisco
7th of April 1948	WHO was established
October 1973	Americans Against Abortion kicked off a campaign against abortions
5th of August 2002	Born Alive Infants Protection Act signed into law to establish the rights of a baby that survives an attempted abortion
June 2007	Amnesty International adopts pro-abortion policy
24th of March 2010	The President of the U.S.A. signs an Executive Order which states that abortions will be funded only in cases of rape, incest or danger to the mother's life
January 2011	"Figo saving mothers and newborns project" in Uruguay. Its aim is to protect the life and health of Uruguayan women by reducing unsafe abortions
2012	World Health Organization, Department of Reproductive Health and Research publishes the second edition of Safe abortion: technical and policy guidance for health systems
20th of January 2014	WHO publishes the Clinical practice handbook for safe abortion
July 2015	WHO publishes Health worker roles in providing safe abortion care and post-abortion contraception

27th of September 2016	The United Nations human rights experts warn that unsafe abortions kill worldwide approximately 50.000 women
28th of September 2016	International Safe Abortion Day

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

The United Nations' specialized agency, WHO, has published several manuals about the topic. Each one of them consists of information concerning unsafe abortions as well as guidelines.

Also, the United Nations Human Rights office of the high commissioner has published a report "Preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights" whose aim is to identify the human rights dimensions of preventable maternal mortality and morbidity in the existing international legal framework

Moreover, the Human Rights Council has submitted the resolution 11/8, on Preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights, June 2009, in order to combat maternal mortality (which is caused by unsafe abortions as well). There was a "follow up" on this resolution, Preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights: follow-up to Council resolution 11/8, 27 September 2010, with the same purpose as the previous one.

Other resolutions related to the topic:

- Resolution 2010/1 on Health, morbidity, mortality and development
- Eliminating preventable maternal mortality and morbidity through the empowerment of women , E/CN.6/2010/L.6, 9 March 2010
- Resolution on Preventable Maternal Mortality and Morbidity, UN Human Rights Council, 20 September 2011
- Resolution 2011/1 on Fertility, reproductive health and development

Generally, there have been several events, campaigns and resolutions on this topic. However, the issue remains the same. Women every single day die due to unsafe abortions and many leave behind them unaccompanied children. It is of great necessity to mention that the global community must take action immediately in order to solve such a crucial issue.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

The UN has used different means to ensure that the matter of unsafe abortions disappears. Although different agencies have noted a significant effort the

issue is still plaguing our world. One of the most important attempts was the CLACAI campaign in Latin America.

There are several campaigns against unsafe abortions that have taken place worldwide. For instance, in Latin America, CLACAI has launched a campaign with the aim of ensuring access to safe abortions to women in the region. Additionally, the Initiative for Women and Youth Network (GIWYN), a nongovernmental organization in Nigeria, having realized the extensive number of women that daily engage in abortion, launches a campaign against unsafe abortions.

In addition, many governments around the globe have adopted the UN's regulations and have marked significant progress in their domestic issues linked to unsafe abortions. Judging from their actions, when the correct guidelines are projected, and the people follow them willingly, each attempt is accurate and can decrease the number of unsafe abortions.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Combating unsafe abortions is an issue that should immediately be dealt with. The global community must take action and prevent women from following such practices. The solutions to this problem fall under two main categories: repressive and preventive measures.

It is essential to combat the causes of unsafe abortions. Number one priority of all nations should be the prevention of unintended pregnancies. This could be achieved through the education of children and adults concerning contraceptive use. In nations where the use of contraceptive is not recognized, contraceptive services should be increased. Fewer pregnancies will be terminated and thus the total number of unsafe abortions will be reduced.

It is of great necessity, to inform the public about the financial, social and physical impacts of unsafe abortions. Moreover, governments and nongovernmental organizations need to find effective ways to overcome cultural and social misconceptions that are obstacles to the necessary health care, which women must receive after abortions.

Additionally, the staff must be trained better and needs to be able to interfere properly in cases of unsafe abortions. Experts should provide the necessary treatment to women that suffer from the consequences of unsafe abortions and transfer them to health centers.

As far as the health centers are concerned, the United Nations as well as NGO's must fund the governments in order to build at least one health center in each state.

These centers will provide women that have been “victims” of unsafe abortions with the necessary treatment. Furthermore, abortions will be performed in these centers by properly trained staff, with the use of the necessary equipment.

Finally, a liberal abortion law does not ensure the safety of abortions. Service guidelines must be written and disseminated. Therefore, changes in the legal framework of different countries are encouraged in order to combat this severe issue.

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