

Review of Global Public Health Issues

Daniel Grossman, MD
Vice President for Research
Ibis Reproductive Health



University of California
San Francisco

advancing health worldwide™

Unsafe Abortion

- WHO definition
 - A procedure for terminating an unintended pregnancy carried out either by persons lacking the necessary skills or in an environment that does not conform to minimal medical standards, or both
- Approximately 20 million unsafe abortions annually, resulting in 44,000 deaths
- 15% of maternal deaths in 2013

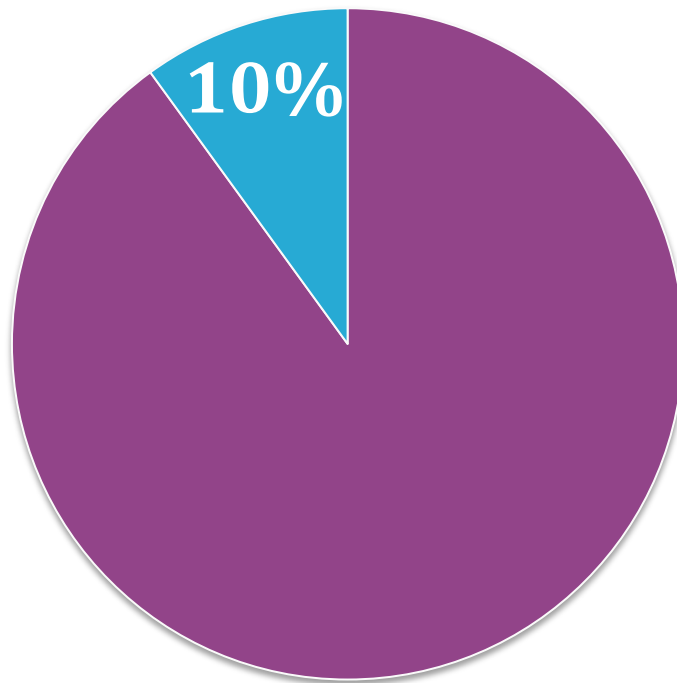
Unsafe Abortion and Maternal Mortality

- *Leading cause of maternal deaths (10-30%)* in places where safe abortion is not available
 - Africa, Latin America
- Usually eliminated as cause of death where abortion is legal or allowed safely
- Simple, inexpensive technology for safe abortion and post-abortion care (e.g. MUA, misoprostol) widely available

