cries & whispers
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UNTOLD STORIES OF UNSAFE ABORTION

A publication by Marie Stopes International
Information is power. It is the most effective weapon against ignorance and fear. I am honoured to be given this opportunity to express support and enthusiasm for Marie Stopes International’s publication *cries & whispers*, a powerful testament to the rights of women everywhere to have access to a safe abortion.

Female testimonies of courage in the face of adversity are a key part of Marie Claire’s editorial mix. Our aim is to be a forum for ordinary women who may otherwise be denied the opportunity to share their story. Similarly, the voices in *cries & whispers* are an urgent reminder that not all women are lucky enough to have free and easy access to important health information and services. Even as I write this, I am painfully aware of the fact that women in Northern Ireland are still unable to benefit from the 1967 Abortion Act and have to leave their homeland to get what is available to the rest of Britain.

According to the latest World Health Organization figures, an estimated 68,000 women die every year as a result of unsafe “backstreet” abortions, with thousands more suffering permanent disability. This is an intolerable situation for any civilised society. Without organisations such as Marie Stopes International, millions more would be denied help when most in need. An unwanted pregnancy is almost always a cause for extreme stress but when denied access to contraceptive information or a safe termination, many women resort to unthinkable practices rather than proceed with a pregnancy. Experiences such as this are encapsulated in the tragic testimonies over the following pages.

I want to salute these brave women who make up the bulk of the text in *cries & whispers*. The editors have chosen, rightly, not to edit their speech but to retain the nuances and idioms of the original voice. The result is heartfelt and powerful. What these women want is control of their own bodies. I applaud the noble efforts of Marie Stopes International for bringing us their stories and ask you to do what you can to support their ongoing efforts.
INTRODUCTION
Dana Hovig, Chief Executive, Marie Stopes International

Marie Stopes International (MSI) workers from around the world gathered the testimonies in this book. Many of these testimony givers came to MSI’s centres to find help after they, or members of their family or friends, had experienced an illegal abortion. For so many of these women, ‘illegal’ also meant ‘unsafe’ abortion. Over and over again, women told MSI that they would rather risk their lives than continue with the pregnancy. “Better dead than pregnant”, as one Kenyan doctor was told by his young, dying patient.

No woman should have to face this choice.

Yet every year at least 68,000 women die from botched abortions; that’s the equivalent of one woman dying every eight minutes. Millions more suffer long term damage or disease as a result of severe complications caused by unsafe abortion. In some countries women are forced to continue with their pregnancies when they can’t find or afford an illegal practitioner, only to dump their newborn babies in bus shelters and dustbins in the middle of the night and leave them to die from exposure. In Afghanistan, MSI’s local Partner has been told by clients how they asked friends to ‘help them’ by beating their stomachs with rocks while they stood against a wall, inducing haemorrhage. In Sri Lanka, a young woman came to one of MSI’s centres in agony from an infection caused by a stick that had been forced into her uterus to induce bleeding. She was taken to the hospital but later died of the infection, leaving behind three young children.

We would not tolerate this situation in the UK – nor in any of the rich industrialised nations. So why is so little done to help these women? Is it because their lives are not valued? No excuse is acceptable. Unsafe abortion is the most easily preventable cause of maternal death and disability.

One of the best ways to reduce unsafe abortion is by preventing unplanned pregnancies in the first place. This means widespread access to and information about a broad range of effective contraceptive methods. Where abortion is an option, women should have access to safe and appropriate services with fully trained providers.

MSI delivers comprehensive reproductive health services to millions of low-income women, couples and adolescents in nearly 40 countries worldwide every year. The organisation has worked long and hard to safeguard reproductive rights and highlight the link between reproductive health and poverty. But governments and international funders are inclined to cherry pick those elements of reproductive health and rights that least offend their sensibilities – or their politics. All too often the needs of women with unplanned pregnancies are ignored or sidestepped.

This publication has been made possible because of the bravery and honesty of all those who took the time to tell us their stories. There are women like these all over the developing world who deserve to be heard. We hope that their stories will move those with power and resources to step up and take action to end the suffering.

That time is now.
All governments and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are urged to strengthen their commitment to women's health, to deal with the health aspect of unsafe abortion as a major public health concern and to reduce the recourse to abortion through expanded and improved family planning services. Prevention of unintended pregnancies must always be given the highest priority and every attempt should be made to eliminate the need for abortion. Women who have unintended pregnancies should have ready access to reliable information and compassionate counselling. Any measures or changes related to abortion within the health system can only be determined at the national or local level according to the national legislative process. In circumstances where abortion is not against the law, such abortion should be safe. In all cases, women should have access to quality services for management of complications arising from abortion. Post-abortion counselling, education and family-planning services should be offered promptly, which will also help to avoid repeat abortions.

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION ESTIMATES THAT AROUND THE WORLD NEARLY 68,000 WOMEN DIE EVERY YEAR FROM COMPLICATIONS OF UNSAFE ABORTION. THIS TRANSLATES TO APPROXIMATELY 190 DEATHS PER DAY; ABOUT THE EQUIVALENT OF A FATAL JUMBO JET CRASH WITH NEARLY 400 PEOPLE ON BOARD EVERY TWO DAYS YEAR ROUND. HOW DOES DEATH ON SUCH A MASSIVE DAILY SCALE NOT RAISE A GLOBAL OUTCRY? THE ONLY POSSIBLE EXPLANATION IS THAT SOCIETIES DO NOT VALUE THE LIVES OR CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN ENOUGH TO RAISE THE ALARM.
I’ll never forget, one night I was in my room and one of my friends came. She was haemorrhaging and it wouldn’t stop. She told me that she had taken some pills. I was so scared when I saw her like that. I told her that we had to go to the hospital but she didn’t want to because they would give us trouble. I told her she could die but she said no. She kept fainting so I took her to the hospital.

