

**Universal Periodic Review-2010**  
**Submitted by Family Planning Association of I.R.I**  
**Non-governmental organization**

**Abstract**

1. This report is on Reproductive Health and Rights and has been submitted by the Family Planning Association of I.R.I for the UPR.

2. By reviewing laws, achievements, personal experiences, and qualitative and quantitative results of the Association on relevant subjects, the Association presents this narrative report on important issues with regards to reproductive rights such as abortion, HIV/AIDS, refugees, adolescents and youths, all of which have seen substantial improvements alongside with some challenges and points that require further attention.

3. According to adopted laws which are comprehensively mentioned in this report, the situation of reproductive health and rights are in a slow but continuing progress to move towards better conditions in Iran. Although the achievements of the recent years are highly noticeable such as the Therapeutic Abortion Act, the Foetus Donation Act, improvement in PLHIV conditions since the establishment of Positive Clubs that provide free services, and also ratification of number of other laws such as the Insurance Rights for PLHIV, reduction in the birth rates among refugees, but still the restrictions of the Therapeutic Abortion Act, the high cost of Anti-Retro Viral (ARV) are the challenges in the way.

4. Stating Reproductive Health and Rights situation, this report indicates also in brief the programmes and the projects implemented by Family Planning Association of I.R.I in order to promote and to improve Reproductive Health and Rights Situation. At the end, FPA/IRI requests more attention on Reproductive Health and Rights subject.

**Key words:** Reproductive Health and Rights, Abortion, Therapeutic Abortion, HIV/AIDS, PLHIV (People Living With HIV), Adolescent and youth

**About the Association**

5. FPA/IRI, established in 1995 in Tehran, is a non-governmental and voluntarily organization. Reproductive Health, the major and the main field of work for FPA/IRI, is included of a very wide range of health, social, psychological, economic and moral issues that guarantee health and vivacity of family's nature. This association contributes to the promotion of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights especially among the youth and vulnerable groups in consistence with cultural values of the society. FPA/IRI is a full member association of International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). Family Planning Association of I.R.I aims to support the right to make a free and informed choice of Reproductive and Sexual Health care for all women, men and the youth and to endeavour to provide necessary information and Reproductive and Sexual Health care needs for all, specifically, for the youth and vulnerable groups of the society. In this regard, FPA has managed to strengthen its partnership with like-minded governmental and non-organizations that share similar objectives. The association's strategic framework highlights the five A thematic areas of Abortion, HIV and AIDS, Adolescent, Access and Advocacy.

6. In line with its activities, the FPA/IRI has reviewed Reproductive Health and Rights situation and since the Association finds the issue remarkable, this report is presented to the UPR mechanism as a considerable report on the situation of Reproductive Health and Rights in Iran.

## **Methodology**

7. Submitting this report, monitoring of experiences, monitoring of laws (domestic and international) and monitoring of research results have been considered as methods. In this regard, the following steps has been taken: studies on laws adopted in Iran for improvement and promotion of Reproductive Health situation, verification of problems within laws or problems in applying these laws. In reviewing these instances human rights laws and regulations have always been within the framework.

8. Monitoring of experiences has been done by collecting data on the Reproductive Health situation through studies of completed projects by the Association and the review of the evolved conclusions and findings of projects. Monitoring of the researches findings also have been done through reviewing data collected by researchers which are to be mentioned.

9. Since developments, researches and activities in fields of abortion, HIV/AIDS, refugees affaires, adolescents and youths are find to be highly considerable this report covers the aforementioned subjects and it may not be possible to review some other points in this report. According to activities conducted by the Association, alongside the accomplishments and measures taken, a number of issues have been identified and brought up in this report.

## **Therapeutic Abortion**

10. Despite the high rates of abortion worldwide (annually 2% of women in the reproductive age group experience abortion once)<sup>1</sup>, abortion is illegal in many countries, in Islamic countries in particular, and is a significant subject in many debates. With the efforts of the Family Planning Association of I.R.I and the support of the Ministry of Health, for the first time in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Therapeutic abortion was proposed to the Islamic Parliament, and the Therapeutic Abortion Act was ratified by the Parliament in 2005 followed by the final approval of Guardian Council. According to this Act, therapeutic abortion can take place only after the absolute conclusions of three specialists and the approval of the Coroner's Office based on either the deformity of the foetus which would cause hardship for the mother after its birth, or mother's illness where the pregnancy might risk her life, before the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy with the woman's approval<sup>2</sup>. Twenty-two items of items indicated in this act are related to mother's condition and Twenty- nine related to foetus abnormalities.

11. Despite the approval of the law which is one of the most important achievements in Reproductive Health field , nevertheless the law only permits abortion within a restricted framework, in other words the "mother's health" in this law is only specifically referred to her physical health and a number of particular illnesses and the mental status of the mother and gender violence are not included<sup>3</sup>.

## **Foetus Donation to infertile couples**

12. For the first time in Iran, in 2003 a law entitled "foetus donation to infertile couples" was approved by the Parliament. According to this law all authorised and competent fertility clinics are authorised to transfer the foetus that is resulted from fertilisation outside of the womb to be carried out for couples whose infertility has been proved through the relevant medical tests<sup>4</sup> in total consistence with Islamic laws and the conditions stated in law regarding embryo/foetus. This law is a development in the infertility treatment in an Islamic country.

