



UNITED NATIONS
COMMISSION ON
THE STATUS OF
WOMEN
TOPIC BULLETIN

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CHAIRS

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Hello Delegates!

First of all, I'd like to welcome you all to AMUN XXI! My name is Kaylyn Lu, and I will be one of your chairs for CSW. I am currently a junior at BCA in the Academy for Business and Finance, and I'm also an avid feminist and advocate for a variety of gender-based issues, even running a blog on the topic to spread awareness.

Since starting MUN in my freshmen year, I've learned that a roomful of high school students can actually accomplish a lot when they put their minds to it. MUN might seem to be only about winning a gavel, but in reality, there's a lot more to it than just a piece of wood. It allows us to play the role of the legislation that we all like to criticize so much, and realize that their jobs aren't that easy. I hope all of you share the same passion I hold for Model UN, and I can't wait to open debate and listen to all of you speak!

Overall, I wish all of you the best while researching and formulating your country's ideas, as well as possible solutions. I'm sure that the topics at hand will create a very interesting and passionate discussion. Can't wait to meet you all in February!

Sincerely,
Kaylyn Lu, Co-Chair, CSW
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Hello Delegates!

My name is Alisha Merchant, and I am extremely excited to be one of your co-chairs for UNCSW at AMUN XXI. I am currently a junior in the Academy for the Advancement of Science and Technology.

I was introduced to the world of Model UN in my freshman year, and have since worked towards expanded my knowledge and awareness on many topics regarding international relations. The overall sense of companionship, competition, and most importantly, community, cannot be found anywhere else. Outside of chairing AMUN, I participate in the debate league here at BCA, as I enjoy public speaking immensely, and enjoy participating in my school's debate team I also volunteer with the American Red Cross and run track and field as a hurdler. My hobbies include cooking, watching Netflix, and writing poetry.

UNCSW and the discussion of equal rights for all people hold a special place in my heart. I cannot wait to meet everyone, and work alongside you whilst you delve deeper into the exciting world of MUN. If you have any questions at all, don't hesitate to email either me. See you in February!

Yours truly,
Alisha Merchant, Co-Chair, CSW
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Topic A: Prevention of Online Harassment and Violence Against Women

Introduction

On June 21, 1946, The United Nations Economic and Social Council established the Commission on the Status of Women, a body created to promote gender equality and women's rights as a whole. The Commission has thus far fought to protect the rights of women by working to prevent sexual violence, domestic abuse, lack of education, and countless other issues facing women worldwide. Now, more than 70 years later, a newer, perhaps more threatening, problem is arising. With the Internet continuing to claim a more prominent role in 21st-century life, the international community must address the rising concerns of online harassment of and violence against women. While modern technology does facilitate this extremely prevalent mistreatment of women, it is the deep-rooted misogyny within society that is the true cause of it.

The creation of the Internet has only made it easier for misogynists, which consist of mostly men, to abuse women, shielded by the anonymity of their aliases. Not only



is this psychologically damaging to the victim, but it is also one in which she cannot take any productive actions against it. Should she choose to report the incident to local law enforcement, there is a high chance that they will choose not to, or simply not be able to do anything about it.

With online harassment and violence against women, various sub-issues arise, including hate speech, blackmail, and non-consensual pornography, which is commonly referred to as “revenge porn”. These issues prove difficult for governments to control, due to the free nature of the Internet. Anyone can post anything at any time, and it will be made available for everyone to see until it is removed. With more than half the world’s 7.7 billion population actively using the Internet, a post that remains online for mere minutes can do an immeasurable amount of damage to the victim’s reputation and mental health.

An explicit photograph of the victim, for instance, that was not consented to could easily be screenshotted and reproduced infinitely, even when the original

post has been removed. Therefore, these images could interfere with university and college acceptances, employment opportunities, and even future relationships. In order to determine effective legislation in regards to censorship, national governments must collaborate with the corporations that own these online platforms to better protect the safety and interests of the women they represent. Violence against women, whether online or not, intentionally keeps women in a position of weakness; effectively impairing their ability to fully participate politically, socially, and economically in society.

