



Let's take action!

Abortion is healthcare



International Safe Abortion Day

This **September 28 International Safe Abortion** global day of action, WGNRR Africa calls its members, partners, allies, governments, private sector, communities, men and boys, and the entire SRHR movement to take action on preventing unsafe abortion in Africa.

#AbortionIsHealthcare

Unintended and unwanted pregnancy and abortion are part of women's lives: 25% of all pregnancies worldwide ended in an induced abortion, 4.7-13.2% of maternal deaths are attributable to unsafe abortion, most in the poorest countries 25 million abortions each year are unsafe, and 7 million women and girls end up in hospital needing treatment for complications of unsafe abortions[1].

In Africa, approximately 90% of African women of childbearing age still live in countries with restrictive abortion laws.[2] And even where the law allows abortion under certain circumstances, the majority of African women including survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, are unable to navigate the processes required to access a safe abortion services. The African Union has acknowledged unsafe abortion as a major public health concern and has adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (hereafter the Maputo Protocol).[3] This protocol which features article 14 guarantees women's right to health and reproductive rights. This monumental protocol has been ratified by 36 out of 55 African countries with some reservations on clauses on access to safe and legal abortion. But while African women are dying from preventable deaths, the adoption and implementation of the Protocol is still subject of controversy in many African countries!

Africa is the world region with the highest number of abortion-related deaths. In 2014, at least 9% of maternal deaths (or 16,000 deaths) in Africa were from unsafe abortion,[4] and nearly seven per 1,000 women of reproductive age in Africa were treated for complications from unsafe abortion. About 1.6 million women in the region are treated for such complications each year.[5] But in Africa, abortion is a taboo topic surrounded by myths and misinformation that propel stigma. The stigma associated with abortion and anyone associated with, i.e. women, providers, pharmacists and advocates in our respective countries—contributes to abortion’s social, medical and legal marginalization. The entire communities separate, stereotype and discriminate against women and girls who need abortions and those attempting to help them to access this healthcare service. Paradoxically, silence, stigmatization and restrictions around abortion do not inhibit its practice; they only force many African women to turn to unsafe practices risking thus their health and lives. Health providers are also shamed and not supported by the health systems even under the grounds permitted by the law, and abortion health care services are eroded due to lack of adequate personnel, budgets and management systems.

Almost all complications and deaths from unsafe abortion could be prevented if safe abortion were accessible, affordable and available from the healthcare services in our countries – the means, the technology and skills all exist and can be provided at very low cost if the will exists to provide them.

The fact is, abortion is an essential part of women’s sexual and reproductive lives and health and is integral part of women’s right to bodily autonomy. And the human right to life and to health can only be achieved for women and girls if they have access to safe abortion if and when they need it.

As the world is heading up to International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD+25) Nairobi summit it’s an opportune moment to ensure our governments are held to account on the commitment’s they made in 1994. Advocates should review and protect the gains made, and accelerate the ICPD Plan of Action (PoA) to ensure that no one is left behind.

TIME HAS COME FOR OUR REGIONAL MOBILIZATION AND COLLECTIVE INVOLVEMENT IN ENSURING THAT SAFE ABORTION SERVICES IS A HEALTHCARE GUARANTEED UNDER THE GROUNDS DEFINED BY THE REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK, ESPECIALLY THE MAPUTO PROTOCOL.



[1] WHO data, 2018

[2] <https://www.gutmacher.org/report/africa-regional-conference-abortion-research-policy-conference-declaration>

[3] African Union, Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, 11 July 2003

[4] Unpublished data from Singh S, Darroch JE and Ashford LS, Adding It Up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health 2014, New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2014.

[5] Singh S and Maddow-Zimet I, Facility-based treatment for medical complications resulting from unsafe pregnancy termination in the developing world, 2012: a review of evidence from 26 countries, BJOG, 2015, doi:10.1111/1471-0528.13552.



WHAT IS 28 SEPTEMBER CAMPAIGN?

28 September is International Safe Abortion Day is part of campaigning and advocacy activities undertaken to build an international movement for universal access to safe and legal abortion, from a human rights and reproductive justice approach. 28 September has been a regional campaign for the decriminalization of abortion in Latin America and the Caribbean since 1990, and in 2011 SRHR activists from all over the world has taken on 28 September as a Global Day of Action for Access to Safe and Legal Abortion. In 2018, Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights, International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion, Campaña 28 de Septiembre LAC (Campaña Nacional por el Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito-Argentina), Asia Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), and Asia Safe Abortion Partnership (ASAP), with the support of many other partners, jointly launched International Safe Abortion Day as the official day for 28 September campaigning activities.

