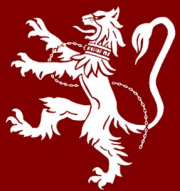




PEA  MUN

Chair:
Julia Goydan

Co-Chair:
Matthew Shang

Vice-Chair:
Jennifer Zecena

General Assembly II

Women's Reproductive Rights

PEAMUN VIII
October 30, 2016

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to PEAMUN VIII! My name is Julia Goydan, and along with Matthew Shang and Jennifer Zecena, we'll be chairing this year's General Assembly on Women's Reproductive Rights. We're very excited to tackle this complex issue with you all, and hope that you will take away something meaningful from this experience.

In order to have a thoughtful, fruitful debate on the day of the conference, we encourage you all to prepare an in-depth analysis of this topic. Use the provided background guide as a starting point, but be sure to conduct additional research. This includes your specific country's stance on women's reproductive rights, as well as other facets of the issue that you think would be worth discussing during committee. Then, based on your research, brainstorm possible solutions to present during committee. A delegate can never be over prepared - the more research you do, the more comfortable you will be up at the podium on the day of the conference!

In addition to researching the actual topic, we encourage you to review parliamentary procedure. This will help us run a smooth and effective committee session on the day of the conference.

Feel free to contact me (jgoydan@exeter.edu), Matt (mshang@exeter.edu) or Jen (jzecena@exeter.edu) with any questions you may have. We wish you the best of luck in your preparations for PEAMUN VIII, and we look forward to seeing you on October 30th!

Sincerely,

Julia Goydan, Chair

Introduction

Women's reproductive rights are the rights of individuals to have reproductive health and to decide whether to reproduce. Reproductive health is "related to multiple human rights, including the right to life, the right to be free from torture, the right to health, the right to privacy, the right to education, and the prohibition of discrimination."¹ Often, the laws pertaining to reproductive health and rights in each country are linked to the country's interpretation of those six key rights. So although articles 16 and 10 of the CEDAW (Convention on the Eliminating of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) and other branches of the UN have guaranteed women equal rights in deciding "freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights,"² the reproductive rights of women today across the globe vary greatly.

Since 1998, the Center for Reproductive Rights has tracked the legal status of abortion in each country and categorized countries into four groups depending on if abortions are permitted on broad grounds without restriction as to reason, on socioeconomic grounds, only to preserve health, only to save a woman's life, or prohibited altogether.³ In 2016, only 74 countries permit abortion on broad grounds without restriction as to reason. Access to contraception also varies dramatically from country to country. Each year, over 222 million women living in developing countries have unmet contraceptive needs.⁴ Unfortunately, the lack of funds and resources prevent the widespread distribution of low cost contraception, although research has shown that

¹ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/HealthRights.aspx>

² Ibid.

³ <http://worldabortionlaws.com/learnmore.html>

⁴ <http://nytlive.nytimes.com/womenintheworld/2015/09/26/why-222-million-women-cant-get-the-birth-control-they-need/>

especially in developing countries the widespread use of contraception prevents pregnancy related health risk for women, reduces infant mortality, and helps prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.⁵