Topic History

Violence against women has existed since the literal beginning of human civilization, with cultures around the world promoting an ideology that equates women to property for centuries. Only recently has the international community made progress in terms of improving women’s position in society; however, there is still a long road to equality ahead. As



previously mentioned, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women was founded in 1946, as a subsidiary of the Economic and Social Council. The Commission aided in drafting the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which was adopted in 1967, as well as the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Additionally, the 57th session of CSW, which took place in 2013, was primarily focused on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.

Despite these efforts to finally end violence against women (VAW), there has been very little discussion among the international community regarding online VAW and harassment of women. The report on the 57th session of CSW only very briefly mentioned social media's role in VAW, stating that we must “develop mechanisms to combat the use of information and communications technology and social media to perpetrate violence

against women and girls,” (Report on the fifty-seventh session).

The United Nations General Assembly, UN Human Rights Council, and UNCSW have all played a significant role in defining and addressing solutions in documents from the years 2011 onward. It is important to note that the UN's awareness and involvement in online gender-based violence only truly began in 2006, in which the UN Secretary-General noted that “more inquiry is needed about the use of technology... in developing an expanding forms of violence. Evolving and emerging forms of violence need to be named so that they can be recognised and better addressed”.

A crucial moment in the recognition of online gender-based violence was the 2011 report to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC). The Special Rapporteur, Frank La Rue, identified the Internet as a catalyst in enabling individuals to exercise their right to freedom of opinion and expression, and through this the necessity of protecting human rights. This was followed up with the 2012 HRC resolution that recognized the



global nature of the Internet as acceleration for the “development of progress in various forms”, referring to the Internet’s ability to catalyze both constructive and destructive behavior.

In 2013, the HRC referred to the Internet as having become “a site of diverse forms of violence against women, in the form of pornography, sexist games, and breaches of privacy”. Then, in June of 2017, the report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights highlighted that the horrible phenomenon of online violence against women should be distinguished from offline gender discrimination and violence. It also contains the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which, under Article 19(3), provides a multifaceted approach to addressing online violence against women, including preventative measures, such as education, reactive measures, including investigation and deescalating situations, and redress for victims. Numerous popular social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, have long struggled with

preventing harassment of women on their platforms. In 2011, Facebook was widely criticized for not removing “joke” pages such as one named “You know she's playing hard to get when your [sic] chasing her down an alley”. The company attempted to justify its actions, saying that “It is very important to point out that what one person finds offensive another can find entertaining – just as telling a rude joke won't get you thrown out of your local pub, it won't get you thrown off Facebook,” (“Facebook’s Questionable Policy”).

Later in 2011, a petition on change.org was started to demand that Facebook remove pages that promote sexual violence. The petition included a list of demands for Facebook, including a promise to publicly denounce rape and all forms of sexual violence, and subsequently remove any and all pages that promote these abuses of women; garnering more than 220,000 signatures.

In May 2012, Anita Sarkeesian, an American blogger, started a Kickstarter campaign to raise a couple of thousand dollars to research “tropes vs women in



video games”. Within days, she had received countless rape and death threats, some more graphic than others. Soon after, a group of gamers created a game in which the player would click on a picture of Sarkeesian’s face as it became progressively bloodier and more beat up.

In the next year, a woman by the name of Caroline Criado-Perez started a petition, calling for the British government to consider putting more women on bank notes. In the following weeks, she was barraged with tweets threatening her with rape and death. Rather than disconnecting from the Internet entirely, she made the decision to retweet every threat. This broadcasted the harassment she was receiving to all of her followers, who swiftly took action by alerting the media and sending messages to Twitter executives and law enforcement. With the international spotlight on them, a representative for the British police force stated that it was Twitter’s responsibility to address the messages as they saw fit, as it would be difficult for an already “hard-pressed” police force

to look into the bombardment of threats.

On their end, Twitter released a statement saying that victims of online harassment, like Criado-Perez, could report each individual threat using a form that Twitter provides. Criado-Perez’s supporters began to send extremely large quantities of tweets to Mark Luckie, Twitter’s head of journalism and news. Ironically, in response to this, he disabled his account for a short period of time, saying that the messages had become “abusive”.

