

<b>Forum:</b>	Human Rights Council
<b>Issue:</b>	Eliminating the practice of unsafe abortions
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<b>Position:</b>	Deputy President

## Introduction

Unsafe abortions are considered to be a major cause of death and health complications for women. It is defined to be a procedure that terminates an unwanted pregnancy through a procedure that is below the medical standard or carried out by an untrained personage. Today, the practice of unsafe abortion is a serious medical hazard for the female population. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) “there are 25 million cases of unsafe abortions each year worldwide”.

Unsafe abortions can lead to a variety of problems, ranging from maternal morbidity to death. In 2017, Doctors Without Borders worked at multiple hospitals in undeveloped regions. In some of the hospitals, up to 30% of obstetric complications are most likely due to unsafe abortions. However, the effects can be entirely avoidable if unsafe abortions are avoided.

Women including adolescents are forced to resort to unsafe abortions when they cannot get access to safer methods. They may consult an unskilled personage, or even attempt the abortions by themselves.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Abortion Policy

Abortion policies are laws that limit or control abortions (Singh 2018).

### Contraceptives

Contraceptives are devices or drugs that can prevent unwanted pregnancies. They can also be referred to as birth control (Fookes 2018).

## Induced Abortion

An induced abortion is an intentional abortion (Firoz 2013).

## Maternal Morbidity

The negative consequences of unsafe labor or abortion. It causes significant short-term or long-term damage to women's health (Goldberg 2015).

## Background Information

### High Abortion Rates in Developing Regions

From years of research and data collecting, experts have found that nearly all unsafe abortions occur in less developed regions. According to the Guttmacher Institute, around 97% of all unsafe abortions occur in the developing regions of the globe. In these regions, getting access to safe and legal abortions can be very difficult. Safe and legal abortions may be unaffordable for pregnant women.

### Causes of Unsafe Abortions

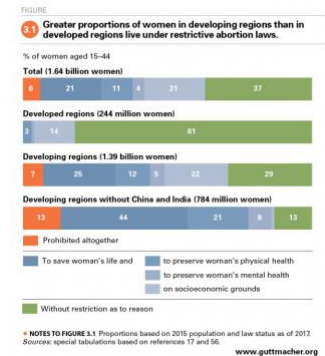
The reasons why women chose to have abortions is closely related to their social, economic, health and partnership factors. According to the Guttmacher Institute, one of the most common causes that force women to go through unsafe abortions are because of young age and the limiting laws.

### Unintended Pregnancies at Youth

Youth pregnancies are one of the main causes that force young women to seek abortions. The high level of social and cultural expectations can limit young women's ability to use proper contraception. This can result in high levels of unintended pregnancies. The majority would also resolve the pregnancies through abortion. Furthermore, more and more young women are completing schooling, as a result, postponing their first union.

## Abortion Laws

The concept of legal abortion has been relatively new. The first laws passed in legalizing abortions were at the start of the 20th century. However, laws in less developed regions or heavily religious regions are still very limiting. Currently, around 27% of women in reproductive age live in a country where abortions are completely prohibited or only allowed to save the woman's life. Only one-third of women live in countries where abortions are available without any restrictions.



## Key Issues

### Abortion Laws

In certain countries, abortion laws can restrict or strictly regulate abortions. Vatican City, Malta, Chile, Dominican Republic, El Salvador Nicaragua are the only six countries that have made abortions completely illegal. Other countries have regulation laws that only allow abortions to be carried out when the mental or physical health of the mother is severely threatened. As a result, certain mothers who are accidentally impregnated are forced to seek illegal measures of unsafe abortions. The vast majority of countries that have established abortion policies are developing countries. They believe that these policies have a positive impact on their economy and politically. Other countries such as the Vatican City ban abortions for religious reasons.

### Deficiencies in Family Programming

Deficiencies in family planning are one of the key elements that have made unsafe abortions so commonly practiced. Basic family programming includes contraceptives, medical checks, and maternal knowledge/education. Many in poverty cannot get accessed to effective contraceptives. Also, a large population of women has not been properly educated nor informed about pregnancies and reproductive health.

