

UGANDA

Issues at Country Level

Situation Analysis on Abortion
Dr Olive Sentumbwe – Mugisa
FHP/WHO

17-20th October 2004

Glenburn lodge, South Africa

Law on Abortion

- Abortion is a criminal offence
- Law provides a prison sentence of 14 years for a woman who terminates a pregnancy and 7 years for any one who assists such a woman.

Law cont:

- However, the law permits abortion to save the life of a mother.

Law on Abortion cont

Abortion is permitted in instances of
Y congenital malformation of the fetus, for example hydrocephalus and others that will cause severe damage to the mother during delivery if fetus allowed to develop.

Law on Abortion cont.

- Rarely abortion may be performed in proven cases of rape, and in severe cases of mental disease
- However, in cases of a patient with mental disease, two other Doctors, one of whom must be a psychiatrist, must agree to the abortion.

Maternal Mortality in Uganda

- Rate is 505/100,000 live births
(UDHS 2000/2001)

Causes of Maternal Deaths

- Hemorrhage -26%
- Sepsis- 22%
- Eclampsia- 6%
- Obstructed labour- 13%
- Abortion-8%
- Other direct- 2%
- Other causes (HIV ,Sickle Cell Anaemia,Malaria)- 23%

Issues

- Laws and Policies:

Laws:

- Restrictive
- Not widely disseminated.
- Penal Code silent on instances when a woman can access legal abortion to save her life although it states that abortion is permitted to save the life of a mother.

Policies

- Several RH Policies on post abortion care in place.
- Not explicit on comprehensive abortion care.
- Indications for legal abortion not explicit.
- Lack of awareness on the full provision relating to instances for legal abortion amongst health care providers, policy makers and public.

Service Standards

- Provide for post abortion care
- Not explicit on comprehensive abortion care.
- Not widely disseminated

Service Delivery

- Very limited implementation of PAC services.
- Lack of equipment
- Limited skills in comprehensive and post abortion care.
- Low Government contribution to the Ministry of Health (US\$ 4 per capita yet the Minimum package is estimated at US\$ 28 per capita)

Other Factors

- Community- stigma, negative cultural practices, lack of information on existing services.
- Religious leaders- address health issue from a moralistic angle.
- Government- Lack of political will to address women's sexual and reproductive health rights as a critical part of human rights.

Strategies

- Laws:
 - Disseminate widely especially with emphasis on the legal instances in which abortion can be accessed.
 - Simplify and disseminate WHO definition of health among HCPs.
 - Simplify and translate laws into local languages.

Policies

- Implement existing policies
- Amend policies to include comprehensive abortion care.
- Amend training curricula for health care providers to include comprehensive abortion care.

Services

- Sensitize service providers on the existing laws and guidelines.
- Train more health care providers in comprehensive abortion care.
- Procure adequate equipment and supplies.
- Ensure that MVA is a component of the essential equipment list.

Strategies cont

- Build partnerships with different professional bodies and organizations(doctors, lawyers, policy makers etc)
- Destigmatize the issue- Advocacy.
- Optimize the current legal framework by providing abortion to the full extent allowed by the law.