Also in 2013, Facebook was widely criticized for refusing to take down an image of an Icelandic woman, Thorlaug Agustsdottir, that was digitally-altered to make it appear as though she was physically abused. The caption, translated, reads: “Women are like grass, they need to be beaten/cut regularly,” (“Facebook’s Questionable Policy”). Numerous Facebook users, including Agustsdottir herself, had reported the image to the company, citing that it was graphically violent. However, they all got the same response: that the image had not been removed, as the social media



platform had not “seen anything questionable in its content,” (“Facebook’s Questionable Policy”).

Most recently, in May 2018, Facebook announced that it would be accepting submissions of nude photographs of its users, in order to “train Facebook to block the images,” (“Facebook Wants Your Nude Photos”). Aside from the clear privacy issues regarding this plan, it is also entirely possible that the company can be hacked, and the images released. While Facebook’s intentions seem to be in the right place, this specific course of action might prove to do more harm than good.

Current Situation

Currently, men and women experience similar rates of online harassment; however, women typically experience a much more serious and a more diverse range of offenses, including a significantly larger emphasis on violent, sexual themes. Additionally, women are more likely to self-censor their posts in order to avoid harassment. According to a study, women who

experienced harassment online were three times more likely to report that the harassment made them feel afraid. On the other hand, men were more likely to report that they were unbothered by the harassment.

Within the same study, it was found that 72% of Internet users have witnessed some form of online harassment, and this number increases within certain subgroups. “The most pronounced differences are by age and sexual identity: Internet users under age 30 and those who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual are more likely to witness all the core harassment behaviors we asked about,” (“Online Harassment, Digital Abuse”). Evidently, online harassment differs between various identities, but so does the kind of harassment. Racial and sexual identity minorities are more likely to experience more severe forms of abuse, such as cyberstalking. Some other forms of harassment include, but are not limited to: defamation, cyber mobs, trafficking, and doxing, which is when a person’s personal information is illegally retrieved and published.



The first necessary step toward preventing the online harassment of women is to realize that it “is a legitimate and harmful manifestation of gender-based violence,” (Global Fund for Women). Despite the “virtual” nature of the online world, the pain caused by this violence is very real and affects the lives of real women. Oftentimes, the hurt felt by victims is dismissed by their friends and families as not significant, and they are told to simply spend less time online. This does not mitigate the issue in any way, it only restricts the free will of that individual woman.

Another issue plaguing the attainment of this goal is the controversy surrounding the legality of hate speech. It is extraordinarily difficult to create legislation protecting citizens from hate speech due to the concept of freedom of speech. Many developed nations have statutes to protect their citizens’ rights to free speech; however, the law often makes no distinction for hateful words. It is difficult to prevent something if it has no widespread, accepted definition. For instance, different

social media platforms have different standards for what qualifies as hate speech; making it more difficult for the international community to take steps toward achieving the prevention of online harassment of women.

Despite the clear importance of protecting freedom of speech, their exists, or should exist, a line at which “harmless” expression can result in irreversible psychological consequences for the victim, and is no longer simply protected speech. Aside from the government’s role in this issue, it is essential to also consider the role of the private sector. The corporations who own the social media platforms used to perpetuate a culture that promotes violence against women are not invincible. Because of this, these companies are often more sensitive to the public’s demands; and will take action to prevent online violence against women and harassment on their platforms if they are pressured to do so.

A common form of online harassment comes in the form of cybermobs, or groups of people who aim to defame women and other minorities, such as the



LGBTQ+ community. They target someone with a public profile, and bombard the victim with a variety of threats, which often include descriptions of killing and raping them. They can also aim at less prominent figures in order to shame and ostracise certain people in online communities. Cybermobs are often difficult to prosecute, which leaves victims terrified and distressed, as the threats come through many outlets and consume a person's life. Most anonymous threats, or verbal abuse by phone or the Internet, are never investigated. It is not very difficult to encrypt your IP address, which in turn hides your location and allows you to evade investigating authorities. The anonymity and privacy that surrounds users calls to question how victims can pursue legal action against perpetrators.