History

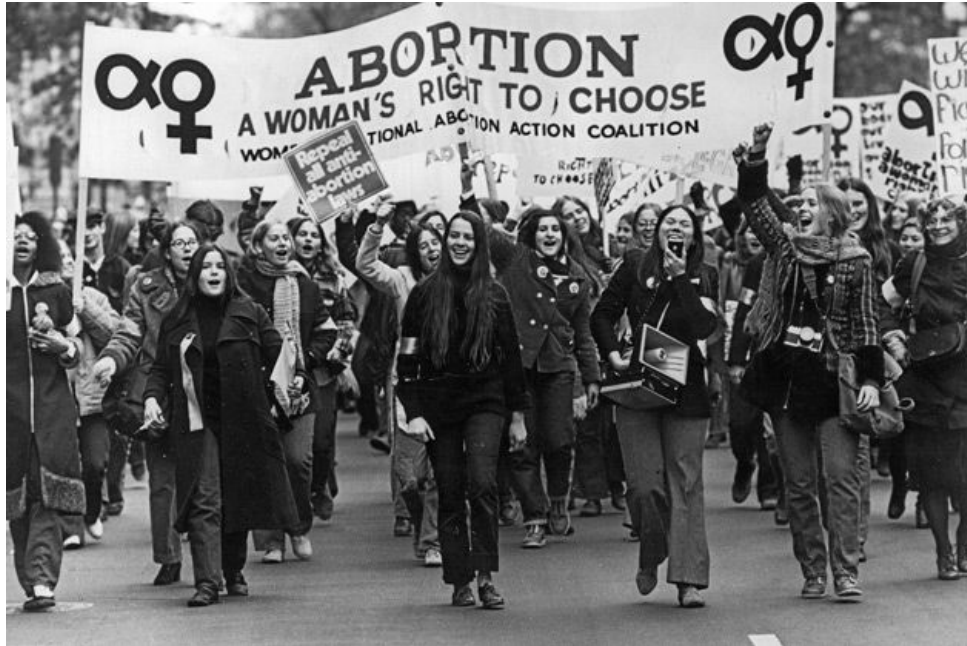
One of the first major pushes for women's reproductive rights occurred on Human Rights Day in 1966, when the Declaration on Population proclaimed that "the opportunities to decide the number and spacing of children is a basic human right."⁶ This continued in 1967, when the Declaration added that "any choice and decision with regard to the size of the family... cannot be made by anyone else [except the mother]."⁷ Another important step came in 1969 when the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, adopted by the General Assembly, stated that "family planning information, education and means should include all medically approved and appropriate methods of family planning."⁸ However, this declaration did not ease the lives of countless women seeking reproductive assistance in countries where methods of family planning, such as birth control and abortion, were not "medically approved". This is an issue that still persists globally.

⁵ <http://who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs351/en/>

⁶ <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/theme/rights/>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.



Women take to the streets in the United States to advocate for women's reproductive rights.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, women across the world began to publicly advocate for their reproductive rights. The feminist movement gained support, and women started “pushing for their right to freedom of choice.”⁹ During this revolutionary time, the International Contraception, Abortion and Sterilization Campaign (ICASC) held its fourth International Women and Health Meeting (IWHM) in 1984, which was themed, “No to Population Control... Women Decide!”¹⁰

Current Situation

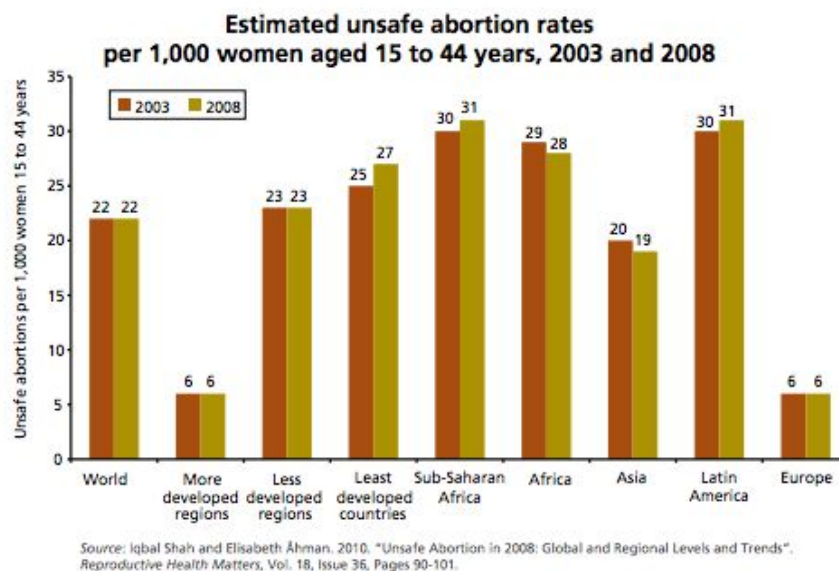
Currently, women's reproductive rights vary greatly across the world. Today, approximately 800 women die from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth every day.¹¹

