

# RENMUN VIII

*The Restoration of Serenity*



March 4th & 5th 2023

## Chair Report

**Addressing the access to safe abortion and  
the preservation of life**

## Chair Introduction

Greetings Delegates!

On behalf of the Renaissance College Model United Nations VIII Secretariat and ourselves, we warmly welcome you to the Commission on the Status of Women at RENMUN VIII! We are Jiya Shah and Belle Tse, a year 11 and year 12 at Diocesan Girls' School and Maryknoll Convent School respectively, and we are delighted to be serving as your chairs.

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women was founded in 1946 with the purpose of advocating for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. In the MUN circuit, the CSW is considered as a beginners council, and is therefore one of the most novice friendly councils. It strives to allow all delegates to slowly familiarise themselves with MUN procedures through debating pressing topics amongst delegates of a similar calibre.

As chairs, we hope that these two chair reports will only serve as a starting point for delegates to conduct extensive research about countries' stances on both topics in order to better prepare yourself for the conference. Throughout these two days, we hope that you will all enjoy a fulfilling and thought-provoking experience as you engage in insightful debate, come up with comprehensive solutions and work together with your fellow delegates in order to address current, real-world issues.

At the end of the day, remember to have fun and if there are any questions, feel free to email either of us. Best of luck delegates, and we look forward to seeing you this March in person :))

Cheers!

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RENMUN 2023 Commission on the Status of Women

## Topic Introduction

Abortion has always been a topic that raised controversy, be it in the ancient times, or in the present day. The term abortion literally refers to bringing a pregnancy to an end, by either extracting an embryo or the fetus before maturity. Abortion addresses fundamental questions about humanity, such as what makes us human, and when life actually begins.

Every year, 1 in 4 pregnancies end in abortions worldwide. Nevertheless, despite the large number of requests for abortions, this procedure is delicate and complex, and if carried out improperly, it can result in a host of health issues, including infertility and even death. This is in part why there is so much debate and divergent viewpoints on this issue among different countries and individuals.

Abortion laws vary greatly around the world, with some countries providing abortion on demand while others outlawing abortion completely. This is true in a number of countries, primarily LDCs, where access to safe and legal abortion services is nearly impossible.

To reach a consensus, delegates must weigh the interests of the mother and her child, as well as factors that contribute to the use of unsafe abortion methods. It is now more important than ever for nations to work together to address the issue of safe abortion access for females around the world in the hopes of respecting, promoting, and protecting female rights.

## Key Terms

Term	Definition
Abortion	The deliberate termination of a human pregnancy, most often performed through a medical procedure during the first 28 weeks of pregnancy.
Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)	A sex education instruction method based on-curriculum that aims to give students the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and values to make appropriate and healthy choices in their sexual lives. CSE curriculums typically teach students about topics connected to future sexual activity, such as age of consent, safe sex, contraception methods including birth control pills, condoms, and the ending of pregnancy when conception does occur, through abortion.
Contraception	The deliberate prevention of conception or impregnation by any of various drugs, techniques, or devices; In other words, birth control.
Equality Rights	Also known as basic human rights, meaning that public authorities should not apply or enforce laws, policies and programs in a discriminatory or arbitrary manner.
Feminism	The goal of feminism is to promote the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes through a variety of social and political movements as well as philosophies. Globally, feminism is becoming more visible and is represented by organisations dedicated to promoting change for women's rights.
Maternal morbidity	Maternal morbidity refers to any health issues or complications that may arise after or during the termination of a pregnancy, such as infections. When discussing maternal morbidity following an abortion, the procedure could be considered

	to be unsafe.
Maternal mortality	Maternal mortality is defined as the death of a woman after (during the first 42 days after the pregnancy is terminated) or during the course of the pregnancy. Increased maternal death rates are a result of unsafe abortion practices.
Reproductive health	A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not simply the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes.
Sexual abuse	Sexual abuse is defined as a sexual act performed on a person against their will. It is seen as a violent act if the perpetrator intentionally employs force against the victim for a predetermined reason. It is usually a deliberate crime.
The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)	The Convention protects children's rights by setting standards in health care, education, and legal, civil and social services.

## Background Information

### The history of abortion

There have been contrasting views on the issue of abortion legislation from the beginning of time. There were nations that highly frowned upon abortions carried out for any and all reasons, while there were also nations that did not mind it, and rather, encouraged women to get abortions if it was necessary for them to do so.