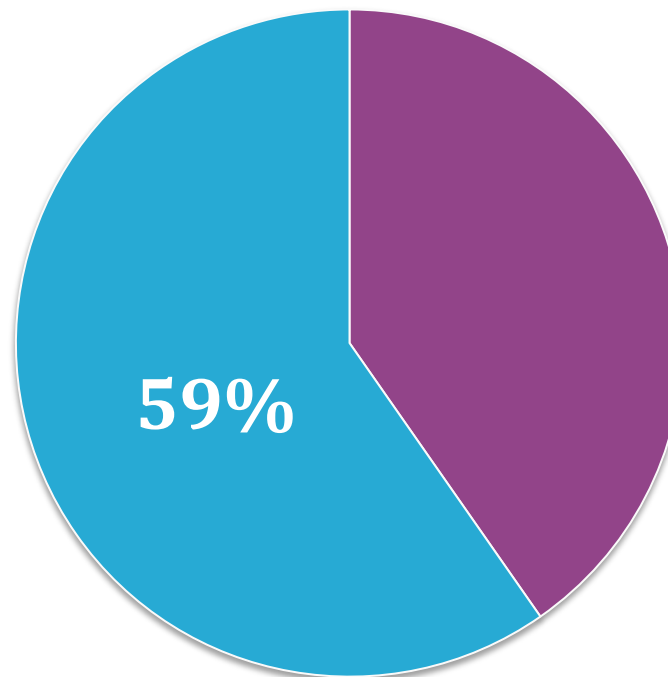
Mortality by Gestational Age

Benin City, Nigeria, 1973-84

All abortions

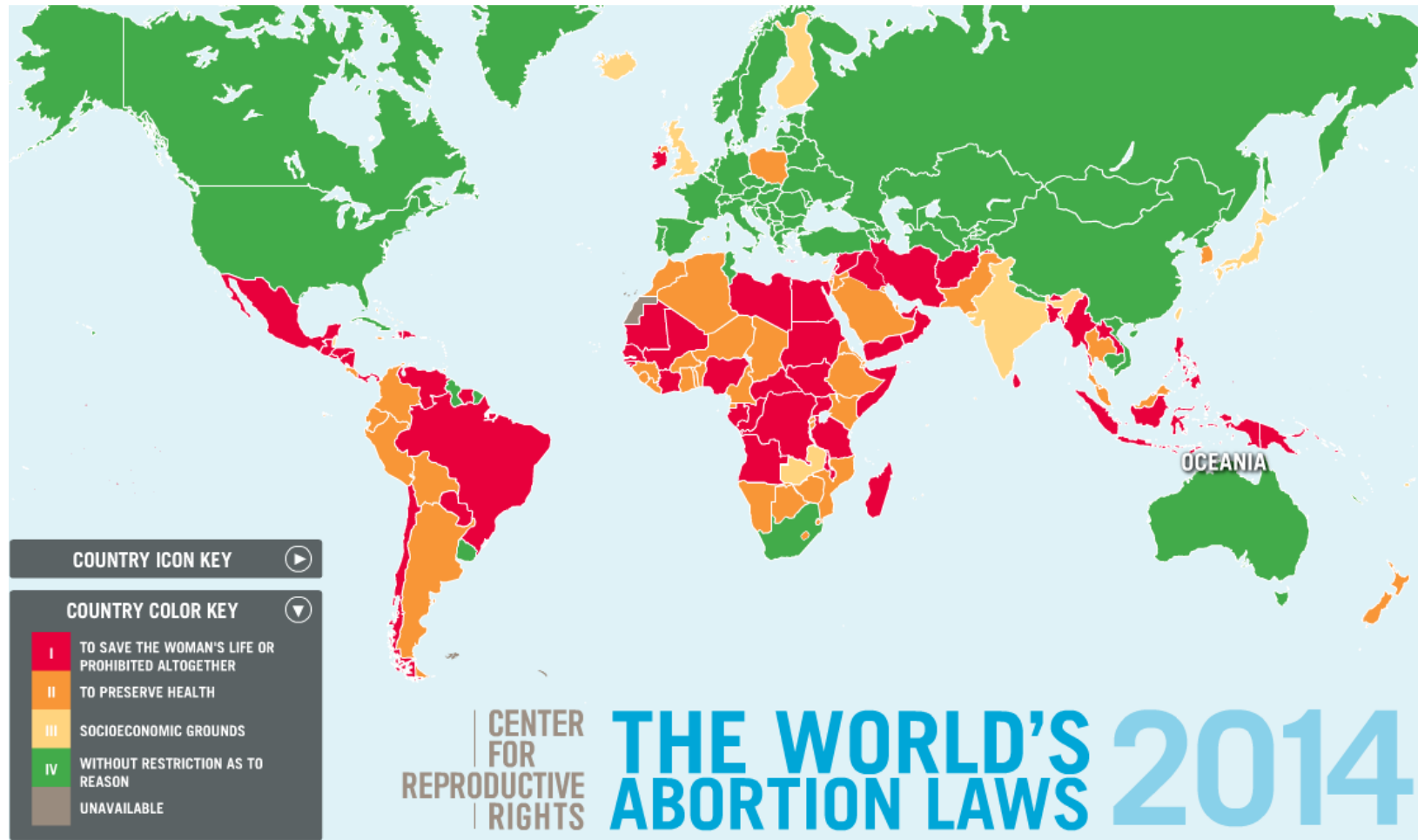


Abortion deaths

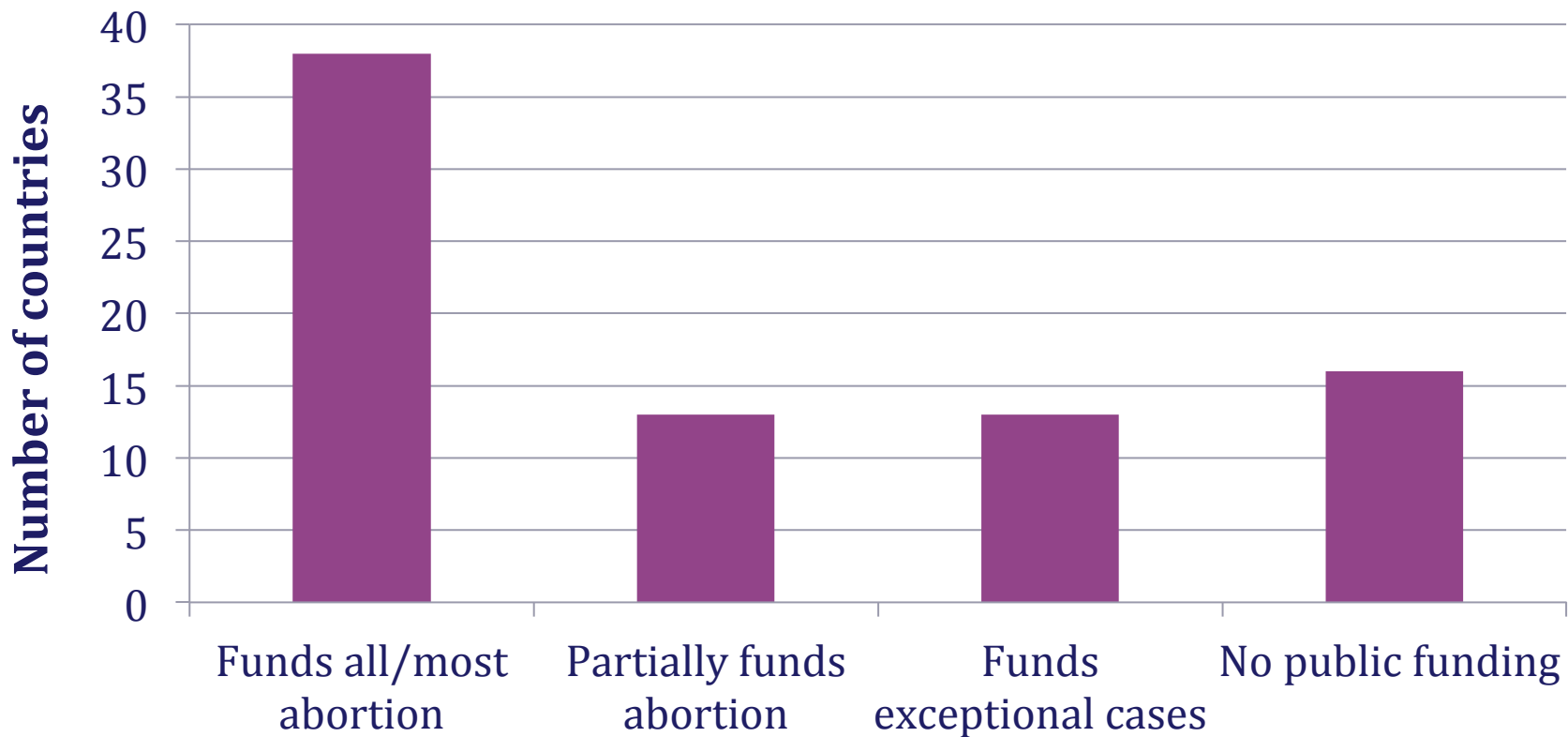


- 1st trimester
- 2nd trimester

Laws Restrict Access in Many Countries



Cost of Services May Be a Barrier in Countries with Liberal Laws



Other Important Barriers to Accessing Safe Abortion Care

- Few or inadequately trained providers
- Lack of access to abortion supplies or medications
- Lack of knowledge of law or services
- Stigma

Misoprostol as Safer Method to Self-induce Abortion

- In Brazil, complications noted be less common with reported use of misoprostol compared to other invasive methods
- In several Latin American countries, abortion-related mortality has declined as misoprostol use has become more prevalent



Misoprostol

- Prostaglandin analogue
- Causes uterine contractions and opening of the cervix