⁹ <http://wgnrr.org/who-we-are/history/>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ <http://nytlive.nytimes.com/womenintheworld/2015/09/26/why-222-million-women-cant-get-the-birth-control-they-need/>

Many of these deaths are caused by unsafe abortions, which grew in frequency between 2003 and 2008 in sub-saharan Africa and Latin America.¹² Some nations, such as Chile and the Dominican Republic, have only recently loosened their abortion bans to allow the procedure in cases of rape, incest, or fetal impairment; however, in other countries, abortion has been legal for decades, although recent laws have made it more difficult for women to receive treatment.¹³ For example, in the past few years, the United States government has considered “over 235 new regulations intended to block access to abortion.”¹⁴ Regulations pertaining to women’s reproductive rights are continually shifting back and forth as the war between activism and tradition persists in many regions across the globe.



Opposition and Resistance

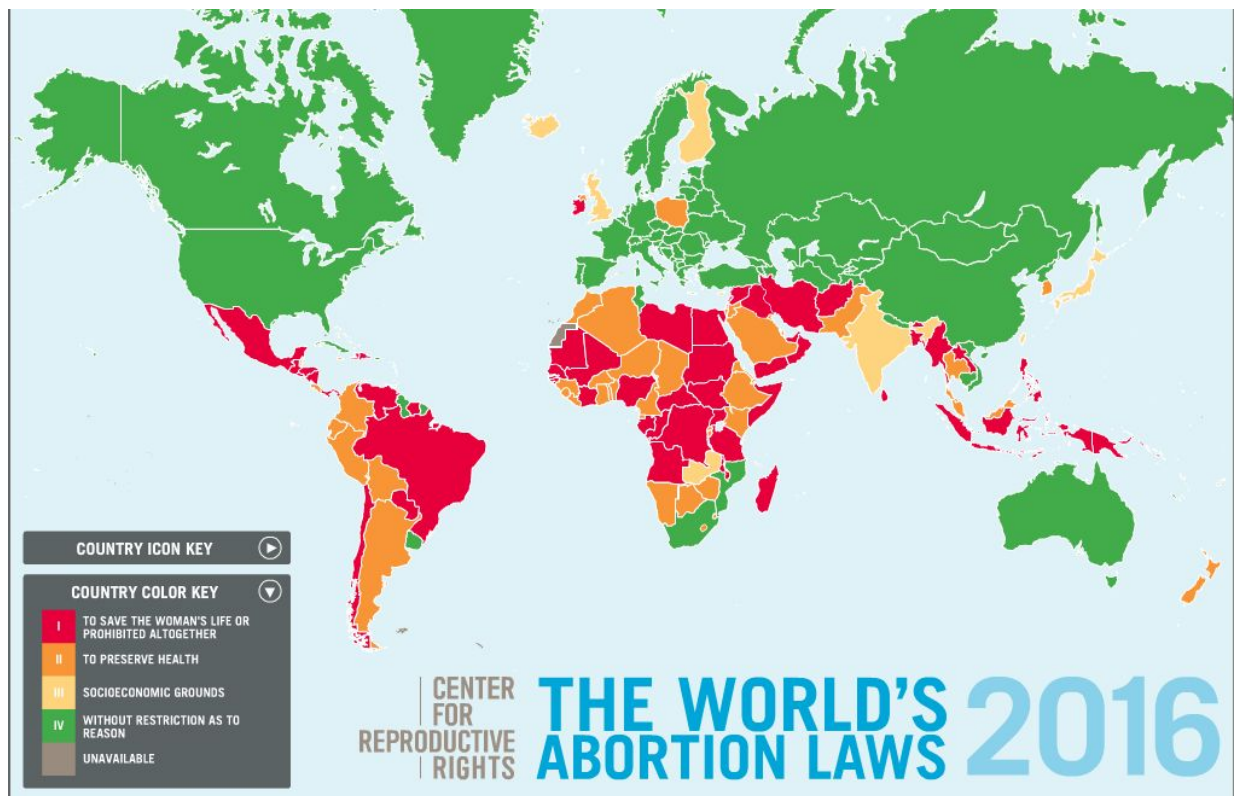
There are various ideologies that fuel abortion restrictions in countries around the world. One of these ideologies is that abortion is immoral and inhumane. For example, many in the