Countries like the United Kingdom used to consider abortions as sins as the mother was technically causing the termination of life and perhaps "killing" an heir to the family by aborting a fetus. As a result, in the early 1800s, laws were passed that declared abortions to be crimes punishable by death and intended to serve as a deterrent to abortion.

Contrasting to that, abortions during early pregnancies were not frowned upon in certain nations, mainly due to the fact that the embryo was not considered human prior to a certain date and was instead considered a plant. Early scholars in Ancient

Rome and Greece consistently claimed that a male foetus did not form until at least 40 days after conception and a female foetus did not form until about 80 days. While these ideologies have been proven wrong in the past, these claims made by philosophers were used as a justification for abortion in the past.

### Current situation worldwide

#### Current status on the Right to Abortion

In 98% of nations, women have the legal right to have an abortion if their lives are endangered by the pregnancies. 69% of nations permit abortions in cases of incest or rape, 72% of nations permit them in cases of fetal disability, and 61% of nations permit them in cases of protecting the physical and mental health of the mother. Furthermore, 34% of nations, including China, certain states in the United States, Canada, and other Eurasian nations permit abortions to be performed at a woman's request.

However, in reference to Figure 1 below, 24 nations around the world have outright bans on abortion, according to the Center for Reproductive Rights, a global legal advocacy group. These countries span over the world, and a few of them include Andorra, Malta, El Salvador, Honduras, Senegal, Egypt, the Philippines and Laos. A total of 90 million women (5%) of reproductive age reside in nations that have banned abortion.

### Abortion laws in every country

■ Prohibited ■ Only allowed to save the woman's life ■ Allowed to keep the woman healthy ■ Allowed under a range of socioeconomic circumstances ■ Allowed before a certain number of weeks (varies country to country)

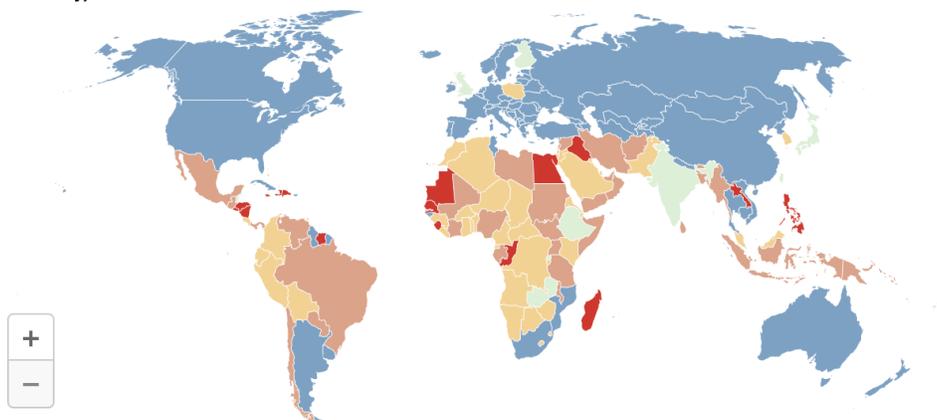


Figure 1: A visual depiction of abortion legislation in nations worldwide

### Current methods used for abortions, and more information regarding it

Most abortions happen in the first trimester. Almost 93 percent of them tend to be performed before the 13th week. There are two main methods of safe abortions.

1. Medical abortions - ending a pregnancy through using medications
2. Surgical abortions - ending a pregnancy through procedures or surgeries performed by a health-care provider in a clinical setting

A first-trimester medical abortion usually begins with the patient taking a mifepristone pill, which prevents the foetus from growing. Misoprostol, the second drug, is usually taken 24 to 48 hours later. The FDA has approved the two-drug protocol for use up to the first 10 weeks of pregnancy, and it is commonly used during that time frame. However, many states in the US and other nations have placed restrictions on the use of mifepristone for abortions.

Similarly, many nations have also heavily restricted, or banned surgical abortions after the second trimester, or even altogether. This has led to a significantly large amount of women getting illegal and unsafe abortions in unsanitary conditions. Such methods could lead to post-abortion complications, thus endangering the mother's health or even life.

