

**Maternal and Child Epidemiology Unit**  
Department of Epidemiology and Population Sciences  
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

**Study on induced abortion among urban poor in north eastern Brazil:  
community and hospital based perspectives.**

**MCEU Staff:** Chizuru Misago, Oona M R Campbell, Walter Fonseca

**Collaborators:** Luciano Correia, Universidade Federal do Ceara, CE, Brazil;  
Marilyn Nations, Harvard University Medical School

**Timetable:** Oct92-Sep95

**Location:** Fortaleza, State of Ceara, Brazil

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Every year, an estimated 30 to 55 million induced abortions take place worldwide in response to unwanted pregnancy. About half of these induced abortions are illegal, and they can lead to appalling complications or even to maternal death. In Brazil, it is estimated that up to 4 million illegal abortions take place every year.

Despite the magnitude of this problem, relatively little research is done in this area. Examples of programmes aiming to prevent (reduce) unsafe abortion in countries where it is illegal are even rarer. This is a particularly pressing need in Fortaleza, Brazil, where the two main maternity hospitals admit over 300 cases of induced abortion per month and where local data suggest an increase in numbers of induced abortions.

This project uses several approaches to assess the extent, and possible prevention, of the problem of illegally induced abortion. Community and medical professional perspectives on induced abortion will be gauged using qualitative methods to provide a context for action. The hospital based component will capture the extent of the problem and the health and financial costs of complications of induced abortion. The contraceptive counselling and follow up of women with induced abortions will be used to evaluate post-abortion counselling as a means of preventing subsequent unwanted pregnancy. Cooperation with the State Health Secretariat and a series of workshops will ensure wide dissemination and implementation of recommendations.

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