In a deeper, more obscure corner of the Internet, a subculture of people gather on forums to discuss the daily ongoings of their lives as self-proclaimed "incels". The term incel stands for involuntary celibates, a group of primarily young white men who feel that women are responsible for

their lack of sexual activity and any meaningful relationships with the female gender. Their forums are filled with sentiments of rage and unconcealed violence directed towards women. While these incels might seem harmless, or men who are simply upset that women do not seem to like them, they are actually far more of a threat to women's safety than meets the eye.

Within this community of those who have similar issues with women, they perpetuate violence against women among themselves, often encouraging each other to "ER". This term refers to Elliot Rodger, a fellow self-declared incel, who was responsible for the 2014 Isla Vista attacks that ended in the deaths of six people. He soon after took his own life. The incel community reveres him and what he did, an act that few of them would ever have the courage to go through with. He represented all of them, a young man who felt that he was denied a fundamental human necessity time and time again by his female peers, someone who, one day, vowed to take his revenge on the cruel world that had forced him to. Elliot Rodger, the late affluent



son of a Hollywood film writer, immediately became the hero of the incels. They praise(d) him endlessly, calling for more of their own to take action against the unfair world.

Elliot Rodger was not the only one whose hatred for women manifested into mass murder. In April 2018, Alek Minassian drove a van in Toronto into unsuspecting pedestrians, killing 10 and injuring 15. The victims were predominantly women. Just before he attacked, Minassian had posted a message on Facebook, saying “The Incel Rebellion has already begun! We will overthrow all the Chads and Stacys! All hail the Supreme Gentleman Elliot Rodger!”

Incels have an extensive, in-depth philosophy of the world, created to explain why they had been rejected countless times by women. In their ideology, the top 20% of men in attractiveness are known as “Chad”. They believe in the 80-20 rule, which states that roughly 80% of women are attracted to Chad. Somewhat less attractive Chads are called Chadlites, while the female alternative is Stacy(lites). To them, women were “femoids”, or “foids”

for short, indicating a status that was sub-human. Incels truly believe in this sexual class system, one in which it is impossible to move up, as your status is determined by unalterable biological traits. They believe that they are the lowest of the low, condemned to a sexless and loveless life. Fueled by this realization, the subculture expresses its misogynist rage through graphic descriptions of sexual assault, rape, and, in extreme cases, homicide.

Country Policy

For the most part, there have been no international policies created to combat online harassment and violence, and country policies have either minimal successes, or have simply not been created yet. Due to a lack of education and precedent surrounding online violence, the laws have been notoriously slow in adapting to the rapid pace of technology and the Internet. In many cases, the laws created do not sufficiently convict the abuser, and leaves the victims helpless.



Western Countries:

The western developed countries, which include the European Union and countries like Australia, the United States, and Canada, have enacted laws that prosecute online abusers and harassers. Unfortunately, a significant amount of the population have cited that the policies are ineffective. For instance, in Sweden, 57% of women who responded to an Amnesty International survey stated that current government policies were inadequate. Around a third of the women in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and New Zealand surveyed that the police response to abuse online was similarly insufficient.

Africa and the Middle East:

Middle Eastern and African countries provide a variety of positions in regard to their policies on online harassment. On one hand, nations like the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which have extremely high rates of sexual violence, largely ignore the need for legislation regarding online abuse. This stems from the stigma

surrounding mental and psychological illnesses. Legislation remains rather lacking, making prosecution extremely difficult to borderline impossible. Situations are further complicated by the lack of education and recourse surrounding matters, as well as government corruption. Even more progressive countries like South Africa struggle to provide sufficient legislation in the arena of regulatory measures or recourse for victims. But, they have instituted legislation that allows online perpetrators to be prosecuted, which has proved to be a significant step toward ending online harassment.

Asia:

Asian countries have a wide range of progress regarding legislation. China, with an incredible 688 million Internet users, proves to be a breeding ground for online abuse. In the most notorious form of online abuse, called “human flesh search engines”, internet users identify and then humiliate online targets who have been accused of acts ranging from corruption to infidelity. Yet, China has no specific



laws that counteract cyberbullying and harassment. The issue of online abuse in Russia is often spearheaded by authorities themselves. Harassment and violence online in Russia can be sophisticated and multifarious; for instance, at the notorious “troll farm” in St. Petersburg, which is believed to have links to the country’s authorities, hundreds of people work to comment on social networks and online forums, spamming the internet with Russian propaganda. It is useful to identify Asia in regions, as different regions have made varying strides towards the prevention of online harassment and violence.

