

<b>Forum:</b>	Seoul Model United Nations Conference
<b>Question of:</b>	Protecting reproductive rights and improving universal access to reproductive health services.
<b>Student Officer:</b>	Leyna Biggs, President

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## Introduction

Reproductive rights is a broad term that encompasses the range of rights that women deserve in regards to their reproductive health. This involves access to healthcare and resources such as affordable contraception, legal and safe abortion, qualified OB/GYN medical attention, as well as the right to be free from harmful practices such as coerced abortions, coerced sterilizations, female genital mutilation(FGM), gender-based violence such as rape, and many more. By providing all women with their right to reproductive healthcare whilst protecting them from harmful practices, women are empowered to be able to make personal decisions about their reproductive health with qualified healthcare professionals, ensuring their right to bodily autonomy and confidentiality<sup>1</sup>. This ensures that the decisions made regarding their bodies are right for them, and allow them to reach their utmost potential throughout their daily lives.

The lack of reproductive rights stems from many fundamental sexist societal issues. When women do not have a say in their health, there is the underlying issue of who is in control over others bodies and lives. Fundamentally, most of all societies worldwide began as patriarchal societies, and most societies are still led by patriarchies. Having men run societies causes many effects on women's rights, the inclusion of women in positions of power, and the value placed on women's views and opinions. An issue that is becoming more highlighted nowadays is the lack of diverse representation in places of power whether this be in governmental bodies, in higher positions within workplaces, or throughout the media. When a specific demographic of individuals runs an entire country, the rights and legislation passed will most likely benefit that specific group of individuals. So, with a lack of female representation in positions

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<sup>1</sup> Editors of Center for Reproductive Rights. "Reproductive Rights: A Tool for Managing State Obligations." UNFPA. Accessed July 15, 2022. [https://www.reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicactions.net/files/documents/crr\\_Monitoring\\_Tool\\_State\\_Obligations.pdf](https://www.reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicactions.net/files/documents/crr_Monitoring_Tool_State_Obligations.pdf).

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of power, the opinions and concerns of women are suppressed, as well as the importance of reproductive rights are undermined<sup>2</sup>.

Another main issue affecting the support of reproductive rights worldwide is the effect reproductive rights have on the control that governments have over their citizens. When women have control over their reproductive health, they have control over whether or not to have children for any reason, when to have children, who to have children with, and many more. By allowing women the power over these decisions in return decreases the control the government has on their population, workforce, and government. A major factor that governments in the past have tried to control is their population by dictating who has the right to reproduce. In the past, regimes have conducted mass eugenics campaigns trying to limit the individuals that can reproduce by forcibly sterilizing populations of individuals without their informed consent who they saw as unfit for reproduction such as individuals with disabilities or certain physical traits. This was used as a way to selectively choose how the population will grow overtime. In desire to control a country's population, another way governments have abused reproductive rights is by forcing abortions upon women within their country without their informed consent<sup>3</sup>. This has occurred in the past in regimes trying to control the size of the population by setting limits on the number of children a family is permitted to have, and forcing the poorer populations to have coerced abortions. These methods were used as a way to control a country's population and growth.

Another incentive that governments have to control women's access to their reproductive rights is to maintain control over their government and workplaces. A major issue women in workplaces face is unemployment or lack of income during prenatal and postnatal periods of pregnancies. Both historically and currently the excuse has been used that as women are likely to be unable to work during prenatal and postnatal periods, they are resultantly less reliable and also less employable as compared to men. Therefore, by reproductive rights not being readily available to all of the female population, the reality is that women would not have control over whether or not, when, or with whom they reproduce, making it true that women in the workplace are less reliable employees<sup>4</sup>. This has been a commonly attributed cause

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<sup>2</sup> Gothreau, Claire, and Kevin Arceneaux. "The Effect of Implicit and Explicit Sexism on Reproductive Rights Attitudes." *Temple Journal*. Digital file.

<sup>3</sup> Farber, Streven. "U.S. Scientists' Role in the Eugenics Movement (1907–1939): A Contemporary Biologist's Perspective." National Library of Medicine. Last modified December 2008. Accessed July 15, 2022. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2757926/>.

