



**SOCIAL PARTICIPATION FOR REDUCING
UNSAFE ABORTION IN URUGUAY.
The role of local organizations in the implementation
of an unsafe abortion prevention strategy.**

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MYSU

WOMEN AND HEALTH IN URUGUAY

Created in 1996 with the mission of:

- *defending women rights to decide*
- *promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights*
- *advocating for women´s empowerment*

AREAS OF WORK

- Advocacy: in the definition, implementation and evaluation of comprehensive policies and legislation on sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Training – courses: health care providers and social scientist in sexual and reproductive health and rights from a gender and generation approach.
- Promoting women rights: at national and community levels.
- Developing research: National Observatory on Gender and Sexual and Reproductive Health
- Building alliances: with different stakeholders

LEGAL CONTEXT AND POLITICAL DEBATE ON ABORTION IN URUGUAY

- ❑ Since 1938 abortion has been considered as a crime in all circumstances by Act N° 9763.
- ❑ Since 1985, the political and social debate on abortion has been installed in the Uruguayan society. The polls indicate that most of 65 % of population is in favour women rights to decide about an abortion until 12 weeks of pregnancy.
- ❑ During 2001 – 2004 the National Congress debated a bill for changing the law. The parliamentary result was negative, in that occasion. But society has been actively involved in the debate.
- ❑ Actually, there is a new initiative in the discussion. It's a bill that recognizes sexual and reproductive rights and specifically the right of every woman to access to legal abortion until 12 weeks of pregnancy. During October, this bill is being discussed by Senators Chamber.

UNSAFE ABORTION IN URUGUAY

- ❑ In August 2004, the Ministry of Health approved a national health regulation to prevent and reduce unsafe abortion in the restrictive legal context.
- ❑ This regulation is being implemented in a few public health care services since its creation.
- ❑ This Health Regulation is important because:
 - ❑ Facilitate that a woman in an unwanted / unintended pregnancy could receive orientation and assistance to take a decision, in the health care services.
 - ❑ Promote that providers could be sensibilized in women rights to decide.
 - ❑ Contribute to the transformation of the hegemonic and patriarchal culture in health care services. Generate a “better scenario” for future legal abortion services.

AT THE SAME TIME:

- ❑ Abortion is considered as a crime.
- ❑ Women who decide to practice abortion must go to the clandestine circuit (also to buy misoprostol)
- ❑ Physicians training, public health policies and health care services has been oriented to care pregnancies, perinatal process and new borns.
- ❑ It's necessary to build a new agreement between physicians and women in terms of trust and credibility based on a new ethical perspective.
- ❑ The Health Regulation is not being implemented in all health care services.
- ❑ Population and specially women are lack of information about this regulation.