- Causes vaginal bleeding (incomplete abortion)
- When used vaginally in repeated doses, approximately 85% effective in causing complete abortion



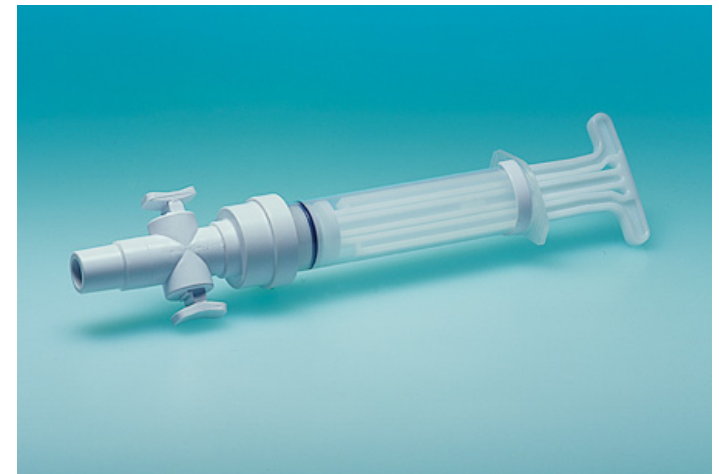
How Are Women Accessing Misoprostol?

- Pharmacies
- Informal sector
- From clinicians
- → Efforts among women to disseminate information about evidence-based use



Efforts to Address Unsafe Abortion

- Post-abortion care services
- Training on the use of manual vacuum aspiration
- Revision of restrictive laws
- Provision of services within the limits of the law
- Harm-reduction models



Conclusions

- In settings where access to safe abortion is limited—either due to restrictive laws or because of other barriers—unsafe abortion is prevalent
- Unsafe abortion results in significant morbidity and mortality—especially later in pregnancy
- Unsafe abortion is a public health challenge that can be addressed in a variety of ways