

## ASSESSING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH PROVIDERS' PERCEPTIONS, KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCES WITH ABORTION

To address barriers to women's sexual and reproductive rights, *Gynuity Health Projects* conducts research that can inform and guide the provision of abortion services. In situations where access to abortion is limited, complications of unsafe abortions tend to be one of the major contributors to maternal mortality. Women's options may be further limited by health providers' unwillingness to address the issue and by poor understanding of local laws. Lack of proper training and resources to offer high-quality abortion services further limits access to safe abortion services, and even to post-abortion care.

It is important to understand the extent to which health provider perceptions and experiences shape the types and quality of abortion services available to women in various settings. *Gynuity Health Projects* partners with networks of reproductive health providers to assess the perspectives and practices of those responsible for and/or directly involved in delivering reproductive health services to women.

For example, In Latin America and the Caribbean, *Gynuity Health Projects* is collaborating with International Planned Parenthood Federation/Western Hemisphere Region (IPPF/WHR) to assess the knowledge, perceptions and experiences of thousands of providers, staff and volunteers in almost 28 country affiliates across the region. The findings of this research are intended to guide regional strategic planning for improving future interventions, including advocacy, IEC, training and other service-related activities.

The research uses confidential self-administered instruments to assess knowledge, perceptions and experiences with abortion in general, including specific abortion services such as surgical and medical methods. The research is designed to be adaptable to reproductive health networks in various settings. Some of the key issues explored in the research include:

- Knowledge and attitudes about unwanted pregnancy and abortion;
- Perceptions and beliefs about existing legislation governing women's legal access to elective abortion services;
- Attitudes and understanding of medical eligibility criteria and clinical guidelines governing access to abortion services, including post-abortion care;
- Perceptions, training, and experience with surgical and medical abortion methods;
- Preference for or bias against certain abortion services;
- Perceptions of facilitating factors and barriers to expanding legal abortions services; and
- Interest in expanding access to specific abortion services and perceived need for such an expansion.

In addition to research implementation, *Gynuity Health Projects* works collaboratively to provide technical support and strategic guidance to interested research collaborators with the aim of reducing the barriers to accessible high-quality abortion services.