¹² <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/2011abortion/2011wallchart.pdf>

¹³ <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/03/28/a-crack-in-the-world-s-most-restrictive-abortion-law.html>

¹⁴ <http://democraticvoices.com/2016/01/10-photos-to-remind-yourself-why-we-celebrate-roe-v-wade-and-must-reclaim-roe/>

United States argue that life “begins at the moment of fertilization”, and that therefore, abortion is essentially the same as murder.¹⁵ Religion is also a major contributor to the anti-abortion platform. While Christianity is often thought of as the sole religion that opposes abortion, other religions such as Hinduism and Islam also prohibit the expulsion of a fetus. In fact, abortion on any grounds is forbidden in the Islamic holy book Al'Quran.¹⁶ Regions of the world in which the majority of the population practices these religions are more likely to have stricter abortion laws because of these cultural influences.



Women’s Reproductive Rights, Outlined by Region¹⁷

¹⁵ <http://www.nrlc.org/abortion/wdlb/>

¹⁶ <https://www.spuc.org.uk/abortion/religion>

¹⁷ <http://worldabortionlaws.com/map/>

North America

North America has fairly non restrictive reproductive laws in comparison to the rest of the world. The United States and Canada both allow abortion without restriction to reason; however, in the United States, some individual states have enacted legislation that restricts a woman's access to reproductive services. For example, some states have closed clinics and instituted waiting periods so that women must visit a clinic at least two times in order to obtain a procedure.¹⁸

Central America

The majority of nations in Central America have considerably stricter reproductive laws. Many countries, such as Mexico and Guatemala, only permit abortion explicitly to save a woman's life. One of the major reasons why abortion is viewed as unacceptable in Central America is because the majority of the population practices Roman Catholicism, a religion which denounces abortion.

South America

All except three countries (Uruguay, French Guinea, and Guyana) in South America have moderately to substantially restrictive reproductive laws. Paraguay, Brazil, and Venezuela only permit abortion explicitly to save a woman's life. Under Chile's anti-abortion law, abortion is illegal even when the life or the health of the woman or girl is at risk and when the pregnancy is a result of rape.¹⁹

¹⁸https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/overview-abortion-laws?gclid=CjwKEAjwt8da8BRDssvyH8uPEgnoSJABJmwYobMnqPoUJHbeiqgeqV0rW1edDBmjxOqvobb8KLa0KuxoCA_jw_wcB

¹⁹<https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2015/09/chile-extreme-anti-abortion-law-creates-climate-of-fear-and-substandard-health-care-for-women/>

Europe

The majority of European nations allow abortion without restriction to reason. One of the exceptions to this is Ireland, which only permits abortion explicitly to save a woman's life. Also, many countries that allow abortions have instituted waiting periods between initial consultation and the actual procedure, making it more difficult for women to obtain abortions. For example, Germany mandates a three-day waiting period, and the Netherlands mandates a five-day waiting period.²⁰

Northern Africa and the Middle East

Most of the countries in Northern Africa and Middle East have moderately to substantially restrictive reproductive laws. A total of thirteen countries in this region only permit abortion explicitly to save a woman's life, including Nigeria, Afghanistan, and Libya. In Tunisia, abortions laws are fairly liberal (abortions are available during the first trimester); however, in more traditional communities, doctors are reluctant to perform abortions in cases that are considered taboo, such as pregnancies resulting from extramarital affairs or premarital sex. As a result, women often resort to illegal abortions.²¹

Sub-Saharan Africa

Like Northern Africa and Middle East, most of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have moderately to substantially restrictive reproductive laws, with the exception of Malawi and South Africa, which both allow abortion without restriction to reason. Prohibition of abortion in

²⁰<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/08/in-liberal-europe-abortion-laws-come-with-their-own-restrictions/278350/>

