

International Seminar on

**Unintended pregnancy and key outcomes—abortion and unplanned births:
Improvements in Measurement and New Evidence**

New Delhi, India, 27-29 October 2020

Seminar organized by the IUSSP Scientific Panel on Abortion Research and the Population Council, India.

Call for Papers

Deadline for submission of abstracts extended to 15 March 2020

As fertility rates continue to decline in most parts of the world, the incidence of unintended pregnancy has nevertheless remained high, and is rising in some sub-regions. An important underlying reason is that increases in contraceptive use have not matched increases in the desire for small families and for controlling the timing of births. At the same time, the concept of unintended pregnancy continues to be assessed and re-examined with the goal of ensuring that it accurately reflects individual-level preferences, subgroup differences and population-level variation.

Researchers continue to explore new ways to better measure the intention status of pregnancy by improving measurement of fertility preferences and intentions, to capture variation due to changing individual circumstances, differences in community norms and values and changes in socioeconomic and policy context. Some studies have examined the degree of intensity or strength of fertility preferences and intentions. These preferences are fluid and may change over short periods of time. In addition, retrospective measurement (commonly used by large-scale surveys) may underestimate unintended childbearing and pregnancy. In addition, dominant social norms may influence research questions and measurement, potentially overestimating unintended childbearing and pregnancy.

Research on unintended pregnancy and its two key outcomes—unplanned births (mistimed or unwanted) and induced abortions—is essential for providing the evidence base to inform policymakers as they make decisions on funding and programs, to effectively support people in achieving their reproductive goals through facilitating access to needed information and services. Monitoring progress towards global and national reproductive health and rights goals would also be well served by research on these reproductive outcomes.

Themes of interest for this seminar include:

- Papers that put forward **new ways of conceptualizing pregnancy intention status** that integrate different dimensions of the concept, including for example: the demographic dimension in terms of preferred timing of the next birth and desired number of children; gender dimension—differences in power and decision-making within a couple and their influence on fertility preferences and pregnancy intention and outcomes; social

dimension, for example societal expectations regarding the appropriate context for childbearing (unmarried, cohabiting, within marriage) and preference for sons.

- Papers that test new approaches to **improve measurement of pregnancy intention and unintended pregnancy**, for example: assessing and/or addressing the limitations of retrospective survey data; capturing variation in the strength of pregnancy intention status; investigating the relationship between strength of motivation to avoid having an unplanned birth to the decision to have an abortion. Studies investigating meanings of the intention status of pregnancy are also of interest, and are very relevant for improving measurement. Papers on these and related issues that are methodological and/or empirical would make valuable contributions to the evidence base.
- Studies that examine the **factors that underlie unintended pregnancy and abortion**: contraceptive failure, not using contraception (and wanting to avoid pregnancy); sexual violence (IPV, non-partner, incest); partner-related factors (e.g. breakup of a marriage or union, not having a partner (being unmarried); socio-economic factors (poverty, impact on continuing education, already has children and cannot afford another child, preference for sons, lack of health insurance); unexpected change in life circumstances (unemployment of woman or partner, illness of couple or family members); factors related to health of the woman or the fetus (pregnancy endangers a woman's health or life, fetal anomalies);
- Though societies have been moving toward delivery of better contraceptive services, not all women are benefiting from these changes. Also of interest to the seminar are studies that focus on the **relationship between socioeconomic disparities and socio-structural factors on the one hand and the incidence of unintended pregnancies on the other hand**—relationships that may be influenced by inequalities in access to contraceptive services.
- Studies of the **decision-making process when the unintended pregnancy has occurred**: improving understanding of how women and couples make the decision to have an abortion or to take the pregnancy to term; what are the factors that influence this choice and how does this vary across population groups and country contexts.
- Studies that focus on unplanned childbearing: **improving measurement of the planning status of births**—assessing the adequacy of categorization of unintended births as mistimed and unwanted; what is the trend in proportion of births that are unplanned and the unplanned birth rate; what factors may explain changes over time in these measures; **studies that assess the impact of unplanned births on the health and the social and economic well-being of women, children and families.**

Authors are encouraged to discuss the implications of their research findings for programs and policies. Better measurement and deeper understanding of unintended pregnancy and its key outcomes, unplanned births and induced abortion, would not only make an important contribution to monitoring progress towards global and national reproductive health and rights goals, but would also inform the development of new solutions to meet these goals, including innovations in the provision of sexual and reproductive health information and services and changing laws and policies.

The seminar will provide an opportunity for researchers to propose new approaches and methodologies, assess the advantages and disadvantages of existing methodologies, and present results from new empirical studies. Papers may be country-specific, regional or global in scope, empirical or methodological, and the seminar will aim to include studies in a range of contexts around the world. Additional aims of the seminar are to stimulate research in this area by increasing networking among researchers and facilitating linkages and coordination across disciplines, countries and research institutions. This seminar will bring together demographers, public health specialists, sociologists and anthropologists, as well as scholars from other related disciplines interested in exchanging the latest scientific knowledge on unintended pregnancy, unplanned childbearing and abortion.

Online Submissions:

The IUSSP Scientific Panel on Abortion Research invites researchers in the field to submit online by **15 March 2020** a **short 200-word abstract AND an extended abstract** (2 to 4 pages, including tables) or a full unpublished paper for consideration. To submit an abstract please fill out the online submission form on the IUSSP website: <http://iussp.org/en/iussp-seminar-submissions>.

Abstracts and papers may be submitted in English, French or Spanish. However, the working language of the meeting is English, and presentations must be made in English.

The seminar will be limited to about 20 contributed papers. Submission should be made by the author who will attend the seminar. If the paper is co-authored, please include the names of your co-authors in your submission form (in the appropriate order).

Applicants will be informed whether paper is accepted by 15 April 2020. Participants must submit their complete paper by 1 October 2020.

In addition to dissemination through posting on the member-restricted portion of the IUSSP website, seminar organizers will explore possibilities for publishing the papers as an edited volume or a special issue of a journal. Papers submitted should be unpublished and, as for a journal or an edited book, authors, by submitting a paper, agree they will not propose it for publication to another editor until the committee makes a decision with regard to their possible publication.

Current funding for the seminar is limited and efforts are under way to raise additional funds but the outcome is at this point uncertain. Participants are therefore encouraged to seek their own funding to cover the cost of their participation in the seminar. If available, funding will be restricted to IUSSP members in good standing and will be contingent upon submission of a complete paper of acceptable quality by the deadline for papers.

For further information please contact Seminar Organizers Susheela Singh (ssingh@gutmacher.org) and/or Fatima Juarez (fjuarez@colmex.mx).

IUSSP Scientific Panel on Abortion Research:

Chairs: Fatima Juarez (El Colegio de Mexico) & Susheela Singh (*Gutmacher Institute*)

Members: Harriet Birungi (*Population Council-Nairobi*); Rishita Nandagiri (London School of Economics and Political Science); Ndola Prata (*School of Public Health, University of California, Berkeley*).