



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
12 December 2022

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-seventh session

6–17 March 2023

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by Concepts of Truth, Inc., a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The Secretary-General has called for innovation – “doing different things and doing things differently,” to address the pressing needs of humanity in a changing world. Innovation in a digital age requires not only access to technology but also to a full range of educational resources to empower women and girls to identify abuses of that technology and make informed decisions.

For women in developing countries, access to technology has meant the chance to have a voice in their communities - learn anywhere any time, boost literacy, improve health, as well as develop skills to broaden participation in society. Unfortunately, technological innovations have also ushered in unacceptably high levels of sexual violence against women and girls, providing abusive partners the ability to monitor, track, threaten and later assault their victims, while giving sex traffickers the technology to profile, recruit, control and exploit their targets without regard for geographical limitations. Research conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and published in October 2021 shows that in the United States approximately 40% of sex trafficking victims are recruited online and abusers exploit online technology to advertise images of their victims.

Among the terrible effects of this sexual exploitation of women and girls has been the increasing rates of unintended pregnancies followed by abortion. According to the article, *Unintended Pregnancy and Abortion* in the September issue of *The Lancet*, between 2015 and 2019, approximately 61 percent of unintended pregnancies ended in abortion, for an average of 73.3 million abortions per year worldwide. In the U.S., over 7.2 percent of those abortions occurred between 14 and 20 weeks gestation according to the Congressional Research Service, April 30, 2018. In the U.S., in 2020, the Guttmacher Institute reported that about 20 percent of *all* pregnancies (not just unintended pregnancies) ended in abortion, and by 2022, that number had increased to 22 percent of all pregnancies.

While for some women, abortion may provide short term relief from the physical and emotional stress of carrying an unexpected or unwanted child to term, numerous global studies - including the extensive research reported by Angela Lanfranchi in her book, *Complications: Abortion's Impact on Women*, DeVeber Institute for Bioethics and Social Research, Toronto, Canada, 2015 - have documented the negative short and long-term health impact of abortion, including the prevalence of immediate post-abortion hemorrhage, infertility, uterine/cervical lacerations, retained fetal body parts, breast cancer, autoimmune disease and numerous psychiatric complications, including severe depression and suicide.

Meanwhile, chemical abortions, which surged during the pandemic, result in approximately four times the complication rate of surgical abortions according to a studies involving 42,000 Finnish women between 2000 and 2006 as well as studies involving California Medicaid patients who had abortions in 2009 to 2010, as reported in the *National Review*, August, 2021 by research scholar, Michael New, in his article, *Telehealth Abortions Pose Significant Health Risks*. Currently, 50 percent of all abortions are chemical abortions and that number is projected to climb to 70 percent by the end of 2022.

One recent study reported in October 2022 by Eileen Smith Dallabrida in her White Paper in Support After Abortion entitled, *Study Shows Negative Long Term Impact of Medication Abortion* shows that 34 percent of women who obtained chemical abortions said that their outlook on themselves or their decision changed negatively since their abortion; 24 percent reported that they searched for help after their abortion experiences; and 39 percent of women did not seek help but said that they could have benefited from talking to someone.

While many studies on the psychological impact of abortion are criticized for relying on like-minded volunteers, the above study relied on women who obtained chemical abortions through a random sample and was arguably more representative. Concept of Truth's international helpline has received approximately 20,000 calls from every state in the U.S. and abroad from (mostly) women descending into mental illness, including depression, self-harm and sometimes suicide, because of their grief over their abortions and the lack of information to make informed decisions.

The importance of informed decision-making in the area of reproductive health cannot be underestimated, especially during the pandemic, where gender based violence and abortions increased dramatically as access to medical facilities and professionals decreased. For many of the women who have had abortions, they would claim that they never received information about the physical and mental consequences of abortion, nor were they informed (until after the fact) that at 16 weeks, an unborn baby is able to move about, suck its thumb, blink its eyes and kick its legs, and that its heart and circulatory system are fully functioning.

If we are serious about ensuring quality education [SDG 4] and empowering women and girls with equal opportunities for decision-making, then we must provide them with the real information about abortion. Concepts of Truth, Inc., NGO seeks to educate girls and women with necessary information to make informed choices. For women who have chosen to abort their babies, the NGO provides compassionate counseling to help them and their loved ones find closure through the grieving process. For those considering abortion, Concepts of Truth, Inc.'s international 24/7 helpline provides crucial life-affirming information.

In keeping with the goals of the Geneva Consensus Declaration, we must ensure that innovation promotes the preservation of human life, better health for women, the strengthening of the family as the foundational unit of society, and the protection of national sovereignty to implement these policies. Concepts of Truth, Inc., an ECOSOC accredited NGO, recommends that member states join in keeping with the goals of the Declaration's approximately 36 member states to ensure that innovation protects human life and dignity and well-being for all persons.
