

Haileybury MUN

Research report



Human Rights 2

The question of access to contraception

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Definitions:

Access

The means or opportunity to approach or enter a place.

Contraception

The deliberate use of artificial methods or other techniques to prevent pregnancy as a consequence of sexual intercourse. The major forms of artificial contraception are: barrier methods, of which the commonest is the condom or sheath; the contraceptive pill, which contains synthetic sex hormones which prevent ovulation in the female; intrauterine devices, such as the coil, which prevent the fertilized ovum from implanting in the uterus; and male or female sterilization.

Introduction:

Over recent years the access to contraception has increased in both more economically developed countries and less economically developed countries. However, contraception continues to be an issue for women who do not have access to modern contraceptive methods. Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the lowest percentage of people using contraceptive methods. These are not all due to the lack of access to contraception. As according to the WHO (World Health Organization) 214 million women, in developing countries, who want to avoid pregnancy are not using any forms of contraceptives due to the following reasons:

- limited choice of contraceptives;
- fear of experiencing side-effects;
- cultural or religious opposition;
- poor quality of available services;
- gender-based barriers.

People in developing countries get access to modern contraceptives through family planning services and health clinics. However, these are very limited in many third-world countries as the amount of money a country chooses to invest in family planning services differs from country to country. For example, the best family planning services for third world countries are in East Asia (Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea, China, and Honk Kong), with 73% of China's population having access to contraceptives. Whereas, other third world countries in Asia like Yemen and Afghanistan have less than 10% of their population using contraception mainly due to lack of access as well as religious reasons.

All countries have some kind of access to contraceptives but many have unmet needs due to other reasons. However, there are various different reasons to the lack of access to contraceptives such as:

- transportation costs are expensive, for low-income women, who are trying to reach the closest clinic/family planning centre;

- lack of a range of contraceptive resources;
- health centres lack qualified staff to insert IUD's (Intrauterine device) and help with other contraceptive methods;
- not all countries provide public funding for contraceptives thus many low-income women cannot afford the contraceptives they need.

Some of the best countries, in terms of access to contraception and affordability, are the United Kingdom, Spain, and Brazil. The United Kingdom has the top ranking due to the easy accessibility to a range of contraceptives as well as the birth control pill that can be obtained for free by the NHS (National Health Service). Similarly, Spain and Brazil have easy accessibility to a range of contraceptives at affordable prices.

Key Statistics:



- As seen in the diagram Africa has the lowest percentage of women using contraceptives as it only has 33.4% of women using contraceptives whereas North America has the highest percentage of 74.8%.
- More than 19 million women lack reasonable access to a public clinic with the full range of contraceptive methods.
- Worldwide the proportion of women aged 15 to 49, married or in a union, who were using any method of contraception increased from 55% in 1990 to 64% in 2015. In Sub-Saharan Africa, this proportion more than doubled between 1990 and 2015, from 13% to 28%. In Southern Asia, the proportion increased from 39% to 59% during the same period.
- The proportion of women wanting to avoid pregnancy who had an unmet need for modern methods declined from 29% in 2003 to 26% in 2012. Of the 222 million women in developing countries with an unmet need for modern contraceptive methods, 162 million (73%) lived in the 69 poorest countries. The proportion of women with unmet need decreased in every sub-region between 2003 and 2012, but those proportions remained high in many areas, including middle Africa (81%), western Africa (74%), eastern Africa (54%), western Asia (50%) and south Asia (34%).
- Contraceptive care in 2012 will cost \$4.0 billion in the developing world. Fully meeting the existing need for modern contraceptive methods among women in the developing world would cost \$8.1 billion per year. Current contraceptive use will prevent 218 million unintended pregnancies in developing countries, and, in turn, will avert 55 million unplanned births, 138 million abortions (of which 40 million are unsafe), 25 million miscarriages, and 118,000 maternal deaths. Serving all women in developing countries who currently have an unmet need for modern contraceptive methods would prevent an additional 54 million unintended pregnancies, including 21 million unplanned births, 26 million abortions (of which 16 million would be unsafe) and seven million miscarriages; this would also prevent 79,000 maternal deaths and 1.1 million infant deaths.

Possible solutions:

- Encourage governments to prioritise family planning services as a part of the government's budget which includes:
 - Having more qualified staff for clinics

- Providing a range of modern contraceptives
 - Making contraceptives affordable or free
 - Encourage countries to provide a small clinic for every 1,000 women that provides basic contraceptive resources.
 - Communities arranging weekly transport to a clinic by:
 - convincing the community that contraception is good for the future, and providing a transport service to the nearest clinic, where people would pay less for transport.
 - Awareness and education, such as:
 - having a doctor visit more remote areas once a month to talk about how to use contraceptives
 - encouraging teachers to promote the idea of the use of contraceptives to younger girls to prevent unwanted pregnancy
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Useful Links:

- <https://onlinedoctor.superdrug.com/birth-control-around-the-world/> - Shows diagrams and explanations of contraception methods of the past and present, all over the world.
- <https://www.theguardian.com/globaldevelopment/datablog/2016/mar/08/contraception-and-family-planning-around-the-world-interactive> - Shows several diagrams of the percentage of people in each country using contraception and the most popular methods of contraception (more recent-2015)
- <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/family-planning-contraception> - Fact sheet on more recent contraceptive methods. Shows why women choose not to use contraceptive methods that are accessible to them.
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12281360> - Information on family planning services and which countries invest more money on these services thus have improved massively.
- <http://go.nationalpartnership.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=50574> - Shows factors that limit access to contraception in developing countries
- <http://iawg.net/areas-of-focus/voluntary-contraception/vc-facts-stats/> - Shows key statistics from 2000-2015 on abortion, contraception, family planning services, and unplanned pregnancies.