

Reproductive Rights: Where do key International Organizations and my own country stand on this issue?

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THEME

Reproductive Rights

CONTEXT

The present activity connects to the reproductive rights animation film created for the Just Now project.

Reproductive rights refers to the legal ability to make decisions about when and if a person wants to have a child. Having reproductive rights means having the power of the law to protect a person's right to make one's own choices about birth control*, pregnancy**, and having children.

Women's reproductive rights have been a battleground for centuries. The struggle for reproductive rights and for women to gain control of their bodies has coincided with the general struggle for birth control, women's rights in general and social justice. In this activity plan the focus is on abortion rights, but teachers/educators can broaden this.

Cautionary Note: since this can be a sensitive topic, teachers/educators will need to proceed with caution to avoid potential parental and/or community opposition. It is therefore advised to inform other teachers/educators or the head of the school if these activities take place in a school setting.

GOALS

- Raising awareness among students/participants of key international organizations that have engaged with the issue of abortion rights
- Helping students/participants gain insight into how international organizations have dealt with this issue and differences among them in language, priorities and focus;
- Helping students/participants gain an understanding of what is happening in their own country relating to abortion rights.

METHODOLOGY

- Student/participants research
- Individual and small group work
- Presenting

* <https://www.webmd.com/sex/birth-control/default.htm>

** <https://www.webmd.com/baby/default.htm>

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students/participants gain a better understanding of key international organizations and how they have engaged with reproductive rights issues
- Students/participants gain a better understanding of the legal situation in their own country relating to reproductive rights
- Students/participants improve their research, collaboration, active listening, and discussion skills

MATERIAL & EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- Access to the internet
- Flipchart paper and markers if learners create physical posters for their presentations

Overview of activities

Duration: Appr 4 x 45 minutes

Preparation

This activity can be done at any point in the school year.

Since many international organizations use abbreviations that are not commonplace, it would be useful for educators to visit the sites of the international organizations listed below and identify in advance what these abbreviations mean. This also applies to some of the terminology used by international organizations.

The teacher/educator might want to research a few different definitions of 'reproductive rights' and have them ready to present.

PART 1: 45-50 MINUTES (PLENARY SESSION) REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Introduction: 5 minutes (plenary)

The teacher/educator briefly explains what is expected of the learners. He/she/they also goes over what has already been covered with respect to the issue of reproductive rights if anything has been done previously.

What do the students/participants know: 10 minutes (plenary)?

In a brainstorm, the teacher/educator asks how the students/participants would define 'reproductive rights'. Is it the same as 'abortion rights'? The answers can be placed on a smart board or something similar. The teacher/educator then presents the learners with a few commonplace and perhaps more official definitions.

In the English language, these could include:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/reproductive-rights>

<https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1350>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reproductive_rights

What do the students/participants know – Part 2: 15 minutes (plenary)?

The teacher/educator asks students/participants if they have recently read or seen anything on (social) media that relates to reproductive rights. A few statements are collected a bit of feedback is given.

Watching the Just Now animation film plus debrief: 15 minutes (plenary)

The class watches the short Just Now film on Reproductive Rights.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HyFZ1gtqPCc>

The teacher/educator can ask a number of questions such as:

- What have the main developments been regarding reproductive rights, as presented in the animation film?
- What do you like or dislike about this short film?
- How important do you think this topic is? In general? For young people your age?
- Why do you think this topic is so controversial?

PART 2: TWO PERIODS OF 45-50 MINUTES (SMALL GROUP WORK) INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

PERIOD 2

Introduction and settling in: 5-10 minutes

The teacher/educator mentions what was covered in the previous session to refresh the students'/participants' memory. He/she/they then introduces the second class session by explaining that multiple international organizations engaged with this issue. Can the students/participants name any international organizations they are familiar with?

Researching international organizations and their engagement with reproductive rights (rest of class period and first 15 minutes of classroom period 3)

The class is divided into 4 smaller groups. Each group assigns a facilitator, who will lead the discussion, a note taker, who will take notes during the discussion and a presenter, who will be responsible for organizing the presentation later to the full class.

Each group is given the assignment to research one of 4 organizations online:

- United Nations
- World Health Organization
- Fundamental Rights Agency
- European Parliament

The smaller groups will go online and research the following questions:

1. What is this organization and what does it do?
2. What kind of position does this international organization take when it comes to reproductive rights?
3. What does this organization argue should happen?

The following links will help the students/participants with their research:

- United Nations: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/06/joint-web-statement-un-human-rights-experts-supreme-court-decision-strike-down>
- World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240039483> Pages XIX and XX
- Fundamental Rights Agency: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/mapping-minimum-age-requirements-concerning-rights-child-eu/accessing-abortion-services>
- European Parliament: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20220603IPR32144/right-to-safe-and-legal-abortion-must-be-safeguarded-meps-demand>

PERIOD 3 (45 – 50 minutes)

The small groups finish their work and then prepare 5-minute presentations each (15 min). Each group presents what they have discovered online for 5-minutes each. The teacher/educator summarizes and helps students/participants draw conclusions.

PART 3: APPR 1 PERIOD OF 45-50 MINUTES (SMALL GROUP WORK) NATIONAL/STATE ATTITUDES AND LEGISLATION

Introduction and settling in: 5-10 minutes

The teacher/educator summarizes the previous session, answers any lingering questions and introduces the last session, which will have the students/participants research legislation in their own country/state.

Researching the attitudes and legislation in one's own country/state: 25 minutes

Students/participants go to the internet (in their same or different groups) and address one of the following questions:

1. What is the present legislation in our country/state regarding abortion?
2. How has the legislation in our country/state changed in the last 50 years
3. What do attitude surveys/studies show regarding support or rejection of abortion rights in my country/state?
4. Who were the main persons who have fought for abortion rights in my country in the past?

The small groups prepare 5-minute presentations each (preparation for 15 min). Each group presents what they have discovered online for 5 minutes each. The teacher/educator summarizes and helps students/participants draw conclusions.

Debrief: 5 – 10 minutes

The teacher/educator gives feedback, debriefs the activity and wraps up.

HOMEWORK IDEAS

Students/participants can ask their parents or other adults what they remember about past discussions in their lifetime relating to reproductive rights. Note: since this can be a sensitive topic, educators will need to proceed with caution to avoid parental opposition.

ADAPTATION ALTERNATIVES

OPTION 1: At the end of the first period or after it

If there is time the teacher/educator can ask students/participants to write down (anonymously) on a sheet of paper what they personally think about reproductive rights. This can be in the form of a short essay or by having them agree or disagree with a couple of attitude statements and give an explanation.

- I think whether to have an abortion is always up to the individual. YES?NO or Scale of agreement. I think this because.....
- I feel uncomfortable talking about this topic. YES?NO or Scale of agreement. I think this because.....
- Abortion rights are a very important topic to talk about? YES?NO or Scale of agreement. I think this because.....

Doing this optional activity will provide a classroom 'thermometer' for further discussions.

OPTION 2: Students/participants can take the initiative to invite a speaker to class or school (in person or virtual) who can present to learners about the fight for reproductive rights in one's own country or internationally, or about the present law(s).

KEY RESOURCES FOR THIS ACTIVITY PLAN

The Just Now animation film on Reproductive Rights:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HyFZ1gtqPCc>

This international timeline can also be useful:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_reproductive_rights_legislation

Also this site on the World's Abortion Laws:
<https://reproductiverights.org/maps/worlds-abortion-laws/>



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