

1/3 of Pregnant Women Get Abortion in Brazil

Contributed by Paula Menna Barreto
Wednesday, 23 March 2005

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 1.4 million abortions take place in Brazil each year. According to the organization, almost a third of pregnant women in Brazil (31%) don't carry their pregnancies through to completion.

In the 15-49 age bracket, 3.7 in every 100 Brazilian women miscarry or abort using unsafe procedures. These data are reflected by the public health system.

In 2005 there were nearly 250 thousand hospitalizations caused by post-abortion curettage, and they cost the public coffers US\$ 10.6 million (28.9 million reais). According to the Ministry of Health, abortion is the fourth cause of maternal deaths in the country.

In the hope of lowering this mortality index 15% by the end of 2006, the Ministry launched a new policy of Family Planning yesterday. Among other measures, the new policy includes annual expenditures of US\$ 14.7 million (40 million reais) for the acquisition of birth control devices.

According to Maria José Araújo, a pediatric physician who coordinates the area of Women's Health in the Ministry, Brazil had in the past various family planning policies that suffered from lack of continuity.

She says that the new policy will cover a larger number of municipalities, thus reaching more people.

The idea is to enable people to go to the basic health unit in their municipality and have a professional who orients them and, on the basis of their need, age, and state of health, helps them choose the ideal birth control device.

"Nothing except condoms, which have no contraindication, will be distributed without orientation by a professional," Araújo observes.

Translation: David Silberstein
Agência Brasil