### Some statistics (in accordance with the WHO)

According to the WHO, unsafe abortions account for 4.7 to 13.2% of all maternal deaths internationally, disproportionately affecting people in developing regions who lack the access to safe abortion facilities. It is estimated that 7 million women in developing countries are treated for complications from unsafe abortions every year.

## **Factors that may lead to, or defer one from abortion**

### Ethical considerations

Many nations allow for the option of a legal abortion in situations where the pregnancy is the result of a criminal act, such as rape, incest, or sexual contact with a minor or someone who has a mental illness or deficiency. Other nations, like Jordan and Lebanon, even permit abortions when it is necessary to protect the honour of the pregnant woman or her family. However, countries like Madagascar, Honduras, and Nicaragua have made it illegal to terminate any pregnancy – even if the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest or could endanger the life of the mother.

### Culture and religion

Abortion and reproductive health have always been controversial topics, in part because of the paucity of sexual education in many areas and the influence of religion. Religions that vehemently oppose abortion probably contribute to the stigmatisation of women who have had abortions. However, the majority of religions allow abortions when the mother's life is in danger because of the pregnancy. However, it should be remembered that the majority of religions have divergent ideologies and varying interpretations of previously accepted ideas.

### Education and awareness

According to a UNESCO report published in 2021, approximately 24 countries have no laws or policies governing sexual education, with many having only discrete frameworks governing sexual education. It is very concerning that there is a lack of sexual education. It is critical for women to understand the fundamentals of reproductive health and to reduce stigma associated with it in order to provide adequate assistance to women in need of safe abortion procedures and to generate abortion-related discussions. It is also incredibly important for awareness to be spread on this matter so that women can gain support from the male population in their reproductive endeavours.

### Poverty

If faced with an unwanted pregnancy, families who live below the poverty line frequently turn to abortion. Many families worry about their ability to provide for the child's basic needs and maintaining a high standard of life, as well as about how having a child may affect their ability to work, attend school, or take care of their other children as according to statistics, 6 in 10 women who have an abortion are already a parent. Moreover, poor families that are unable to get an abortion frequently give their newborn children into foster care because they are unable to provide them with a suitable home setting.

### Adolescent pregnancies

Every year, an estimated 21 million girls aged 15–19 years in developing regions become pregnant and approximately 12 million of them give birth. Many states have considered or adopted laws that would prevent teenagers under 18 from obtaining an abortion unless they involve a parent or go to court. While the majority of pregnant teens do involve at least one parent in the decision making process for getting an abortion, the minority of teenagers who do not tend to have suitable reasons for not doing so. Such reasons could vary from possibly exacerbating an already volatile or dysfunctional family situation to the fear of being kicked out by their parents. Delegates should be able to adequately address the issue of dealing with teen pregnancies while coming to a consensus about how abortions for such situations should be appealed by the court, or even in private hospitals or clinics.

## Potential Clashes

### Pro-life movements vs Pro-choice movements

While the media often depicts the United States to have most of the controversy over pro-life and pro-choice movements, there are also similar issues in other nations worldwide.

Pro-life movements, also commonly known as anti-abortion or abolitionist movements typically began around the world as countermovements in response to the legalisation of elective abortions. In Europe, there are usually about 1-2 prominent anti-abortion organisations in each nation, examples being the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children in the United Kingdom and Laissez-les-vivre-SOS futures mères in France. Both organisations campaign against abortion using questionable claims, and heavily protest around abortion and pregnancy clinics with the main goal to prevent women from entering the clinics. These organisations also hold annual events such as the March for Life in France to spread awareness about anti-abortion ideologies. Many tend to even influence far right parties in the nation to decrease funding for abortion facilities, which have time and time again proved to be unsuccessful. These acts committed by anti-abortion organisations are, however, not only limited to Europe, and are also prevalent in certain Asian countries, the United States and Canada, where the March for Life has been successfully held for multiple years, and bills that restrict abortions have been passed.

On the other hand, Pro-choice movements have also become prevalent in the past century, causing great changes in abortion laws worldwide. The pro-choice movement contends that women have a constitutionally protected right to abortion, and that the constitution of the nation shall work to keep abortion safe and legal. In the United States, NARAL Pro-Choice America is one of the largest organisations advocating for abortions, and womens' right to it. They hold various activities and issue press releases to educate the public and push them to fight for the right of abortion. In the United Kingdom, and multiple other nations in Europe, there are large scaled organisations such as the Women's Equality Party which advocates for womens' rights including abortion rights by holding regular campaigns and sharing womens' stories from around Europe.