<sup>4</sup> Becker, Sascha, Ana Fernandes, and Doris Weichselbaumer. "Discrimination in Hiring Based on Potential and Realized Fertility: Evidence from a Large-scale Field Experiment." Science Direct. Last modified August 2019. Accessed July 15, 2022. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0927537119300429>.

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used to justify workplace discrimination for years, and has allowed governments to keep workplaces and societies dominated by men.

Lastly, another major factor that has affected the access of reproductive rights in many countries is accessibility of qualified healthcare professionals and treatments, as well as a lack of resources and education. In many countries, possibly as a result of armed conflicts, the lack of governmental funding can have unintended consequences on their population, workplace, and economy. With a lack of resources and funding, affordable access to OB/GYN healthcare, reliable contraception, safe abortions, and quality education can effect the lives of women in unfathomable ways. With the lack of education regarding sexual and reproductive health, combined with a lack of contraceptives and abortions, along with the lack of protection of women and children from harmful practices of rape, incest, FGM, etc, many women are barred from healthy lives, happy relationships, quality educations, and opportunities in workplaces. The lack of these necessities consequently affects the health of the country's citizens as well as causing the lack of women in the workforce, which negatively affects the country's economy. This issue is especially important to address because women and girls in areas of conflict as well as female refugees such as refugees who are internally displaced as well as refugees who have fled to other countries are at higher risk of violations against their reproductive rights. There is also a lower chance of female refugees having access to necessary resources and medical care<sup>5</sup>.

The lack of reproductive rights can mainly be combatted through governments realizing the long term effects on the country's workforce, economy, and citizen's overall health and wellbeing and in response passing legislation that provides women and children with quality healthcare and protection from harm. Many governments have passed such legislation, however, certain countries do not have the capacity to allocate enough resources or funding to combat this issue. This is where the theme "Bonds of Unity" comes into play, since through the recognition of the suffering that can be minimized through providing quality healthcare and protections to meet all citizens' reproductive rights that bonds many populations, governments and organizations can unite and cooperate towards equal rights for all individuals<sup>6</sup>. This can be done through MEDCs and organizations providing funding for LEDCs to help

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<sup>5</sup> Bou-Karroum, Lama. "Health Care Workers in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings: Systematic Mapping of the Evidence." National Library of Medicine. Last modified May 29, 2020. Accessed July 15, 2022. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7259645/>.

<sup>6</sup> Editors of UN Human Rights. "South Sudan: UN Report Highlights Widespread Sexual Violence against Women and Girls in Conflict, Fueled by Systemic Impunity." United Nations Human Rights. Last modified March 21, 2022. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/03/south-sudan-un-report-highlights-widespread-sexual-violence-against-women>.

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ensure that all countries have the funding and resources to provide quality reproductive healthcare for their citizens. In the past, the solutions such as passing legislation and helping fund other campaigns have been attempted. However, the issue with relying on the legislation passed to ensure the country's population with ensured reproductive rights is the fact that legislation is much easier to strike down than it is to pass in the first place. Once legislation is passed, there is no guarantee that it will consistently apply as a reflection of the country's citizen's values, and therefore can risk being removed very easily with the assurance of many consequential effects on the health and wellbeing of their citizens.

### Definition of Key Terms

#### **Abortion**

An abortion is used to terminate a pregnancy. There are a few ways that abortions can be carried out, either through taking a certain set of medications or through undergoing a medical procedure<sup>7</sup>. The morality of abortions is commonly debated within many countries, which often leads to either restrictions on when within a pregnancy an abortion can be received or entire illegalization of abortions.

#### **Bodily Autonomy**

Bodily autonomy is a term used to describe the right of people to be able to make informed decisions on what is best for their body without the coercion of outside forces<sup>8</sup>. The basis of all reproductive rights revolves around people's right to bodily autonomy, the right to self-govern over their bodies.

#### **Coercion**

Coercion is the act of using a position of dominance to threaten or force a person to either act in a certain way or make a certain decision. From the perspective of reproductive rights, the use of coercion to force a patient to undergo a certain procedure without their consent is restricting the patient's control over their own decisions.

#### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality refers to the act of keeping information private and only accessible by certain individuals. Most medical records are kept confidential to protect the privacy and rights that patients have to bodily autonomy. This means that the decisions patients make with qualified healthcare professionals is

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<sup>7</sup> Editors of National Health Service. "Abortion." NHS Overview. Last modified April 24, 2020. Accessed July 15, 2022. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/abortion/>

<sup>8</sup> Nienow, Shalon. "Seven Steps to Teaching Children Body Autonomy." Kite Insights. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.rchsd.org/2019/12/seven-steps-to-teaching-children-body-autonomy>

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kept within healthcare offices, ensuring that the decisions made are not influenced by outside forces. This also ensures that the healthcare procedures undergone can not be held against a patient for any reason.

### **Contraception**

Contraception is a set of resources that are used as a preventative measure with the purpose of reducing the likelihood of pregnancy<sup>9</sup>. Although many contraceptive methods exist, the accessibility of contraceptives varies greatly depending on the nationality and economic status of individuals.

### **Eugenics**

Eugenics is a study that examines how sterilization can be utilized to control the characteristics and demographic makeup of populations. Historically there have been many human rights abuses stemming from eugenics mass sterilization campaigns that have forced individuals to be sterilized without their consent in order to attempt to construct what the government viewed to be a perfect population. Although sterilization procedures are available for all genders, during eugenics campaigns and movements, women were usually the main target for forced sterilizations as it is a more cost effective way of controlling populations<sup>10</sup>. This shows how eugenics campaigns are not only based on sexist views, but also deeply rooted in gender-based violence.

### **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

Female genital mutilation is a procedure that removes or injures parts of the female genitalia. FGM is a form of gender-based violence used against women and girls because there are no proven medical benefits for the patients. As there are no medical benefits, FGM is performed for non-medical reasons and usually stems from the sexist desire to control women and their bodies<sup>11</sup>.

### **Gender-Based Violence (GBV)**

Gender-based violence is any harmful act that is directed toward women or girls. An important part of reproductive rights is a person's right to be free from gender-based violence. Common subgroups of gender-based violence are sexual violence, domestic violence, intimate partner violence, etc, with

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<sup>9</sup> Editors of Center for Disease Control. "Contraception." *Reproductive Health*. Last modified January 13, 2022. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/contraception/index.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> Farber, Steven. "U.S. Scientists' Role in the Eugenics Movement (1907–1939): A Contemporary Biologist's Perspective." *National Library of Medicine*. Last modified December 2008. Accessed July 15, 2022. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2757926/>.

<sup>11</sup> Editors of World Health Organization. "Female Genital Mutilation." *World Health Organization*. Last modified January 21, 2022. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>

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examples such as FGM, child marriage, rape, etc<sup>12</sup>. The negative effects of these forms of GBV can be mitigated through accessing one's reproductive rights such as legal abortion, contraception, and quality OB/GYN healthcare.

### **Informed Consent**

Informed consent is when patients provide their consent to undergo a certain procedure after having communicated with medical professionals who explained the procedure to be undergone. All patients have the right to only undergo the procedures they provide their consent to once informed about the purpose, risks, and benefits<sup>13</sup>. Patients also have the right to make informed decisions having had the opportunity to ask questions to their medical providers. It is crucial to hold healthcare professionals responsible for providing education on the procedure at hand to receive permission from the patients before performing any procedure or healthcare treatment.

### **Obstetrician-Gynecologists (OB/GYN)**

An obstetrician-gynecologist is a doctor who specializes in both the fields of obstetrics and gynecology. The field of obstetrics has a specific focus on providing care for individuals during prenatal, natal, and postnatal periods of a pregnancy<sup>14</sup>. The field of gynecology specifically focuses on the female reproductive system. OB/GYNs are the doctors primarily responsible for providing quality care of people's reproductive systems and play a major role in ensuring reproductive rights for all patients.

### **Reproductive Rights**

Reproductive rights is a broad term that encompasses many aspects of fundamental human rights that apply to all citizens. According to the center of reproductive rights, there are many key aspects of reproductive rights such as "the right to life, to decide the number of children they bear, to health, to liberty and security of the person, to consent to marriage and equality in marriage, to privacy, to equality and non-discrimination, to education and information, to be free from practices that harm women and

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<sup>12</sup> Editors of UNHCR. "Gender-based Violence." UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/gender-based-violence.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Editors of American Cancer Society. "What Is Informed Consent?" American Cancer Society. Last modified May 13, 2019. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/planning-managing/informed-consent/what-is-informed-consent.html>

<sup>14</sup> Editors of St. George's University Blog. "What Is an OB/GYN? A Look at the Doctors Specializing in Women's Health." St. George's University Blog. Last modified October 21, 2021. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.sgu.edu/blog/medical/what-is-an-ob-gyn/>.