Latin America:

Most Latin American and South American countries do not have many policies put in place to properly combat online harassment and violence against women. For instance, in Colombia, women who lead organizations that promote equal rights are often harassed and stalked, which they believed to be connected to online abuse. Deeply rooted cultural norms like machismo and patriarchal systems

play a role in gender and familial roles. Because of this, women who are victims of online harassment and abuse give into blackmail demands in order to protect their safety and reputation.

Questions to Consider

How can nations enforce laws and preserve the safety of women online without infringing upon others’ privacy?

Should the responsibility of online user protection fall upon the public or private sector?

How can the UNCSW encourage nations with deeply rooted cultural and social norms to promote the end of online gender-based harassment and violence?

How can the committee create an effective framework to ensure that women in countries that do not currently have widespread Internet access will be protected when that happens?



What are more efficient and effective ways of enforcing laws regarding online gender-based violence and harassment that are already in place?

How can the process of reporting and prosecuting online violence and harassment be made a more viable choice for victims?

Topic B:

Access to Family Planning in the Developing World

Introduction

Family planning allows people to obtain their desired number of children and determine the adequate spacing between pregnancies. According to the United Nations Population Fund, “214 million women in developing countries lack safe and effective family planning methods” (“Family planning”). These women account for 84% of all unintended pregnancies in developing regions. Family planning can significantly reduce infant, maternal, and child mortality, as well as improve maternal, child, and family health, including the reduction of teen pregnancies. For instance, an estimated 536,000 women die each year from pregnancy-related reasons, with a whopping 99% of these deaths occurring in the developing world. Access to family planning and reproductive health care is crucial to the promotion of gender equality, the eradication of poverty, and slow unsustainable population growth.

Oftentimes, these women are aware of the various contraceptive options that exist; however, they do not



have access to them nor information and services on how to properly utilize them. Unmet contraceptive needs can lead to unwanted pregnancy, sexually-transmitted infections, and increased rates of abortion, often unsafe ones. Providing contraception to women would avoid as many as 36 million abortions, 70,000 maternal deaths, and 52 million unintended pregnancies according to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Moreover, the repercussions of an unwanted or unplanned pregnancy severely hinder the ability of a woman to participate fully in her society — politically, socially, and economically.

Topic History

For a significant portion of history, a woman's role in society was largely limited to birthing and raising children, and her freedom was controlled by the men in her life. However, societal expectations

of women have tremendously evolved over the course of the last century, which saw a radical increase in the number of women participating in labor markets across the globe. The 20th century also gave rise to more advancements in medicine, reducing maternal mortality rates and leading to a soaring world population. As a result, many countries began to recognize the adverse effects of large populations, marking the beginnings of modern family planning. In 1952, India became the first nation to put its national family planning policies in action. Around the same time, the International Planned Parenthood Foundation and Population Council, both non-governmental organizations, were established.

On May 13, 1968, the International Conference on Human Rights recognized access to family planning as a human right. The conference's drafted document, known as the Teheran Proclamation, states that "parents have a basic human right to determine freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children". This document



established a monumental concept; every individual has the inherent right to determine their future for themselves. It also established family planning as an obligation of countries and governments all over the world. Throughout history, women have experienced failed efforts to plan, avoid or delay pregnancies, further securing their roles as homemakers and housewives, and hindering their ability to contribute to society. Furthermore, the human right to family planning allows women to expand their opportunities and increase their overall socioeconomic status.

Since the 1960s, family planning programs have increased the use of contraception from 10% to as much as 60% of couples worldwide, though these numbers vary based on location and region. The 1984 UNFPA conference in Mexico City requested governments to make family planning universally available, provide improved education and resources for all groups of people, and ensure that programs are neither coercive nor discriminatory. The conference also stresses the importance of taking

important steps to avoid the necessity of abortion, such as not promoting abortion as a method of family planning. However, humane treatment and counseling should still be provided for women who undergo abortions.

