

POP/830
14 June 2002

UN POPULATION DIVISION ISSUES UPDATED STUDY ON ABORTION POLICIES

NEW YORK, 14 June 2002 (UN Population Division) -- The United Nations Population Division has issued Abortion Policies: A Global Review. The study is an updated, country-by-country examination of national policies concerning induced abortion and the context within which abortion takes place. Comparable information is presented for all Member and non-member States of the United Nations. Volume I covers Afghanistan to France; Volume II, Gabon to Norway; and Volume III, Oman to Zimbabwe. The three volumes are complemented by a wall chart.

The publication aims at providing the most up-to-date, accurate and objective information about the nature of laws and policies relating to abortion in both developed and developing countries, at the end of the twentieth century. Included in the analysis is information on the social and political settings of these developments, the ways in which these laws and policies have been formulated, and how they have evolved over time.

Determining whether the written law or policy of a country conforms to the practice observed or inferred remains a major problem. In many countries where the performance of abortions is generally illegal, large numbers of abortions are being carried out, most of them illegally, with few prosecutions. Of the approximately 50 million abortions carried out every year in the world, estimates place the number performed illegally at 40 per cent.

The publication shows that abortion is legally permitted to save the life of the woman in 98 per cent of the countries in the world. Other grounds for abortion are to preserve the physical health of the woman (63 per cent of countries), to preserve mental health (62 per cent), in case of rape or incest (43 per cent), foetal impairment (39 per cent), economic or social reasons (33 per cent), and on request (27 per cent). Grounds on which abortion is permitted varies greatly among development regions. For example, abortion is permitted upon request in 65 per cent of developed countries, but 14 per cent of developing countries, and for economic and social reasons in 75 per cent of developed countries and 19 per cent of developing countries. Nonetheless, abortion to save the woman's life is permitted in nearly all developed (99 per cent) and developing (96 per cent) countries.

An electronic version of Abortion Policies: A Global Review is also available on the Web site of the Population Division, www.unpopulation.org.

Abortion Policies: A Global Review, Vol.I, (Sales No. E.01.XIII.10), Vol.II (Sales No. E.01.XIII.18) and Vol. III (Sales No. E.02.XIII.5) may be obtained at \$30.00 for each volume from the Sales Section, United Nations, New York or Geneva, through booksellers worldwide, or by writing to Joseph Chamie, Director, Population Division, United Nations, New York, NY 10017, USA; tel. 1-212-963-3179; fax: 1-212-963-2147.

* * * * *