In Asia, abortion is very rarely categorised into "pro-life" and "pro-choice". In response to demographic pressure, many nations have recently liberalized their abortion laws, while some historically "liberal" nations have started to consider restricting abortions. In order to come to a conclusion on how abortion legislation in Asia affects stakeholders, delegates much research thoroughly and understand each nation's constitution on abortion.

## Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Involvement with the Issue
The United States of America	<p>The United States has seen some of the most heated discussions on the topic of abortion legislation in recent years, particularly that of Roe v. Wade, and the overruling of the legislation in 2022.</p> <p>The Roe v. Wade ruling, which was passed in January 1973, ruled that having access to a safe and legal abortion was a basic human right. However, after controversies early this decade, Roe v. Wade was overruled as of 24 June, 2022. This has allowed multiple states to have been able to ban, or severely limit abortion, thus causing many women to get illegal, unsanitary and unsafe abortions at unauthorised clinics. The abortion rate in the US has continuously declined from a peak in 1980 of 30 per 1,000 women of childbearing age to 11.3 by 2018.</p>
Poland	<p>Abortion in Poland is legal only in cases when the pregnancy is a result of a criminal act, rape or when the mother's life is in danger. The last amendment in the Act on Pregnancy Planning of the Republic of Poland took place in January 2021, and Poland is reported to have one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the European Union. Moreover, Poland is one of the few countries in the world where abortion has become largely outlawed since the 1990s after decades of permissive liberalised legislation. According to statistics from 2010, about 12% of Polish pregnant women had to carry out abortions outside Poland due to the strict restraints within the nation.</p>
El Salvador	<p>One of the few nations that has strictly banned abortion is El Salvador, with reasons likely due to the influence of Roman Catholic beliefs, and the impact of the Christian Democratic Party. Abortion is prohibited in all situations, including those involving potential danger to the mother's life, rape, fetal abnormality, and other possible situations in which other nations would permit an emergency abortion. The offence carries a sentence of one to three years in jail.</p> <p>Due to the prohibition of abortion in El Salvador, women tend</p>

	<p>to turn to highly dangerous methods such as overdosing on contraceptive pills, gastritis remedies and caustic fluids like battery acid. These abortion methods are unsafe, and are often carried out in unhygienic and unsanitary conditions by the women. Such women are also prone to the risk of being exposed by hospital or clinic staff who treat any complications of such abortions.</p>
<p>Islamic Nations</p>	<p>The two main sources of Islamic law, the Quran and the sunnah, do not directly address abortion. In addition, Islamic criminal rules weren't usually formalised until recently. Consequently, based on which of the five main schools of Islamic law is followed, Islamic law adopts a variety of approaches to abortion. Islamic law's position on abortion often depends on whether it is carried out prior to ensoulment, the point at which a foetus has a soul. Although it can also be regarded as happening around 40 days into a pregnancy, this is most frequently seen as happening at 120 days. While some schools allow abortion before ensoulment when necessary, others outright forbid it at any stage of pregnancy. However, all schools permit abortion at any moment during pregnancy in order to save the pregnant woman's life.</p>
<p>The Philippines</p>	<p>Abortion is illegal and highly stigmatised in the Philippines. Nevertheless, abortion is a regular practice, but it is frequently carried out in unhygienic settings and with outdated methods. Complications from abortion account for about 1,000 deaths annually, which increases the high maternal mortality rate in the country. Each year, complications from unsafe abortions result in the hospitalisation of tens of thousands of women.</p>
<p>The World Health Organisation</p>	<p>The WHO released new guidelines regarding safe abortions in March 2022. This can reportedly protect the health of women and girls by preventing over 25 million unsafe abortions that currently occur each year. Such guidelines include removing unnecessary policy barriers to facilitate safe abortion access, and improving access to high quality, person-centred services. In order to ensure that women and girls receive the best possible care, WHO will assist interested nations in implementing these new recommendations and strengthening national policies and programs relating to contraception, family planning, and abortion services.</p>

## **Possible Solutions**

### **Education**

Females must get education on sexual and reproductive health, including but not limited to issues like contraceptives, abortion and fertilisation. Particularly in LDCs, there is a shortage of education regarding reproductive health. Females can become aware of the significance of safe abortion procedures, reproductive health rights, and facilities through education on this topic matter. Consequently, the rates of maternal death and morbidity will decline, as well as the rates of abortion due to better family planning and a more effective use of contraceptives.