While abortion remains a controversial topic, the international community must work to reduce the occurrence of illegal abortions, which pose a serious health hazard. The 1994 Fourth International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, and the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, set a goal for universal access to reproductive health care, which translates to protecting the people's right to control the number, spacing, and timing of one's children. "Implicit in this...are the rights of men and women to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice."

Soon after, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established two indicators of universal family planning access.



Indicator 5.6.1 stresses the proportion of women who can make informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use, and reproductive health care, while indicator 5.6.2 establishes the importance of laws and regulations that protect women's full access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, information, and education. While the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) did not initially focus on family planning and contraception, in 1999, universal access to reproductive health services, was added and became Target 5B. Since the early 1990s onwards, focus shifted from family planning to the broader aspects of reproductive rights and health for women. In 2008, the UN found that 144 out of the 195 national governments directly supported contraceptive access and family planning programs through their policies, including a remarkable 86% of developing nations.

Despite this, women still face difficulties gaining access to reliable suppliers and programs. In a 2011 case study conducted by the Marie Stopes International, a reported 80% of couples in Sierra

Leone have never used a modern contraceptive method. As a result, one in eight women dies during pregnancy or childbirth. When interviewing a native woman, Zainabu, she said; "I want to stop. Giving birth can be dangerous...By stopping having children, we'll be able to give all our attention to the ones we have." In 2012, the United Nations Population Division reported that Middle and Western Africa have the greatest unmet need for contraception, the percentage of women who desire birth spacing but do not employ any contraceptive method to prevent their pregnancy. Statistics remained stagnant from 1990 to 2010, and contraceptive prevalence remained less than 10% in Chad, Mali, and South Sudan. Between 2010 and 2014, an estimated 44% of pregnancies worldwide were unintended.

More recently, in 2018, the UNFPA reported that the right to family planning is under attack in many countries. False information regarding family planning is rampant in many developing areas. In Lebanon, one Syrian refugee reported that her husband forbade



contraception, believing it caused infertility. As a result, she had back-to-back pregnancies, which led her to develop multiple nutrient deficiencies. Despite the UN and other NGOs working tirelessly to improve family planning access, there are still many steps that need to be taken to provide women everywhere with the services they need.

Current Situation

Currently, one of the most critical barriers that hinder family planning access is misinformation. The worldwide literacy rate for men is well over 80%, whereas women trail at 65%. These statistics are not only due to fewer educational opportunities, but also cultural, religious, and societal norms. As a result, women in developing countries have very limited knowledge about their sexual and reproductive health, which leads them to make ill-informed decisions when it comes to family planning.

A 52 country-wide Demographic and Health Surveys cites that

married women with unmet needs name four main reasons for not using contraceptives, being: concerns about side effects and an overall risk factor, infrequent or nonexistent participation in sexual activities, close relatives and family members providing opposition to contraception, or belief that they do not need contraceptives if they are breastfeeding and/or have not resumed menstruation after birth.

Even more alarming is the false information that surrounds contraception, which can spread through local populations, healthcare providers, and even doctors. In one study conducted by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), women in the United States, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, and Mexico cited infertility and weight gain as being potential side effects of contraceptives. Along with the aforementioned misinformation, many women in developing African nations believe that contraception can interfere with their sex life, or even cause cancer.

Religious, social, and cultural barriers, as well as familial opposition, may influence a woman's decision to use



contraceptives, but this is a less cited reason than personal concerns. For example, unmarried people from religious regions may find it extremely difficult to gain access to contraception, as premarital sex is frowned upon in many religions. A 2013 report notes that 82% of developed countries permitted abortion for economic or social reasons, and 71% allowed abortion upon request. Meanwhile, the corresponding figures are 20% (economic and social reasons) and 16% (request) for developing countries.

Present-day Europe faces a drastic increase in refugee populations, and many questions are surrounding how to best distribute and integrate migrants into the various accepting European nations. Similarly, there is significant confusion on how to provide these migrants with proper health care, especially reproductive health care, seeing that their cultural and religious backgrounds are extremely different from westernized Europe. While many healthcare providers have experience with culturally integrated patients, there is a

considerable lack of experience in working with non-integrated minority refugee populations. Comprehending the differences between various religious and cultural norms is imperative in order to ensure that health care providers provide their best level of service.