According to WHO, 214 million women in developing countries have an unmet need for modern contraception. This staggeringly high number of women often struggle with poverty and pregnancies. Most of them, also live in countries where it is very difficult to get access to safe abortions, either due to the price or the laws forbidding it.

Another problem female face today is the lack of education in women's reproductive wellbeing. Some of the impregnated mothers are unaware of the dangers an unsafe abortion can cause, or they cannot distinguish between a safe and unsafe abortion. Therefore, the lack of maternal education can result in a great number of unsafe abortions.

## Major Parties Involved and their Views

### World Health Organization (WHO)

The World Health Organization is one of the main NGOs that focuses on eliminating unsafe abortions globally, mainly in developing regions such as South Africa and Eastern Asia. They have frequently made efforts to abolish abortion policies, and have done a large quantity of research on unsafe abortions. They have also published many informative articles regarding the issue to help inform the general public. Furthermore, the WHO has several medical care centers located in South Africa and Eastern Asia that improves pregnancy health.

### The United States

For decades the United States have been working hard to eliminate the practice of unsafe abortions, and also providing family planning to a large portion of the female population. However, the United States have made abortion laws stricter across certain regions. For example, in May 2019, the state of Alabama passed an abortion law that prohibits abortions. The law also includes a ban on abortions in cases of rape and incest. Although the United States is still working hard in combating the occurrence of unsafe abortions, the abortion policies may force more people to seek unsafe abortion methods.

### Doctors Without Borders

Doctors Without Borders is another NGO that focuses on Maternal Health. They are offering medical assistance in African, Latin America, and South-Eastern Asia. They provide safe and affordable access to deliveries and abortions to people in poverty. From 2013-2017, they have assisted 1.1 million deliveries including induced abortions) Furthermore, they also provide treatment women and girls who have been harmed by unsafe abortions.

## Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Date	Description of Event
1803	The UK passed the first anti-abortion law, and the policies became stricter throughout the century.
1980s	Other countries followed the trend and outlawed abortions.
1950s	Due to the strict abortion policies, the illegal abortion rates peaked. There were over one million illegal and unsafe abortions performed in the US each year.
1950s	The unsafe abortion often left women with dangerous health hazards such as abdominal infections.
1950-1960	Women started to push for civil rights. Countries in Europe and Western Central Asia started to legalize abortions, and amend abortion laws.
1960-1970	The trend of legalizing abortions spread to other developed countries.
January 22, 1973	The US supreme court passed a law based on the <i>Roe v. Wade</i> decision, it allowed the women to terminate the child without restrictions.  However, this movement also caused numerous protests from different religions.

## Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

In January 22nd, 1973, the US supreme court had passed a law that permitted the women to have abortions without restrictions. Furthermore, the federal government and NGOs also funded women to have affordable and safe abortions. It was a major improvement for the

civil rights of women, but having safe and legal abortions were still close to impossible. The law soon caused a national outrage. A great number of religious groups were upset about the new law in place. The antiabortion forces orchestrated illegal and violent acts of protest. Since the early 1980s, clinics and abortion providers have been a constant target of attack. Doctors and medical workers often received death threats and vicious attacks such as invasions and small-scale bombings.

## Possible Solutions

Advocating sexual education is a feasible action that can be taken to lower the chance of an unwanted pregnancy or an unsafe abortion. Sharing knowledge regarding sexual safety, proper contraceptive usage and safe abortion is necessary. A large portion of women who go through unsafe abortion are unaware of the damaging health hazards it can cause. Some unsafe abortion methods such as inserting sharp tools into the uterus and swallowing strong drugs or medicine can be extremely dangerous and even potentially kill the woman.

Another possible solution that can decrease the occurrence of abortions is to provide effective contraception and family planning. In many developing regions of the world, modern contraception and family planning are difficult to access. Providing effective contraception can decrease the chance of unwanted pregnancy, therefore, also decrease the rate of abortion.

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