



Making Abortion Safe - RCOG's global initiative to advocate for women's health

Introduction

Every year an estimated 25 million unsafe abortions take place globally. It is one of the leading causes of maternal mortality worldwide and the risk of dying from an unsafe abortion is highest for women in Africa, where nearly half of all abortions happen in potentially dangerous circumstances¹. Almost every death from unsafe abortion could be prevented through the use of effective contraception, provision of safe abortion, and timely post-abortion care.

The RCOG firmly believes that abortion is an essential part of women's health care. The Making Abortion Safe programme will work in collaboration with healthcare professionals in Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Zimbabwe, to improve women's and girls' access to safe abortion (to within the full extent of the law), post-abortion care and post-abortion contraceptive services.

Programme Overview

Building on the RCOG's influence and track record in setting women's health standards and professionalising sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, Making Abortion Safe will work with healthcare professionals who are, or are willing to become, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Champions, to support healthcare professionals to address the barriers to safe abortion and/or post-abortion care for women and girls in five focus countries and globally.

The programme will focus on three areas:

1. **Professionalism:** HCPs will have increased access to safe abortion and post-abortion care through RCOG educational and professional resources.
2. **Normalisation:** Normalisation: HCPs will have the tools they need to be supported to provide and/or facilitate access to safe abortion and/or post-abortion care including guidance addressing stigma, peer-to-peer support and values clarification.
3. **Leadership:** Champions and other HCPs' capacity to advocate for safe abortion and/or post-abortion care is strengthened. SRHR champions will develop and implement advocacy strategies in each of the five focus countries.

Critical to the programme's success will be partnering with professional societies, NGOs, like-minded individuals and others who are working to ensure women and girls' have access to safe abortion and/or post-abortion care. Meanwhile, the RCOG will also be taking a pro-active approach to influencing policy and practice around the world.

The SRHR Champions and other healthcare professionals will be supported with a package of e-Learning, professional guidance, advocacy training and other activities, which will be tailored to each of the programme country's unique situation and the specific advocacy priorities identified by Champions.

¹ Ganatra B, Gerdtz C, Rossier C, Johnson Jr B R, Tunçalp Ö, Assifi A, Sedgh G, Singh S, Bankole A, Popinchalk A, Bearak J, Kang Z, Alkema L. [Global, regional, and subregional classification of abortions by safety, 2010–14: estimates from a Bayesian hierarchical model](#). The Lancet. 2017 Sep



Programme activities

The programme will offer a package of training, guidance, support and activities, which will be tailored to each country's unique situation and the specific needs of the SRHR Champions. The Making Abortion Safe programme will include the following activities:

E-learning and technical guidance

E-learning

In collaboration with the SRHR Champions, the programme will develop a range of online courses, including knowledge-based safe abortion care; the harm-reduction approach; and abortion provision within existing legal frameworks. These courses will be free to access and can be disseminated widely.

Best Practice & Guidance

The programme will work with SRHR Champions to identify the need to develop or adapt clinical guidance in the areas of abortion and post-abortion care, or disseminate guidelines where they already exist, to support in-country efforts to improve access to services.

In addition, guidance documents on the topics of stigma, harassment and burn-out, will be developed to support the efforts of healthcare professionals operating at different levels.

Advocacy and support

Advocacy

During the lifetime of the programme, SRHR Champions will strengthen their advocacy capacity, develop their action strategies at national, regional and international levels and collaborate with peers on a peer-to-peer mentoring scheme.

Conferences, Events & Workshops

The programme will promote safe abortion and the work of the SRHR Champions at international scientific conferences including; the RCOG World Congress, the FIGO Regional and International Congresses, and other relevant international SRHR events.

Peer-to-peer learning

The programme will facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges and learning, including a mentorship scheme, both within countries and across programme countries.

Further information

To express an interest in becoming an SRHR Champion, please take a look at the Terms of Reference and follow the application guidance.

Website: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/global-network>

Contact: cwgh@rcog.org.uk