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girls, to be free from torture or other inhumane forms of punishment, and to be free from sexual and gender-based violence.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Reproductive Sterilization**

Reproductive sterilization is a term used to describe any medical procedure that is used to intentionally alter the patient’s reproductive system in order to leave them incapable of reproduction. There are procedures available for all genders, although the procedure may be conducted differently, the result is the same. When sterilization is performed with the informed consent of the patient, it can be used as a form of permanent birth control<sup>16</sup>.

## **Timeline of Key Events**

### **1866-1972- The American Eugenics Movement**

The Early American Eugenics Movement was led by biologist and breeding teachers Charles Davenport and Henry Laughlin who led this campaign on the ideals of ridding future generations of the American population of issues such as mental disability, promiscuity, physical disabilities such as dwarfism, pauperism, and criminality<sup>17</sup>. In belief that these traits were inherited, the movement believed that by removing these individual’s ability to reproduce, then future generations would be free from these believed societal problems. However, throughout the American Eugenics Movement, even though the frequently used justification was to rid the American population of certain physical and mental disabilities, in reality this campaign also had a primary target on Black, Indigeonus, and people of color(BIPOC), which showed an aspect of scientific racism<sup>18</sup>. This eugenics movement caused many

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<sup>15</sup> Editors of Center for Reproductive Rights. "Reproductive Rights: A Tool for Managing State Obligations." UNFPA. Accessed July 15, 2022. [https://www.reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicactions.net/files/documents/crr\\_Monitoring\\_Tool\\_State\\_Obligation\\_s.pdf](https://www.reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicactions.net/files/documents/crr_Monitoring_Tool_State_Obligation_s.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Editors of The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. "Sterilization for Women and Men." The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/sterilization-for-women-and-men>.

<sup>17</sup> Bouche, Teryn, and Laura Rivard. "America's Hidden History: The Eugenics Movement." Scitable. Last modified September 18, 2014. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.nature.com/scitable/forums/genetics-generation/america-s-hidden-history-the-eugenics-movement-123919444/>.

<sup>18</sup> Editors of National Human Genome Research Institute. "Eugenics and Scientific Racism." National Human Genome Research Institute. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.genome.gov/about-genomics/fact-sheets/Eugenics-and-Scientific-Racism>.

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human rights abuses, primarily reproductive rights abuses, and has proven to have had many long-term detrimental effects on the populations targeted by this eugenics movement<sup>19</sup>.

### **November, 1920- Soviet Union Legalizes Abortion**

In 1920 the Soviet Union was the first country to legalize abortion. The intention of the legalization of abortions was said to have been to improve women's health and in turn allow them to stay in the workforce as pregnancy would no longer effect their working capabilities. Although this was a landmark ruling, the options and availability of such reproductive health services were not very accessible and did not entirely remove discrimination against women in the workplace or in society<sup>20</sup>.

### **1933-1945- Eugenics Campaign in Nazi Germany**

Under the Nazi Regime during the Holocaust a massive eugenics campaign was conducted to 'cleanse' the population of individuals who the government saw as unfit for reproduction. This was used as a way to selectively dictate how the population would grow in order to only allow the reproduction of individuals with certain characteristics. This included the sterilization of many Jewish, disabled, people of mixed ethnicities and mixed nationalities, and many more. Most of every sterilization was coerced and performed without the patient's informed consent, and was an example of how forced sterilizations can be used hand-in-hand with discrimination such as antisemitism and ableism<sup>21</sup>.

### **December 18, 1979- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**

The convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women(CEDAW) was the first convention to put major emphasis on eliminating the obstacles that women face in the workplace, healthcare systems, etc. Since 1979, this convention has been updated and added to, which has ensured continued development of the protection of all forms of women's rights, including reproductive rights such as maternal healthcare services<sup>22</sup>.

### **1980-2016- China's One-Child Policy**

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<sup>19</sup> Gur-Arie, Rachel. "American Eugenics Society (1926-1972)." The Embryo Project Encyclopedia. Last modified November 22, 2014. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://embryo.asu.edu/pages/american-eugenics-society-1926-1972>.

