

## Reproductive rights – the choice of contraception. A perspective from Madagascar

The World Health Organization (WHO) states that access to contraceptive information and services are fundamental to the health and human rights of all individuals. Use, access and perception of contraception is very different among countries and a huge gap exists between high- and low-income countries.

Fiona Franz, a medical student of our group is spending a 6-months period in Madagascar to collect data for her thesis. She is a member of the national board of the non-profit association *pro familia* (<https://www.profamilia.de/en/about-pro-familia/the-association>) in Germany. Pro familia fights for all matters concerning sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) including contraception, abortion rights and access to reproductive technologies. Fiona is also a co-founder and activist of the Hamburg chapter of *Medical Students for Choice* advocating for reproductive justice.

In Madagascar she is collecting data among women and stakeholders in the field of reproductive health in order to understand how contraceptives are used and perceived in the country.

### Fiona, can you tell us something about your work in Germany?

*In Germany my voluntary work consists of different aspects. With pro familia we do advocacy work for topics concerning reproductive and sexual health and rights. As an association of professionals in the field and the biggest association doing family planning consultations and comprehensive sex education, we also consult the politics in these matters. Here we emphasize on what is recommended by the WHO to improve reproductive and sexual health in the population. In this context we also advocate for free contraceptives with an eye on other countries where this is already implemented. I'm also in contact with other member associations of the IPPF (International planned parenthood federation) that are distributed worldwide to share experiences and learn from each other.*

*Besides this, I work in the student organisation "Medical Students for Choice" in Hamburg, where we raise awareness on feminist medicine and reproductive justice. On the practical side we provide information and training on abortion care to fellow medical and midwifery students.*



*Discussing family planning with midwives, Mahajanga Madagascar*



*Contraceptive board from CSBs in Madagascar*

### Why do you think it is important to understand the motivations driving women towards the use of contraception?

*When we talk about sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) we also talk about bodily autonomy and choice. Meaning the goal is that every person should have the right to decide if, when and how often they want to reproduce. According to the WHO "Choice is at the heart of fertility decisions" (<https://www.who.int/news/item/22-06-2022-promoting-contraception-choice-for-every-individual>). However, simply providing enough contraceptives is not enough. It is especially important to make sure that the choice is a real choice and to make women aware of their rights.*

*We need to have a look at the question: "Is the selection of contraceptives due to financial and social reasons truly a matter of bodily autonomy and personal choice?" That is why in the discussion on reproduction we rather use the term and framework of reproductive justice as it includes social barriers and inequalities that we need to overcome in order to have reproductive choice.*

Data collection has started on 5<sup>th</sup> July and the study of Fiona will apply a mixed method approach based on quantitative and qualitative research methods. Through the qualitative methodologies based on focus group discussions and in depth interviews, we will take advantage of discussing with women combining health promotion and health education messages that we hope will help women to access services or at least to be aware of their availability.