Another key obstacle to family planning is a lack of funds. Many contraceptive methods like the IUD and female and male sterilization are still extremely expensive and require skilled medical professionals (ie. midwives and trained health workers) to conduct these exams and procedures. Costs can inhibit people from seeking contraceptives. For instance, money spent on contraception can equate to 5 to 20% of household income in developing countries.

To provide the previously mentioned resources, there not only has to be sufficient supplies but also supply chains to facilitate distribution. When suppliers of free contraceptives like NGOs, governments, or other organizations face supply chain issues, like stockouts, it becomes



infinitely harder to obtain these resources. Women who use short-term birth control methods are specifically affected, as well as women who have to travel long distances. Supply chains still struggle to reach remote, rural areas, where most low-income populations tend to reside. As a result, lesser privileged women and families have minimal access to family planning services.

Other groups of people that also face hurdles in accessing necessary services include adolescents, unmarried people, sex workers, and people living with HIV. This may lead to higher rates of unintended pregnancy, increased risk of sexually transmitted diseases like HIV, limited attainable contraceptive methods, and higher levels of unmet need. Increasing teenage exposure to contraceptive methods is an essential starting point for improving maternal and newborn health, as well as bettering the overall long-term health of sexually active adolescents. Attention must be devoted to these groups, as complications of a reproductive nature attribute to a

vast number of deaths of girls ages 15-19.

Effective family programs should not only provide access to modern contraceptive methods but should also prioritize providing accurate information concerning the side effects, benefits, and risks for each contraceptive method. Follow-up services and information about reproductive health should also be offered. At the end of the day, all women should be able to choose from a wide range of contraceptive options to select the most effective method for themselves.

Country Policy

Western Countries:

The West, which includes the European Union, and countries like the United States, Australia, and Canada, falls on the upper side of the spectrum in terms of access to family planning. In 2017, 70% of Europeans accessed contraceptive methods; while the prevalence of modern contraceptives hovered at 61.8%, significantly higher than the majority. Despite this, different regions within Europe struggles in unique aspects of family planning.



The continent can be divided into three groups, each with different needs moving forward. In the first, the majority of women rely on contraceptive methods, and abortion is only used in place of failure. Meanwhile, in the second, abortion is not as prevalent due to higher rates of sterilization. This group includes countries like the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Finally, in former communist nations, abortion often replaces contraception and sterilization.

Africa and the Middle East:

Both Africa and the Middle East consist of primarily developing nations; however, they have taken numerous measures to improve access to family planning. Countries such as Iran, Egypt, Kenya, Tunisia, Turkey, Morocco, and Pakistan have all made this an essential component of their national development programs. Meanwhile, countries with large Muslim populations are taking critical steps toward reproductive health care. Nonetheless, the path to access to family planning for all within this region remains long and

tedious. The majority of sub-Saharan Africa has yet to implement measures within their national programs, but work is being done by various communities and non-governmental organizations.

Asia:

In Asia, nearly all nations have some form of family planning programs promoted by the government. However, the majority of these continue to face roadblocks, despite increased efforts by the governments and parties involved. Among regions within the continent, eastern Asia has the most access to modern contraceptive methods at 80.4%, which is even higher than that of Europe. Despite this high number, the Asian continent as a whole remains at 61.4%. Generally, Asian women are encouraged to utilize contraception as a tool to contain the ever-growing world population.

Latin America:

Over the past half century, Latin America has drastically improved its citizens' access to family planning, especially through



financing universal health care agendas. These efforts have a critical role in ensuring the sustainability and longevity of family planning initiatives within the region. Despite the consistent increase of the modern contraceptive rate across all Latin American countries, significant disparities exist for marginalized groups. Additionally, studies have shown that insurance is related to increased access to and use of family planning. Therefore, improving the scope of insurance coverage is a critical measure toward lessening, and eventually eradicating, these disparities.

Questions to Consider

How can conservative nations establish aspects of family planning that may conflict with religious or conservative views?

What are efficient methods to providing refugees with family planning services and programs?

How can stigma surrounding contraceptive methods and deeply rooted misinformation be corrected?

What role can developed nations play in improving access to family planning in the developing world?

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