Pathway to Abortion: Abortion Study among Youth and Poor Women in Cambodia (2019)

Rachel Marcheskie, ’21 Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs
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Introduction
- Only 12% of youth think that abortion is legal in Cambodia
- Women under the age of 24 represent 23% of the medical abortions from the supported providers
- Only 2% of youth know when fertility returns after giving birth

Objective of Study
The main objective of this study is to understand how youth access abortion. This includes youth’s experience surrounding an abortion and the role of influencers. Another objective is to understand the barriers for accessing safe abortions and family planning services among youth and poor women.

Methods
- In-depth interviews are used to understand details about real experiences
- Sampled women who had unwanted pregnancies:
  - Abortion users: 18-24 years old
  - Non-abortion users: 18-24 years old OR 18-49 years old & low income (<$1 per day)

Key Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Journey Mapping Unwanted Pregnancies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No use of family planning due to fear of side effects of birth control, only used withdrawal, or misconception about fertility after birth/abortion</td>
<td>Irregular use of family planning due to fear of effects of birth control or timing errors with calendar, pill, or injection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognition of pregnancy symptoms</td>
<td>Pregnancy test via urine test or ultrasound</td>
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Decision
To abort:
- Shame/fear of being unwed and pregnant
- Poor health
- Recently had a child
- Poor financial situation

To keep:
- Fearful of pain/health effects from abortion
- Husband wants to keep
- Feels guilty

Use
Self Induced:
- Very few women used traditional methods of self induced abortion

Medical Abortion:
- Most women used medical abortion
- Able to easily purchase at pharmacy and inexpensive
- Concerns of incomplete abortion/health effects

Surgical Abortion:
- Some women used medical abortion, often only after medical abortion failed
- Concerns of pain during procedure

Follow up
After delivery/abortion, health providers often advise women about future family planning methods. Many women wish to use family planning methods, but are hindered by their fears/misconceptions of birth control/fertility

My Responsibilities
While interning at PSI, my main responsibility was to analyze interview data and compile responses into a narrative following women’s journeys with their unwanted pregnancies

Questions
- What course of action will be taken in order to fill the gaps in knowledge about birth control and fertility?
- How do we use husbands as a form of influencers to reach better health care for women?

Conclusion
PSI’s research will continue to produce insights which will be vital in helping Cambodian women access safe, reliable abortions, along with increasing awareness of reproductive health

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