

# **Situation of Abortion and PAC in Arab Countries**

**PAC Meeting  
12-13 May, 2010  
Alexandria, Egypt**

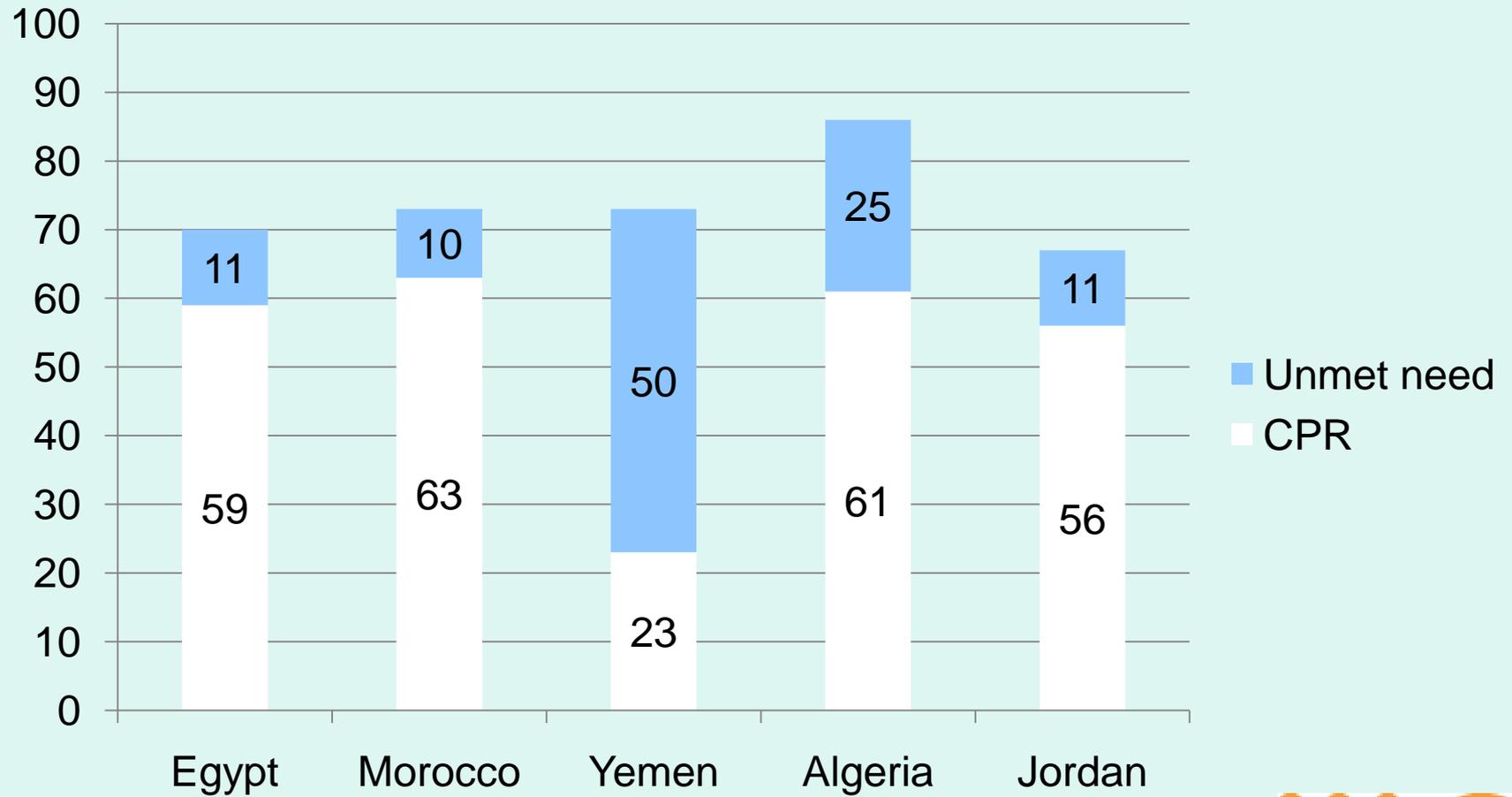


# Overview

- Abortion is one of the most neglected public health challenges in the region
- It is estimated that 1 in 4 pregnancies are unintended
- WHO estimates that unsafe abortions contribute to 11% of total maternal mortality in the region and that 1.5 million abortions were performed in unsanitary setting or by unskilled provider or both

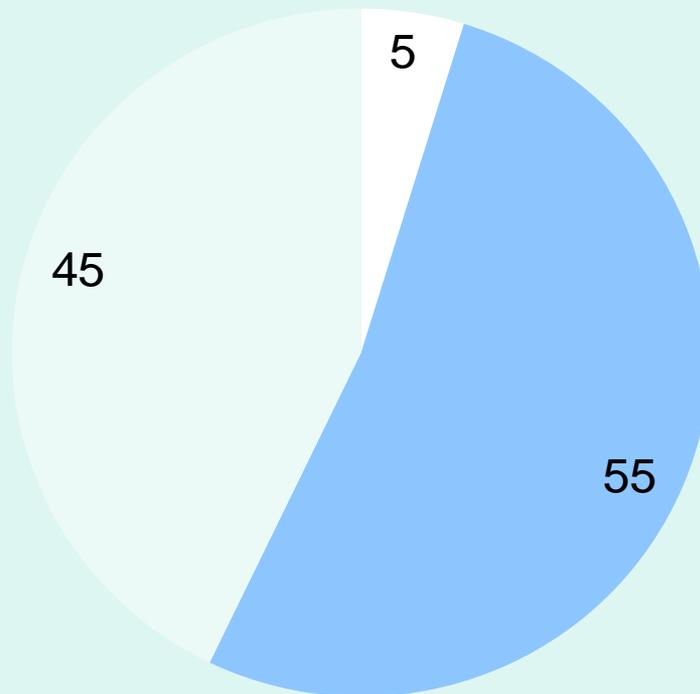


# Unmet need for Family Planning



# Variations in Abortion Laws

%of countries



- No restrictions
- Prohibited except to save woman's life
- Preserve woman's physical and mental health
-

# Evidence from Tunisia

- Tunisia was the first Muslim country to legalize abortion (2 stages 1965 and 1973)
- Maternal mortality from abortion dropped
- Recorded decrease in abortion between 1990 and 2003 (11 to 7/1000)
- First country to legalize medical abortion



# Evidence from Syria

- One of the countries that prohibit abortion except to save the woman's life
- Hosted the first conference on unsafe abortion in 1992 and concluded that abortion is a major public health hazard
- Syria conducted a survey in 2006 to assess unmet needs for family planning and unintended pregnancy
- Half the women with unintended pregnancy were using contraception of which 45% traditional and 25% pills



# Challenges

Legal frameworks and implementation of laws.

- In countries with restrictions, implementation is open to interpretation, need for several authorizations, health providers may not know the law and women are not aware of it and face challenges



# challenges

- Inadequate data and evidence to inform policy (limited studies because of the legal and social stigma)
- Health systems are not equipped to deal with abortion and post-abortion care
- Need to strengthen family planning programs to address unmet needs, reduce the use of traditional methods, ensure availability of contraceptives, and improve quality of care



# Conclusion

Regardless of the degree of legal restrictions on abortion, effective family planning use is critical to reduce unintended pregnancy and abortion.

But high rates of contraceptive use alone do not eliminate unintended pregnancy, there is a need for modern and long-term methods



# Conclusion

- Learn from experiences of countries in the region and globally by sharing and disseminating the evidence to reach policy makers
- Create local evidence by supporting more national studies
- Put family planning back on the agenda



Thank you