BECAUSE OF THAT

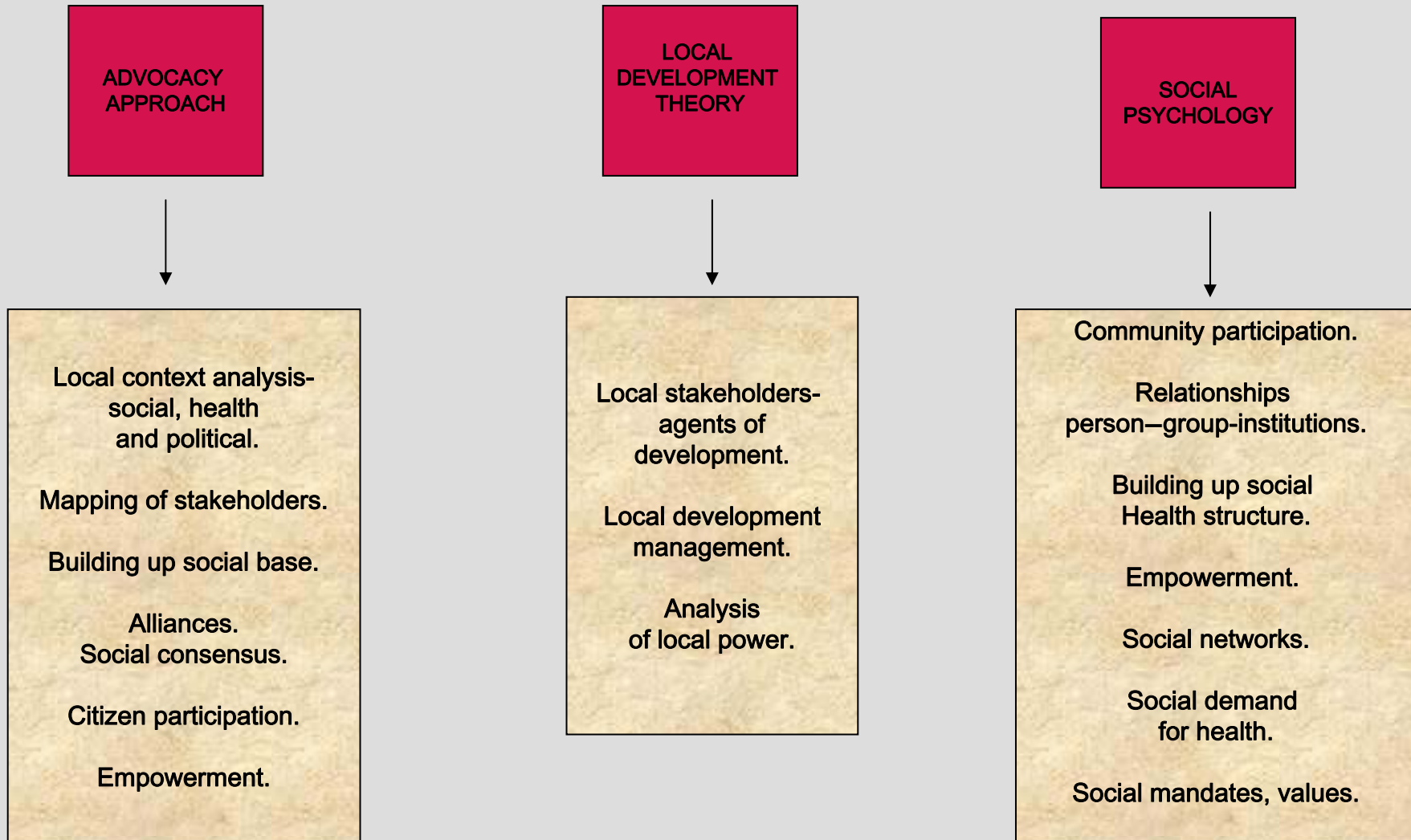
MYSU has been developed a double strategy with the purpose of:

- *changing the legal context*

AND

- *reducing unsafe abortion and promoting sexual and reproductive rights (working at communitary level)*

Conceptual framework



Intervention in community levels

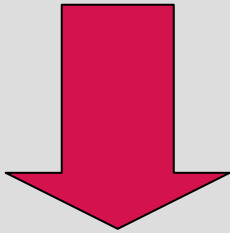
Communities are unique in terms of:

- **Local culture.**
- **Codes, practices, standards.**
- **Politics.**
- **Heads and local political leaders.**
- **Means of social management.**
- **Community participation.**
- **Local social agenda: demand articulation**
- **Public relations between the population and local institutions/health centers.**
- **Proximity.**
- **Legitimacy.**
- **Local demand.**



**Local-Global
Relations**

ANALYSIS of LOCAL CONTEXT (COMMUNITY LEVEL)

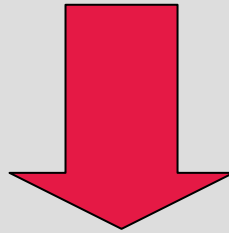


HEALTH

Incidence of unwanted pregnancy and abortion.

Mortality and morbidity due to unsafe abortion.

Existing health services.



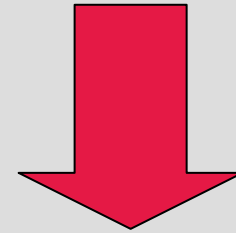
POLITICAL

Local stakeholders.

Correlation of forces.

Predominant political positions.

Existing alliances.



SOCIO-CULTURAL

Social demand.

Levels of acceptance of abortion practice.

Local agenda.

Cultural barriers.

Local values and beliefs.

Ethics principles

- **Sustainability. Local organizations capacity – building.**
- **Working *WITH* the community and not *TOWARD* the community.**
- **Reliability. Credibility. Flexibility.**
- **Knowledge and comprehension of local people points of view.**
- **Recognition of the community knowledge.**
- **Search for local cooperation, strengthening of local partnerships.**
- **Promotion of women empowerment and community participation.**
- **Building up women citizenship so they can demand their rights to decide.**