13. There are no specific data banks in specialised centres of infertility for religious minority groups for receiving foetus; This issue derives of sufficient clarifications in the regulation of Foetus Donation Act<sup>5</sup>.

## **HIV/AIDS**

14. With regards to the high rate of HIV/AIDS epidemic in the world, the essential measures for HIV/AIDS prevention and control taking place in Iran are highly notable. With the appearance of the second wave of HIV/AIDS (through sharing needles) for the first time in Iran, in 2006 the Association established a club in coordination with HIV/AIDS Centre of Research, UNAIDS and IPPF, to empower individuals infected with the HIV virus for their more highlighted presence in society, by presenting them wide-ranging counselling services and establishment of medical treatment referral and particularly for the improvement of the living conditions of those infected with HIV/AIDS. The worthy outcome of this club was the opening of a second club by the Association in the Holy City of Mashhad. Currently 2% of identified individuals who are infected with the virus use the free services of these two clubs<sup>6</sup>.

15. With the appearance of the third wave of HIV/AIDS (through unsafe sex) which in the recent years has turned into a cause for concern, in early 2009 the Association established a Drop In Centre for vulnerable women of the society. This centre has been established to provide free health medical services to vulnerable women and to offer counselling and educational services to promote Positive Prevention.

16. The social status and conditions of PLHIV has improved over the recent years. According to Act 29 article 96, fifty percent of social insurance is to be paid by individuals that now supporting organisations have accepted to pay the 50% fee of the insurance of PLHIV<sup>7</sup>. Another instance of this improving process is the adoption of a law according to which, employers are not be permitted to fire their employees for being infected with HIV.

17. Due to the high cost of ARV services, a large number of PLHIV do not have access to these services (it is estimated that 5% of the PLHIV do not have access to ARV)<sup>8</sup>. Another issue in this regard is the employment problems of these individuals that due to particular physical and treatment conditions they are not able to work in several full-time jobs.

## **Right of access to information**

18. Considering that the right of access to information is one of the fundamental rights of mankind, and also considering the fact that over ten percent of all the refugees of the world live in Iran<sup>9</sup>, the Association held a number of educational workshops on reproductive health and personal hygiene for Afghan refugee camps. The effect of the project in the reduction of the birth rates was from 7.5 percent down to 5.7 percent is considerable<sup>10</sup>. With the cooperation of UNHCR in the current year (2009) the Association is once again attempting to hold educational courses on family planning guidelines for Afghan refugees in three provinces where refugees dispersal outside of the camps is very high.

19. Considering the sensitivity of Reproductive Health and Right and traditional intolerances and cultural problems of refugees, the provision of educational, counselling and Reproductive Health services are faced with problems.

## **Adolescents and youths**

20. Currently approximately 24 million or 35.4% of the population of Iran is consisted of the 10-24 age groups<sup>11</sup>. Another point is the low average age of the first sexual experience among youth. According to the mentioned points and the importance of the education on Reproductive Health and Rights in order to reduce harm of high risk behaviours among the youth this issue become more crucial.

21. After the ICPD conference, Islamic Republic of Iran according to Reservation right has accepted SRHR educations according to age limit and appropriate educational materials through parents and teachers to school students <sup>12</sup>. Therefore education of SRHR can not be conducted directly to school students but indirectly through parents and teachers.

### **Recommendations**

22. In view of the fact that Reproductive Health and Rights is a fundamental integral part of human rights and also the fact that the existing challenges in this regard extensively leave their mark on all societies, the Family Planning Association calls upon the Human Rights Council and the UPR to pay further attention to the subject of Reproductive Health and Rights so that the mobilisation of resources towards increased domestic and foreign investments with the cooperation of international organizations for the promotion and improvement of reproductive health and rights become realised.

23. Considering the particular importance of Reproductive Health and Rights which directly affects the right to life of individuals, the Family Planning Association calls upon the Council and UPR to appoint a Special Rapporteur on reproductive health and rights.

24. This Association recommends that an e-library be set up on reproductive health, hygiene and rights, the preparation of an e-newsletter in this subject which would make available to individuals active in this regard on a regular basis is also recommended by the Association.

25. The Association recommends that the Council sets up necessary mechanisms for the opportunity for countries to exchange experiences and information on this subject, be they in the governmental or nongovernmental sectors.

### **Note**

26. It is necessary to mention that all the achievements and successes in the reproductive health and hygiene field in the Islamic Republic of Iran is due to the following:

- The support of grand clergies who by issuing edicts on Reproductive Health and Rights programmes opened the way for these activities.
- Members of Parliament and the Guardian Council who by reviewing and ratifying laws showed their support for reproductive health and rights programmes.
- Justice Organisation for supporting SRHR programs in prisons, particularly in female prisons.
- Government officials who have shown their support for NGOs active in reproductive health and rights.

27. Therefore with the support of the authorities towards reviewing challenges and offering of solutions for the near future we are very hopeful.

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