<sup>20</sup> Peleschuk, Dan. "The First Country to Legalize Abortion Still Left Women Few Options." Ozy. Last modified October 3, 2019. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.ozy.com/true-and-stories/the-first-country-to-legalize-abortion-still-left-women-few-options/96498/>.

<sup>21</sup> Editors of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Nazi Racial Science." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.ushmm.org/collections/bibliography/nazi-racial-science>.

<sup>22</sup> Editors of UN Entity for Gender Equality. "Short History of CEDAW Convention." UN Entity for Gender Equality. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/history.htm>.



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Under China's communist rule, the one-child policy was enacted to limit the number of children each family was permitted to have. This policy had many long-term effects that were not planned for such as the current gender imbalance. This is caused by the sexism within societies worldwide, which meant that when families could only have one child, they would consistently opt to have a boy over a girl. However, another reality is the brutality of how the policy was enforced. If families couldn't pay the set fee to keep each extra child, then the government was turned to forced abortions during pregnancy or confiscation of the child after birth. This led to many reproductive rights abuses since women no longer had bodily autonomy as they did not have the choice of how many children to have especially as a result of the forced abortions led by the government<sup>23</sup>.

### **September 25, 2015- United Nations Releases New Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

The United Nations General Assembly adopted 17 goals in 2015 to outline the issues to be combated before the year 2030 in order to achieve a more sustainable world. SDG #5: Gender Equality has a major emphasis on providing universal quality sexual and reproductive healthcare as well as improving the protection of women's reproductive rights<sup>24</sup>. Within the SDGs, there are also many targets. Target 3.7 specifically targets reproductive rights by specifying "by 2030, to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes"(United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs)<sup>25</sup>. This shows how with detailed goals, the UN does have a major focus on improving the reproductive rights of citizens worldwide.

### **2016- Ongoing- The Global strategy for Women's, Children's, and Adolescent's Health**

The global strategy for women's, children's, and adolescent's health is a roadmap that was provided by the UN to help them reach their goals by 2030. This global strategy has a unique emphasis on promoting the health and wellbeing of women, children, and adolescents specifically by targeting preventable diseases that can lead to mortality. A specific emphasis on the prevention of maternal

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<sup>23</sup> Editors of Fresh Air. "How China's One-Child Policy Led to Forced Abortions, 30 Million Bachelors." National Public Radio. Last modified February 1, 2016. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.npr.org/2016/02/01/465124337/how-chinas-one-child-policy-led-to-forced-abortions-30-million-bachelors>.

<sup>24</sup> Editors of World Bank. "World Bank Group and The 2030 Agenda." World Bank. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/sdgs-2030-agenda>

<sup>25</sup> Editors of UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. "Family Planning and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Last modified 2019. Accessed July 16, 2022.

[https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/family/familyPlanning\\_DataBooklet\\_2019.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/family/familyPlanning_DataBooklet_2019.pdf)

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mortality also provided for more attention being paid to the improvement of reproductive rights and resources for women worldwide<sup>26</sup>.

### Position of Key Member Nations and Other Bodies

#### **United States of America**

The United States of America has a long history of battles on the access citizens have to reproductive healthcare and access to certain resources such as contraceptives and abortion care. There have also been many reconsiderations of the supreme court's decision on their stance on the legality of abortions and bodily autonomy as seen by the recent overturning of the 1973 supreme court ruling on *Roe v. Wade*, which originally deemed abortions as legal in all states across the US. However, the topic of reproductive rights is much broader than just abortions, as it includes access to necessary obstetrics treatment and reproductive resources<sup>27</sup>. When it comes to Americans' access to qualified OB/GYN attention, the care that a citizen receives is highly dependent on whether they have insurance. This further widens the gap between the wealthy who can afford all of their healthcare needs and those who with a lower income can't afford insurance, and in return do not receive necessary OB/GYN medical attention.