²¹ <http://www.pewforum.org/2008/09/30/abortion-laws-around-the-world/#middleeast>

sub-saharan Africa can be accredited to cultural prejudice of immoral sexual behavior. Also, many restrictive abortion laws in Africa date back to colonial codes that remain in place today.²²

Central Asia

Central Asia has fairly non restrictive reproductive laws in comparison to the rest of the world. The Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, and Mongolia all allow abortion without restriction to reason. However, like other countries around world, nations in Central Asia are starting to reverse the freedoms they had originally granted women. For example, lawmakers in Russia are proposing tighter laws on abortion, along with banning over-the-counter sales of emergency contraception drugs.²³

South and Southeast Asia

South and Southeast Asia has a mix of reproductive law strictness. Some countries in this region, like China and Vietnam, allow abortion without restriction to reason, while other countries, like Myanmar and Bangladesh, only permit abortion explicitly to save a woman's life. Many South and Southeast Asian countries fall somewhere in between these two extremes. In China, abortion is actually a legal government service available for women on request; however, it is usually used to enforce the country's one-child policy, and women are often pressured into receiving the procedure in order to abide by this law.²⁴

Oceania

In this region, Australia allows abortion without restriction to reason, but the remaining countries have more restrictive laws, with Indonesia and Papua New Guinea only permitting abortion

²² http://latitude.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/12/15/africas-abortion-wars/?_r=0

²³ <https://www.rt.com/politics/260037-abortions-russia-new-bill/>

²⁴ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/11858723/China-Forced-abortion-late-term-to-avoid-one-child-policy.html>

explicitly to save a woman's life. In Indonesia, like many other developing countries where abortion is stigmatized and highly restricted, women often seek secretive procedures performed by untrained providers and pursue other unsafe abortion methods.²⁵

²⁵ <https://www.guttmacher.org/report/abortion-indonesia>

Questions to Consider

1. Are there rules in your country that control women's reproduction?
2. Should countries be able to control women's reproduction?
3. What existing programs should be build upon to further aid women?
4. What recent progress has been made towards improving women's reproductive rights?
(in your country, in the UN, etc.)
5. What further improvements could be made to international law in the advancement of women's reproductive rights?
6. How can NGOs be utilized in order to aid women in regions that oppress reproductive rights?
7. On which region(s) of the world should efforts be focused on the most?

Further Reading

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/HealthRights.aspx>

<http://worldabortionlaws.com/learnmore.html>

<http://nytlive.nytimes.com/womenintheworld/2015/09/26/why-222-million-women-cant-get-the-birth-control-they-need/>

<http://who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs351/en/>

<http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/theme/rights/>

<http://wgnrr.org/who-we-are/history/>

<http://democraticvoices.com/2016/01/10-photos-to-remind-yourself-why-we-celebrate-roe-v-wade-and-must-reclaimroe/>

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/03/28/a-crack-in-the-world-s-most-restrictive-abortion-law.html>

<http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/2011abortion/2011wallchart.pdf>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/international-abortion-laws-the-six-nations-where-it-is-still-illegal-to-have-an-abortion-10229567.html>

<http://worldabortionlaws.com/map/>

<http://www.nrlc.org/abortion/wdlb/>

<https://www.spuc.org.uk/abortion/religion>

https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/overview-abortion-laws?gclid=CjwKEAajw8da8BRDssvyH8uPEgnoSJABJmwYobMnqPoUJHbeiqqeqV0rW1edDBmjxOqvobb8KLa0KuxoCA_jw_wcB

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2015/09/chile-extreme-anti-abortion-law-creates-climate-of-fear-and-substandard-health-care-for-women/>

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/08/in-liberal-europe-abortion-laws-come-with-their-own-restrictions/278350/>

<http://www.pewforum.org/2008/09/30/abortion-laws-around-the-world/#middleeast>

http://latitude.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/12/15/africas-abortion-wars/?_r=0

<https://www.rt.com/politics/260037-abortion-russia-new-bill/>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/11858723/China-Forced-abortion-late-term-to-avoid-one-child-policy.html>

<https://www.guttmacher.org/report/abortion-indonesia>