



## **Human Rights and Reproductive Justice: The Human Rights Nexus between Reproductive Coercion and Mental Health**

Project Partners: UN Population Fund (Asia Regional Office)

### **About the UN Population Fund**

UNFPA is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency. Its mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

UNFPA's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific was established in 2008 in Bangkok, Thailand, to provide a key link between UNFPA's global vision and strategies, and the needs of the region and programme countries.

The Regional Office in Bangkok provides strategic support and technical expertise to 22 country offices across Asia. The Pacific Subregional Office in Suva, Fiji, supports 14 Pacific island nations. They deliver policy advice, guidance, training and support to empower partners and colleagues in the field. The Regional Office also provides leadership in positioning the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in tandem with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the forefront of poverty reduction and development strategies, policies and debates throughout the region.

<https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/en>

### **Project Overview**

All people who can become pregnant, including people with disabilities, have the right to make autonomous decisions about how, when and whether to become pregnant. Yet, in many countries around the world, a spectrum of coercive State and non-State practices exist that interfere with this fundamental right. Forced and coerced abortion and sterilisation based on disability are particularly egregious manifestations of reproductive coercion, often compounded by other forms of discrimination (for example, based on race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, or other status).

This project aims to understand the origins of reproductive coercion in outdated, colonialist, and harmful mental health laws and policies and how the UN human rights system approaches the issue. It will examine the ways in which select UN human rights mechanisms have addressed the matter in a select range of countries in the Asia/Pacific region. The project will contribute to understand the extent to which human rights and reproductive justice can challenge the basis for reproductive coercion for mental health reasons.

### **Project Output**

A 30-40 page report will be submitted to the UN Population Fund (Asia Regional Office). The research will include three different sections: a) reproductive justice as a framework for human rights analysis, b) data and analysis of the work on the issue from with UN human rights mechanisms, and c) country/case examples which problematise the issue.



The data and analysis of the work on the issue with UN human rights mechanisms includes UN Special Procedures, UPR and UN Treaty Bodies. The research will focus particularly on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and the interpretive work by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Students will be provided with a basic reading list and bibliography, but will also be given several learning opportunities with leading activists and scholars on this complex issue. An opening series of talks are proposed to help students understand the framing of the issue, including with Essex academics working on the phenomenon of reproductive coercion in the UK and User/Survivor Scholars working on advancing the CRPD as a foundational framework for supporting reproductive justice and transforming harmful and outdated mental health laws. Students will also be given the chance to meet and work collaboratively with the project partners.

In addition to desk research, the research team and the supervisor will consider the best research methods, including potential interviews and/or focus groups, which would require ethical approval.

At UNFPA's discretion, the final output may be published or used as the basis of a future publication, with the due acknowledgment of the team behind the research.

## **Project Timeline**

### **Phase 1: November-December 2021**

- Preliminary desk research, understanding the project and developing research/report outline.
- Mapping of cases and bibliography. The outline, bibliography to be submitted to the partner by the end of autumn term for comments.
- If applicable, identifying a list of experts for interviews and questionnaire, and securing ethical approval.

### **Phase 2: January-March 2022**

- If applicable, interviewing.
- Research and data gathering.
- Report writing.
- Submission of the first full draft to the partners.

### **Phase 3: April-June 2022**

- Revision and finalising the research based on input from the partner.
- Potential blog posts at the partner's website or elsewhere.

## **Essential readings**

- Report on sexual and reproductive health and rights of girls and young women with disabilities,  
Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, 14 July 2017  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Disability/SRDisabilities/Pages/ReproductiveHealthRights.aspx>



- Eliminating forced, coercive and otherwise involuntary sterilization: an interagency statement (WHO, Geneva, 2014)  
[www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/201405\\_sterilization\\_en.pdf](http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/201405_sterilization_en.pdf)
- SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, THEMATIC PAPER towards the preparation of the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples,  
<https://www.un.org/en/ga/69/meetings/indigenous/pdf/IASG%20Thematic%20Paper%20Reproductive%20Health%20-%20rev1.pdf>
- Sexual and Reproductive Rights at the United Nations: Frustration or Fulfillment? (Alice Miller and Mindy J. Roseman), 19 REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH MATTERS 102 (November 2011)
- Human Rights and Reproductive Choice, Lynn P. Freedman and Stephen L. Isaacs  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2939211>
- ANNE M. LOVELL , COERCION AND SOCIAL CONTROL, A FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCH ON AGGRESSIVE STRATEGIES IN COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH  
*Coercion and Aggressive Community Treatment: A New Frontier in Mental Health Law*, edited by Deborah L. Dennis and John Monahan. Plenum Press, New York, 1996.
- Reducing Recurrent Care Proceedings: Building a Local Evidence Base in England, Pamela Cox, Susan McPherson, Claire Mason, Mary Ryan and Vanessa Baxter  
<https://www.mdpi.com/2075-4698/10/4/88>
- Reports of the former UN special rapporteur on right to health on the theme of mental health: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Health/Pages/RightToMentalHealth.aspx>

#### **Focal point in UN Population Fund (Asia Regional Office)**

- Gunilla Backman, Human Rights Officer, [backman@unfpa.org](mailto:backman@unfpa.org)