#### **Germany**

Currently Germany has universal healthcare, so OB/GYN healthcare is accessible to all of their citizens<sup>28</sup>. For this reason, even though private healthcare insurance can be obtained, all of the citizens are guaranteed healthcare that does not bar people with lower incomes from receiving medical attention. Along with this, recently the German government has reformed a previous law that made it illegal and punishable by death for doctors to perform abortions. This has made it that abortions are still illegal, but as a whole, however, in certain circumstances, an abortion can be received and even in those situations, the procedure must be performed before 12 weeks after conception. So, overall, OB/GYN healthcare is

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<sup>26</sup> Kuruvilla, Shyama. "The Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016–2030): A Roadmap Based on Evidence and Country Experience." *Bull World Organization*. Last modified May 1, 2016. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4850541>

<sup>27</sup> Editors of Institute for Women's Policy Research. "The Reproductive Rights Composite Score." *Institute for Women's Policy Research*. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://statusofwomensdata.org/explore-the-data/reproductive-rights/reproductive-rights-full-section>

<sup>28</sup> Editors of Comparative Health Policy Library. "GERMANY | Summary." *Columbia Public Health*. Last modified June 7, 2022. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.publichealth.columbia.edu/research/comparative-health-policy-library/germany-summary>

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readily available for all German citizens, however, there are still tight regulations on certain aspects of reproductive healthcare treatments<sup>29</sup>.

### **Somalia**

The large amounts of internally displaced people (IDPs) in Somalia have decreased women's access to OB/GYN care and increased their exposure to gender based violence. The issue of reproductive rights in Somalia is seen through the large presence of gender based violence. This violence is shown through both high rates of incidents of rape, common occurrence of female genital mutilations, and the overwhelming number of maternal mortalities. The UN reports that 99% of women aged 15-29<sup>30</sup> in Somalia have been subject to FGM, making it the highest in the world. Also, Somalia has one of the highest maternal mortality rates worldwide. These issues all stem from a lack of access to healthcare and the country holding the view that women have a lower societal status.

### **Egypt**

In Egypt major issues that affect women's reproductive rights are the lack of OB/GYN providers, the high rates of FGM, and the restrictions on what treatments women can receive. A major issue that the female population in Egypt faces is what providers to go to for OB/GYN care. Even though the general preference among the population is to see female providers, due to gender inequality there is a lack of female individuals in the medical profession meaning that Egyptians avoid receiving OB/GYN care altogether. Along with this, FGM is still a widely performed practice across the country, which is a form of gender based violence. Also, Egypt is one of the few countries worldwide where abortions are illegal regardless of the circumstance<sup>31</sup>. These are all the main issues that affect Egyptian women's reproductive rights.

### **Republic of Korea**

In South Korea there are less concerns regarding women's access to reproductive rights. Gender based violence is not as prevalent among the citizens. For this reason, the majority of citizens have healthcare that ensures them access to necessary OB/GYN healthcare needs. Along with this, healthcare treatments such as abortions are legal in most cases depending with some regulations on gestation periods. However, even though reproductive health treatments are available to the public, there are some

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<sup>29</sup> Editors of Reuters. "Germany Abolishes Nazi-era Abortion Law." Reuters. Last modified June 24, 2022. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-abolishes-nazi-era-abortion-law-2022-06-24/>.

<sup>30</sup> Editors of UN News. "Daughters of Somalia, a Continuous Pledge to End Female Genital Mutilation." UN News. Last modified February 4, 2022. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/02/1111242>.

<sup>31</sup> ———. "The World's Abortion Laws." Center for Reproductive Rights. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://reproductiverights.org/maps/worlds-abortion-laws/>.

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aspects that bar certain citizens from receiving medical attention or assistance such as the cost. Most South Korean citizens have to pay for private healthcare insurance, which bars citizens with lower incomes from assurance that they can receive all their healthcare needs<sup>32</sup>.

### **South Sudan**

In South Sudan the issue of reproductive rights has more to do with the status of women in a society riddled with conflict. Since women are largely regarded to be less than men in society, they have less access to bodily autonomy and also lack necessary OB/GYN attention. This makes it difficult for women to have full control over their bodies which makes them more vulnerable to gender-based violence<sup>33</sup>, decreases their access to contraceptives and treatments such as abortions. At places such as gunpoint, there have been many cases of sexual abuse. In South Sudan abortions are not totally outlawed, but in hopes of decreasing maternal mortality, they are legal in cases where the pregnancy puts the mother's life at risk. This shows how there are in South Sudan that purposefully limit women's ability to dictate what happens to their bodies, which reflects the way society views women as a whole.

