

# RESEARCH REPORT

## 1. COMMITTEE: HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Topic 1:

The question of whether states should have the authority to regulate or restrict individual rights including the right to have children, as a response to overpopulation.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

The problem of overpopulation and how to handle it remains as one of the biggest problem for many states. The UN Human Rights Council counts restricting the right of an individual to have children as a violation against their human rights, which include the right to decide freely and responsibly on matters of sexuality and reproduction, free from coercion, discrimination and violence. Many still debate whether the government should or should not have that power.

## 3. KEY TERMS

### Reproductive Rights:

- Legal rights and freedoms regarding reproduction and reproductive health
- Includes access to contraception, abortion, fertility treatments, and the right to decide if and when to have children

### Overpopulation:

- Situation where the number of people exceed the carrying capacity of the environment
- Can lead to resources depletion, environmental degradation and reduced life quality

### Population Control Policy:

- Government measures aimed at influencing the reproductive behaviour of its population
- Include incentives like tax breaks for smaller families or restrictions like one-child-policies

**Bodily Autonomy:**

- Principle that individuals have control over their bodies, which include reproductive choices, and to be free from coercion or state interference

**Human rights:**

- International legal norm that protects fundamental freedoms and rights of individuals

**Coercion and choice:**

- Coercive policies mandate and pressure individuals to act in specific ways, whereas choice-based policies provide information and access without forcing an opinion on them

**4. BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANTS**

- **1948:** Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly
- **1973/2022:** Roe v. Wade decriminalises abortion nationwide (USA) based on the fourteenth Amendment's right to privacy, later (2022) got overruled by supreme court, now depends on the state law if abortion is legal or not
- **1979-2015:** Chinas one-child policy
- **1994:** International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), shifted focus from population to reproductive rights and health
- **2015:** The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) were adopted, Goal three emphasises universal access to reproductive healthcare and a better healthcare overall
- **2017 (1952/2022):** Indias launch of Mission Parivar Vikas and introduction of injectable contraceptives and oral pills under National Health policy 2017, was first county to launch a National Programme for Family planning (1952), launch of FP2030 Vision Document, which added new contraceptive choices (2022)
- **2020s:** many countries face declining fertility, and debates shift from population control to population aging and workforce problems

## 5. CURRENT SITUATION

- Many countries adapted and their people have access to reproductive healthcare, contraception, maternal care and voluntary family planning
- Progress in these fields is uneven, in some regions progress is stalling or reversing due to political, cultural and funding pressures as well as pandemics, conflicts and polarised domestic politics

## 6. KEY COUNTRY POSITIONS

### **China:**

- Historically implemented strict population controls, like the one-child policy
- Justified restrictions due to rapid population growth and resource limits
- Faced criticism for human rights abuses, like forced sterilisation, fines, and coercion
- Currently shifting toward pro-natalist policies due to the aging population

### **India:**

- Early aggressive family planning in the 1970s sparked controversy
- Current policy emphasises voluntary, informed choice access to contraception

### **United States:**

- Deeply divided
- Many states restrict abortion and reproductive services
- Others protect reproductive rights via legislation

### **France:**

- Generally, supports reproductive rights
- Offers incentives for families like parental leave and tax benefits
- Focuses on choice and support rather than restriction

### **Saudi Arabia:**

- Policies influenced by religious and cultural norms
- Traditionally pro-natalist with significant support for families
- Reproductive rights are shaped within broader religious frameworks

**Brazil:**

- Varied policies, abortion mostly restricted except in limited cases
- Growing civil society advocacy for reproductive rights

**7. CONCLUSION**

The issue of whether states should regulate individual reproductive rights in response to overpopulation touches on fundamental questions of human rights, state authority, ethics, and socio-economic priorities. Historical experience suggests that coercive policies often lead to human rights violations, while rights-based approaches emphasise dignity, choice, and support. In modern policy debates, balancing sustainable development with individual freedoms stays central.