

Legalisation of Abortion in Argentina

Half a million women and girls undergo unsafe abortions every year in Argentina. Unsafe abortions have been a major contributor to maternal mortality in the country, with 14% of maternal deaths accounted for by unsafe abortion. FIGO is delighted that, on 30 December 2020, abortion up to 14 weeks of pregnancy was legalised in Argentina. Argentina has joined Guyana and Uruguay as one of just a few South American countries that have legalised abortion – an important element of universal health care and reproductive health for women around the world.

FIGO position on issue

FIGO regards sexual and reproductive health and rights, including access to safe abortion services, to be a basic and non-negotiable human right of every woman and girl in the world. This includes the right of individuals to control and decide on matters of their own sexuality and reproductive health, free from coercion, discrimination and violence. This means women and girls should be free to decide if or when to have children, and how they will access the means to exercise this right.¹

FIGO reiterates that the right to safe abortion and abortion care, management and timely provision of non-judgemental service is an integral part of sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality, reproductive justice and universal access to healthcare.

When safe abortion isn't an option, women and girls are forced to seek untrained providers – often operating in unsanitary environments – or resort to drastic and unsafe attempts to self-induce abortion. Lack of access to safe abortion results in 45% of all abortions globally being unsafe, in turn accounting for approximately 13% of maternal deaths worldwide.^{2,3} FIGO aims to reduce unsafe abortion and the mortality and morbidity associated with it.

In all settings, in every country, neither wider society nor members of a healthcare team have the right to impose religious or cultural convictions regarding abortion. Women and girls have the right to access quality medical- or surgical-induced abortion, and healthcare services have an obligation to provide such services as safely as possible.

FIGO commits to taking the following actions

FIGO will support any health care providers in Argentina and elsewhere to facilitate the provision of safe abortion services, including by:

- supporting the engagement of all health care professionals and contributing to education on abortion-related issues
- encouraging the development of comprehensive abortion care, management and timely non-judgmental services
- providing any required technical expertise to ministries of health and their partners in implementing legislation when passed
- continuing advocacy and awareness-raising about safe abortion in Argentina and around the globe.

About FIGO

FIGO is a professional organisation that brings together obstetrical and gynaecological associations from all over the world.

FIGO's vision is that women of the world achieve the highest possible standards of physical, mental, reproductive and sexual health and wellbeing throughout their lives. We lead on global programme activities, with a particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia.

FIGO advocates on a global stage, especially in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pertaining to reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health and non-communicable diseases (SDG3). We also work to raise the status of women and enable their active participation to achieve their reproductive and sexual rights, including addressing female-genital mutilation (FGM) and gender-based violence (SDG5).

We also provide education and training for our Member Societies and build capacities of those from low-resource countries through strengthening leadership, good practice and promotion of policy dialogues.

FIGO is in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO) and a consultative status with the United Nations (UN).

¹ FIGO. *Ethical Issues in Obstetrics and Gynecology*. 2015. Available at: <https://www.figo.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/FIGO%20ETHICAL%20ISSUES%20-%20OCTOBER%202015%20%28003%29.pdf>

² Guttmacher Institute. *News Release: Worldwide, an Estimated 25 Million Unsafe Abortions Occur Each Year*. 2017. Available at : <https://www.guttmacher.org/news-release/2017/worldwide-estimated-25-million-unsafe-abortions-occur-each-year>

³ World Health Organization (WHO). *Safe abortion: technical and policy guidance for health systems. Second Edition*. 2012. Available at: <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/70914;jsessionid=5498437A92F0FF1208F035FC424AE063?sequence=1>