

Center for Reproductive Rights' Statement on Nigeria's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Process - March 20, 2014,

Mr. President,

I make this statement on behalf of the Center for Reproductive Rights. We would like to draw attention to inadequate access to family planning services and information, and to safe abortion in Nigeria.

The right to family planning services and information is rooted in the rights to equality and non-discrimination, education, and health. It should be noted that only 14% of Nigerian women use any form of contraception and over one quarter of women and adolescents between the ages of 15 and 49 have an unmet need for effective contraception. This high rate of unmet need is responsible for the significant number of unplanned and unwanted pregnancies in the country—at least one-third of women and adolescents have had an unplanned pregnancy. Many have sought unsafe abortions, with deadly consequences.

Unsafe abortion and lack of access to post-abortion care has led to a significant number of maternal deaths in the country. These deaths are a direct result of the Nigeria's restrictive abortion law which means most abortions are clandestine and unsafe. One in seven Nigerian women between 15 and 49 years has tried to obtain an abortion, either from unqualified practitioners or from qualified ones working under substandard medical conditions. Low income women, women who live in rural areas and adolescent girls bear the brunt of the resulting maternal injuries and deaths due to their vulnerable status.

We support the recommendation made to Nigeria on introducing sexuality education in the school curricula as such education in Nigerian schools remains drastically inadequate leaving adolescents without accurate and evidence-based information to prevent unplanned and unwanted pregnancies.

We urge the government of Nigeria to undertake effective and sustainable measures to increase access to family planning services and information, and to subsidize or cover the costs; provide sexuality education in schools; and improve access to safe abortion and post abortion care including by reviewing the impact of its restrictive abortion law on the country's maternal mortality incidence.

Thank you.