### **Spain**

In Spain there is a very strong universal healthcare system that ensures that all citizens regardless of their economic status can receive necessary healthcare treatments without paying out of pocket. This means that all citizens have access to OB/GYN healthcare, which is part of their reproductive rights. Along with this, in Spain there is also a relatively low occurrence of rape or sexual assault, which means there are less occurrences of gender based violence. When it comes to people's access to abortions, in Spain it is legal to receive an abortion, with a few restrictions regarding gestation periods and receiving parental permission. Overall, Spanish citizens' access to reproductive rights is fueled by low rates of gender based violence and the widespread availability of free healthcare for all<sup>34</sup>.

## **Suggested Solutions**

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<sup>32</sup> Yoon, Lina. "South Korea's Constitutional Right to Abortion." Human Rights Watch. Last modified June 9, 2022. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/09/south-koreas-constitutional-right-abortion>.

<sup>33</sup> Editors of UN Human Rights. "South Sudan: UN Report Highlights Widespread Sexual Violence against Women and Girls in Conflict, Fueled by Systemic Impunity." United Nations Human Rights. Last modified March 21, 2022. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/03/south-sudan-un-report-highlights-widespread-sexual-violence-against-women>.

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To ensure that all citizens have access to their reproductive rights, it is crucial that they have access to quality OB/GYN healthcare. This can be done through providing all citizens with healthcare at little to no cost. Many countries have implemented universal health care systems which have mostly proven to be beneficial at ensuring access to all forms of healthcare including OB/GYN care. However, it is important to understand that not all governments will have the ability to implement universal health care systems as a result of financial restraints. This would not only result in fewer unwanted pregnancies through access to contraception, this would also importantly allow for fewer cases of maternal mortality as a result of access to medical attention. This can be improved upon if countries who can already afford such systems assists all countries having trouble providing universal health care through financial contributions when possible, or through helping contribute to medical campaigns in LEDCs. This shows how even though it is crucial to ensure universal access to quality healthcare, it can only be achieved through the cooperation of governments globally.

Another aspect of providing quality healthcare to all citizens requires bridging the gap between male and female participation within the healthcare profession. Although most countries do have healthcare professionals, the specific field of obstetrics and gynecology is a field of medicine where patients feel the most vulnerable, which explains the preference of female OB/GYNs over male OB/GYNs. However, in many countries the medical field is dominated by men, resultantly causing women to avoid receiving medical attention as a whole. By decreasing gender inequalities in the medical field, overtime there will be more participation in OB/GYN offices through the build up of comfort in medical professionals. Also, this overtime would normalize the act of visiting an OB/GYN, which would in return cause many more people to be more proactive regarding their reproductive health.

Even though it is important for all countries to provide their citizens with access to medical treatments and quality healthcare including OB/GYN care, it is also equally important that women and girls are protected from all forms of gender based violence. This is also a fundamental part of their reproductive rights. Common forms of gender based violence that women and girls can be subject to are sexual assault, rape, FGM, etc. These forms of GBV can be avoided with better education not only of the younger generations but also of the older generations. For the younger generations of children it is important that girls are not seen as less than for the rest of society to throw around, but most importantly it is crucial that they learn their rights and know how to stand up for themselves.

On the other hand, it is important that the older generations are educated on the harmful effects of violence against women and girls such as FGM. The validity of these outdated practices must be

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reconsidered, but will only be questioned if the parents of young girls are educated. This shows how the power of education can be utilized to prevent future cases of GBV to protect reproductive rights in all environments. Along with this, it is also important that countries use platforms to create outreach programs for victims of rape or abuse. As part of reproductive rights it is necessary for victims to know where they can receive help from professionals either medically or for emotional support. With the implementation of hotlines, public clinics, sexual assault report and help facilities, etc, there would be more ways for people to access their right to protection from gender based violence of all sorts.

Another solution that governments can choose to implement is the legalization of all treatments regarding sexual health such as abortions and sterilizations with informed consent. Informed consent is a crucial aspect to all medical procedures, however, to protect the right to bodily autonomy, if citizens have access to all possible medical procedures and treatments, then they will have the opportunity to decide with medical professionals the best course of action. This is a possible way to protect people's right to bodily autonomy as part of their reproductive rights by providing patients with the right to decide for themselves. Through illegalizing any treatment regarding reproductive health, it shows the government's intent to control their citizens' bodies. This violates people's right to bodily autonomy, which is a part of their reproductive rights.

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