For more information, visit www.september28.org

**MEN AND BOYS AS
ALLIES OF WOMEN AND
WOMEN'S RIGHTS
ORGANIZATIONS IN
ADVOCATING
FOR SRHR INCLUDING
THE RIGHT TO ACCESS
SAFE ABORTION**

Abortion is a societal issue. There is always a man behind every abortion. Abortion is, therefore, a men's issue too! Sadly, men make up the overwhelming majority of the anti-choice movement. Many men seem perfectly comfortable speaking out in favor of controlling women's bodies. It is time for pro-choice men—to speak out. Pro-choice men oppose sexual abuse, reproductive coercion and promote sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Restricting safe abortion services is a form of gender-based violence. Controlling a woman's reproductive choices—including access to abortion—is a form of individual and state-sponsored control over a woman's body. If men are speaking out against all other forms of violence against women, then they should speak out against this form of violence, too.

Men should support as allies in defending existing safe abortion legislation and its implementation, opposing restrictive laws and policies, challenging stigma and discrimination, and in advocating for the women and pregnant people's right to safe and legal abortion.



TACTICS TO REACH YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS:

There are a lot of different ways to create change. Challenging our families, our friends, and using our privilege to make the world more equitable is the work that must be done. Talking about abortion and dismantling stigma is contributing to our future and the future of many girls and women around the world.

- Engage in candid two/three way conversations about abortion: remember these are your friends and family, you want this to be an informal light conversation.
- Non-judgmentally solicit views: Make them feel comfortable stating their views.
- Listen actively: Ask follow-up questions about their experiences/knowledge on the topic to solicit details without being confrontational.
- Model vulnerability: You can start by sharing your stories and why you are passionate about advocating for access to safe and legal abortion to facilitate friends and family sharing theirs.
- Connect on values : You and your friends/family might not be in complete agreement about the issue but you can create a connection based on experiences that reinforce an important value relevant to the issue.

Sometimes, we are removing layers of stigma which allows people to admit how they really feel about abortion. Not everyone is open to having their opinions changed. It's okay if we cannot completely change someone's stance, this doesn't mean that your conversation was unsuccessful or a waste of time. Sometimes a single conversation isn't enough, but we're sowing seeds that might make them think more later on.

TAKE ACTION!

This September 28, International Safe Abortion day, WGNRR Africa and partners call upon different stakeholders to take specific actions to ensure that abortion health care services are:

Available: comprehensive, integrated and rights-based abortion and Post Abortion care (PAC) needs to be available to all African women without discrimination and coercion related to age, health condition, disability, marital status or place of residence.

Accessible: Ensure that women have no geographical and environmental restrictions to access these services, are well informed of products, procedures and health services that are specific to them; and that there is a network of clinics and pharmacies that provide discreet safe and legal abortion and comprehensive post abortion services.

Affordable: Products, procedures and services shall be at affordable prices and able to be met by majority of women.

Of Quality: Providing effective, safe, people-centered care that is timely, equitable, integrated and efficient to women and girls in our communities.



10 supporters of abortion rights: Take action on 28 September! How will you mark September 28th?

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS TO MARK 28 SEPTEMBER:

- Organise **Abortion Speak Out** such as festival, forum, meeting, workshop/training, cultural event.
- Spread the Word! Use every possible platform such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, blogs, print and digital media platforms, statements & press releases, podcasts, videos, webinars, posters, banners and infographics.
- Join the Tweet-a-thon – 27 September 2019A tweet-a-thon is a “storm” of tweets. Let’s all start tweeting at 12 noon in our local time zones. Using the theme, hashtag and tagline above, send out tweets relevant to your local and national situation, and/or use the sample tweets below.
- Create safe spaces and times to discuss maternal mortality in relation to unsafe abortion.
- Host Community Dialogues where men and boys shall be involved in discussion around the male responsibility on sexual and reproductive health.
- Listen and collect stories without judgment about women’s abortion experiences; make visible sufferance of women who have been stigmatized in seeking or undergoing abortion
- Ask our government to domesticate the regional frameworks that create a friendly environment that ensures access to safe and legal abortion and that ensure that training health care providers on abortion and comprehensive post abortion care.
- Call government to allocate adequate budgets for AAAQ abortion health care services in facilities nationwide.

KEY MESSAGES

We call on all government’s that have ratified the Maputo Protocol to lift the reservation on Article 14.2 [i]

On the ICPD+25 summit, ensure progressive commitments are re-affirmed by member states to ensure access to safe and legal abortion as right that women should have access to.

Have real conversation about Stigma surrounding abortion and how it also intersects with pervasive power relations, patriarchal norms, wrongful gender stereotypes, and privileged identity markers.

Leave the decision to have an abortion in the hands of pregnant women, girls, trans men and gender non-conforming people.

TAG AND SHARE WITH US THROUGH OUR SOCIAL MEDIA HANDLES



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Abortion is healthcare

#MyAbortionMyHealth

My right to decide!



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