

**ADVOCATING FOR SAFE
ABORTION AND POST
ABORTION CARE SERVICES**
A Simple Guide For Youth Advocates



Uganda Youth and Adolescents
Health Forum





WHAT IS ABORTION

Abortion is the ending of a pregnancy by removal or expulsion of an embryo or fetus.

Types of abortion (safe & unsafe)

- Safe abortion is a procedure for termination of a pregnancy done by a trained healthcare worker using a recommended method appropriate to the pregnancy duration in an environment conforming to minimal medical standards in a healthcare facility.
- Unsafe abortions are done by untrained individuals using unsafe methods (such as insertion of foreign sharp objects, herbal/traditional medicine) in an environment not conforming to medical standards and these increase risk of severe complications or death.

45%

OF ALL
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ARE UNSAFE

Almost all of these unsafe abortions occur in developing countries

- Worldwide, 25 million unsafe abortions (45% of all abortions) occur every year. Almost all of these unsafe abortions take place in developing countries.
- Abortion in Uganda like in other African countries such as Nigeria is legal only when performed to save a woman's life.
- Ugandan law does not mean that abortion is legal but it is rather restrictive. Every woman has the recognized human right to decide freely and responsibly without coercion and violence the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of SRH.
- In Uganda young women & girls are less privileged of the society less likely to access contraception services. Moreover, more than half of pregnancies in Uganda are unintended and nearly one third of these end up in abortion. Unsafe abortions and its complications account for 5% of maternal deaths in Uganda (Annual Health sector performance report 2018/2019).
- Safe abortion is heavily restricted in Uganda, yet gender inequality and sexual violence are widespread. People are learning about safe abortion and fewer girls are dying.

WHO IS AT RISK OF UNSAFE ABORTION

Any woman including adolescents with an unwanted pregnancy who cannot access safe abortion. Deaths and injuries are higher when unsafe abortion is performed later in pregnancy. The rate of unsafe abortions is higher where access to effective contraception and safe abortion is limited or unavailable.

Some signs and symptoms

Abnormal vaginal bleeding, abdominal pain (usually lower), infection, shock

Dangers or effects of unsafe abortion

- Failure to remove all of the pregnancy products from the uterus (incomplete abortion)
- Heavy bleeding (hemorrhage)
- Infections
- When the uterus is pierced by a sharp object it can rot (uterine perforation) and may be removed
- Damage to internal organs- through inserting dangerous objects such as sticks, knitting needles, or broken glass into the vagina or anus.

Common unsafe ways of conducting abortion

- Intake of local herbs/medicine, harmful substances
- Insertion of sharp objects & prickers into the cervix via the vagina
- Procedure conducted by untrained health provider & in an unsafe environment
- Inappropriate intake of proven medicine such as in overdoses, self medication
- Application of external force(s)



How unsafe abortion exposes young people to life risks

Unsafe abortion procedures as mentioned above may cause damage to other body organs, lead to formation of pus and bad smell from the private parts and may eventually lead to death/loss of life.

Why safe abortion

- To protect the life of women or girls
- To protect her physical or mental health
- In cases of rape or sexual abuse
- Detected serious abnormality on the fetus
- Socio-economic reasons
- At the woman's or girls request

BARRIERS & LEGAL ISSUES TO SAFE ABORTION

Women, including adolescents, with unwanted pregnancies often resort to unsafe abortion when they cannot access safe abortion. Access to safe abortion protects women's and girls' health and human rights.

Barriers

- Poor availability of abortion services.
- High cost of safe abortion procedure.
- Stigma
- Health care workers constantly not accepting to provide abortion services.
- Unnecessary requirements, such as waiting times, mandatory counseling, provision of misleading information, and sometimes medically unnecessary tests that delay care.
- The refusal of health professionals, educators and parents/guardians to provide information to young women (and men) on sex, sexuality and SRH.

Legal issues

- Restrictive laws abortion & its provision
- The refusal of health professionals, religious groups, educational or judicial institutions to allow or provide abortion information, referrals or services to young women and girls.
- The imposition of 'extra' requirements for young women who want to access abortion services such as a consent.
- A lack of respect for or recognition of young women's right to privacy when seeking out abortion services as a result of a perception that they are not capable of making such decisions on their own or require the participation of parents or other responsible adults in making that decision, and
- Judgmental attitudes held and expressed by health professionals that mean young women and girls do not feel comfortable accessing abortion.

Note: Every individual has the right to decide freely and responsibly without discrimination, coercion and violence the number, spacing and timing of their children, and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of SRH (ICPD 1994). Access to legal, safe and comprehensive abortion care, including post-abortion care, is essential for the attainment of the highest possible level of SRH.

DOS AND DON'TS ON ABORTION

Do's

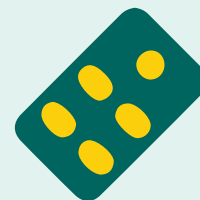
- Be aware of abortion laws in your country
- Know trusted medical abortion providers within your area.
- Do fully understand the medical abortion process

Don'ts

- Don't use herbs or home remedies
- If you live in a place where abortion is legally restricted, do not admit to using the abortion pills.

Common myths and misconceptions on safe abortion

- Having an abortion has higher health risks than continuing a pregnancy and going through childbirth
- Having an abortion may stop me from having children in the future.
- Women and girls use abortion instead of contraception
- Abortion causes emotional/ mental harm
- Only young and/or irresponsible women choose abortion



ADVOCATING FOR SAFE ABORTION

Brain Teaser		Your response (True-T/False-F)	
1	Unsafe abortions can be prevented		
2	An abortion done by a qualified medical practitioner in a safe environment may less likely lead to death		
3	Having an unsafe abortion done may lead to death		
4	A wide range of health care workers can provide various aspects of medical abortion services		
5	Using contraception can reduce the risk of unsafe abortion among women and young people		

PUTTING WORDS INTO ACTION: Partnering to prevent unsafe abortion

- Almost every abortion death and disability could be prevented through sexuality education, use of effective contraception, provision of safe, non-discriminatory post abortion care services.
- Provide comprehensive sexuality education including information on contraception and its counseling; provision of safe legal induced abortion, and timely access to safe abortion care for complications to lead to improved outcomes in SRHR mainly for women and girls.
- Access to modern contraception and comprehensive abortion care services are crucial to avoid an increase in unintended pregnancies and subsequent unsafe abortions.
- Community attitudes have been transformed and social stigma has started to give way to human rights and understanding.
- Stronger partnerships at the global, regional and country level promote successful strategies for ensuring these essential health services and human rights.



SAFE ABORTION SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- Advocacy efforts towards starting up new services & upgrading the existing ones
- Fair & equal treatment from service providers
- Enabling youth – Friendly environment
- Ample of information
- Bridge the information with back-up of confidential services
- Organized efforts on the part of [government organizations] & [non-governmental organizations]
- Respect our decision
- Trust us
- Informed choices
- Off with the myths and misconceptions
- Need your support



References

<https://www.ippf.org/safe-abortion-uganda> (Accessed 2/15/2021)
<https://www.who.int/news/item/28-09-2020-international-safe-abortion-day> (Accessed 2/16/2021)





A wide range of health care workers can provide various aspects of safe medical abortion services



Advocating for safe abortion



An abortion done by a qualified medical practitioner may less likely lead to death



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