

The United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) defines reproductive health as a “state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes”. In 2022, WHO shared that “almost everyone of reproductive age—about 4.3 billion people [worldwide]—will not have access to at least one essential reproductive health intervention over the course of their lives”. In addition, the issue of reproductive healthcare is a grave and deadly one: in every single day in 2020, almost 800 women died from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. The World Bank estimates that around 500 million people worldwide do not have access to basic menstrual products and hygienic bathroom facilities, making reproductive justice a critical issue for international development.

Action to improve access to reproductive healthcare is especially necessary in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to a 2021 report by the independent development and humanitarian organization Plan International, around two million women and girls in Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, and Columbia lack access to appropriate menstrual hygiene products and education resources. This issue, a subset of reproductive health is commonly referred to as “period poverty”: inadequate access to “menstrual products, hygiene facilities, waste management, and education.” (Journal of Global Health Reports)

Reproductive health also encompasses increasing access to accessible, affordable, sustainable, and high-quality contraceptives and prenatal services. In Latin America and the Caribbean, financially strained healthcare systems lead to reproductive healthcare inequities, especially in vulnerable populations such as indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ people, and refugees. In this committee, we will be discussing culturally sensitive socioeconomic and policy solutions towards reproductive justice in Latin America and the Caribbean.