The general population should also be provided with adequate information and education in order to destigmatise conversations about abortion and increase public awareness and knowledge of reproductive health. This would eventually lead to enhanced infrastructure development for reproductive health in order for women to be better suited with the resources required for safe abortions.

### **Abortion infrastructure**

In order to stop unsafe abortion procedures, abortion-related facilities including clinics, hospitals, staff and post-abortion care should be established. The availability of post-abortion treatment also lessens the pressure women going through abortions experience on a psychological and physical level.

### **Legislation**

Both the misuse and exploitation of abortion clinics as well as the utilisation of unsafe abortion methods should be prohibited by the law. Delegates must remember that any and all possible laws should respect women's autonomy and rights in order for it to prove to be effective.

### **Foster care system**

The foster care system in countries that have outlawed abortion clinics must be strengthened since more kids will likely join the system as a result of the prohibition on abortion facilities. The majority of foster care systems are currently overburdened and underfunded, which lowers the standard of living and restricts access to basic essentials for systemised children.

### **Rights of the unborn children**

Delegates have the option to decide whether or not to emphasise the rights of unborn infants. Such can be accomplished by strategies like legislation, education, etc. Delegates should also take into account the mothers' needs and lives, as well as if certain regulations will lead to risky abortion practices.

## Past Actions

### Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Nations are obligated to uphold, defend, and respect all forms of human rights, particularly those relating to autonomy and sexual and reproductive health. Many other internationally protected human rights, such as the rights to non-discrimination and equality, life, health, and information, freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, privacy and the right to bodily autonomy and integrity, the right to decide the number and spacing of children, liberty, the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific advancement, and freedom, may be in jeopardy where safe and legal abortion services are unreasonably restricted or not fully available.

### Roe v. Wade

The Roe v. Wade ruling, which was handed down in January 1973, confirmed that having access to a safe and legal abortion was a fundamental right. It became a famous lawsuit that made abortion legal in the United States. A woman's freedom to choose an abortion was also protected by the Griswold right to privacy.

Several US states had passed laws restricting a woman's access to abortion in recent years. Nine states now have laws that forbid early-pregnancy abortion, frequently without making Georgia's "heartbeat" law outlaws abortion at six weeks, while Alabama made abortion illegal from the time of fertilisation.

On the other hand, activists for abortion rights have also pushed for laws allowing the procedure later in pregnancy and allowing medical professionals other than doctors (such as physician assistants) to perform abortions in New York, Vermont, Illinois, and Maine.

Nevertheless, as of June 24, 2022, the US Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, ending the right to abortion that was upheld for decades. The right to an abortion is no longer protected by the US constitution, thus causing each state to make its own reproductive laws regarding abortion. This allowed for over 25 US states to ban, heavily restrict or threaten the rights for the procedure. A large number of states have been pushing for legislation that would ban women from travelling to other states for the procedure as well.

The overturning of Roe v. Wade could shift worldwide thoughts on female reproductive rights, mainly as politics in the US usually precedes those worldwide. This could have a large impact worldwide, and mainly on developing nations in which womens' rights may already be limited.

## Guiding Questions

### On the topic in itself

- What are the major causes of a lack of safe abortion facilities?
- Should abortion be legalised? Should the rights of the unborn children be considered?
- Does the government have the right to decide whether mothers should undergo abortion procedures?
  - If yes, then why is this the case?
  - If not then who should be given the right to decide? Should the child's possible family (including their father) be involved in the decision making process, or should the decision simply lie in the mother's hand?

### On your country's stance

- Is abortion legal in your country?
- What have government officials or spokespersons commented about the abortion legislation?
- Are there any internal disputes in your nation about the abortion legislation? If so, which side does your government party support, and how could that affect your stance on this issue?

### On possible solutions for this issue

- How can both the unborn child and the mother's stake in this issue be considered during the decision making process?
- What policies can be set to decrease maternal mortality rates?
- What actions can be taken on a national and international level? How would those differ from each other?
- What can be done to prevent the need to undergo abortion procedures?
- What can be done to increase reproductive education and decrease stigmatisation around abortion?

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