When we got to the hospital the doctors treated us very badly. They didn’t want to care for her even though she was dying. They kept asking what she had done, what she had taken. I told them that didn’t matter, that they had to take care of her. But they didn’t want to care for her. Then there was this student that we knew. He was doing his internship and I begged him on my knees to care for her. He saw how desperate I was and so they put her in the operating theatre and we waited for her to come out.

One of the nurses came and she started to ask questions as if she was a police woman. She asked me where my friend had bought the pills. She needed to know to have the chemist shut down. God knows, my friend was between life and death and if she had bled more she would have died. We barely had a few seconds to get her treated and they kept asking all these questions.

The only thing I knew was that she had come to my room in that state and the only thing I could do was help her. I couldn’t leave her bleeding. I didn’t even care if they took me to jail. I was so tired of them.

That was a horrible experience and she was alone because the boy never showed up, not even a week or a month later. He disappeared.”
Most of the hospitals in this country are filled with women in this condition – about 50% of women patients who are suffering from incomplete abortion, septic, infected. Half of these women will die.

Doctor, Marie Stopes International Ethiopia

“A straightforward public health problem with a known solution has been allowed to become the killing fields of women in developing countries, particularly Africa.”

Fred Sai, Special Adviser to the President of Ghana

“Abortion should be safe, legal and rare.”

Bill Clinton, former president of the United States
"I was born 18 years ago. I couldn’t go beyond primary school since my parents died. I’m living with my grandmother. I got pregnant by accident. I was just earning my bread from sex. I decided on my own to abort. A traditional healer gave me some local herbs to drink but it was unsuccessful. I decided to go to hospital and talk to a doctor whom I believed was sympathetic and he carried out the abortion. I couldn’t change my mind since if I was to proceed with that pregnancy where I could get money to feed myself and take care of that child?"

"I went to school but couldn’t continue after I got pregnant. I fell in love with a soldier who impregnated me. I was 14 years old. I used to play sex with that soldier without protection. I didn’t like it and I decided to have an abortion."

"Once my sister’s husband raped me. I felt so bad mentally and physically because this was a man I respected. I told him and he advised me to get an abortion. I knew I could not continue with this pregnancy. First, I didn’t want my sister to know that her husband had made me pregnant. Secondly, I would like to continue with my studies. I couldn’t explain to my parents. I couldn’t ever stand the shame and blame. I have moved out of my sister’s house to avoid further torture."

"I am living with HIV. What I fear is that we might get a child who is HIV positive and I would die tomorrow and leave this child with all that difficulty. I don’t have a father, I don’t have any other person who would look after a child especially one with this kind of status. So I was not really comfortable having another child."
Before I married him, he had a wife who died. His parents asked my parents if their son could marry me and my daddy accepted, little knowing that the man was HIV positive. I got pregnant and delivered the first child normally, but during the second pregnancy I had problems and I was operated on. I started feeling sick and we decided to go for the HIV/AIDS test at the AIDS Information Centre. My husband was positive and I was negative. So we were told to abstain from sex or to use condoms but my husband refused. Again I got pregnant and I didn’t deliver normally, instead I was operated on. The doctor told me not to get pregnant until the baby was two years old.

I decided that we should go back for the HIV/AIDS test and this time we both tested positive and they told me to stop breastfeeding my baby at three months old. We went for the TB test and my husband was negative and I was positive. I was put on TB treatment immediately. After nine and a half months I found out that I was pregnant again and I decided to carry out the abortion. Although my husband had forbidden me from carrying out an abortion because he wanted the baby, I couldn’t agree because of my own health and the doctor’s advice. I had to have the abortion to save my life for a while.
“THIS DECISION, WHICH IS ONE OF THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL, DIFFICULT AND SOUL-SEARCHING DECISIONS A WOMAN AND A FAMILY CAN MAKE, IS ALSO ONE IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD HAVE NO ROLE. I BELIEVE WE CAN ALL RECOGNISE THAT ABORTION IN MANY WAYS REPRESENTS A SAD, EVEN TRAGIC CHOICE TO MANY, MANY WOMEN.”

US Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton
At first I was happy. I didn’t mind losing a semester and having the baby and then continuing with my career. I was paying for school on my own. My partner was an older man, with a career – a lawyer. He knew I wanted to be a professional. But then when I told him I was pregnant, he turned around and left. I felt horrible. I thought he was different. All the time we had shared together. All the things that he had said and done. None of that mattered. In the end, at the most important time, he abandoned me. I cried until I had no tears left.

If I consider that I’m not ready to have another child, I’m not having it and this is my and my husband’s decision not the government’s. This is because the government will not help if I can’t afford to bring up and educate my child. And what am I going to do then? Increase the number of beggars in the street?

I thought that the easy answer was marriage. But his mother refused categorically and I could do nothing. His mother’s reaction and my mother’s mind are opposites. There was no problem with my mother because we’re not minors. This is the reason of the abortion. We’ve thought that it was better to do it to avoid the dispute between our parents.

In rural areas there is no planning to have children or not. They accept every pregnancy as their fate. Mostly I have seen that women are not happy after their third or fourth pregnancy. Due to malnutrition women become weak and when they become pregnant their responsibilities double. She has to perform housework, has to take care of the children and of other family members. Some women use local methods to abort the baby and some consult with doctors, lady health visitors and traditional birth attendants. It is true that religion and culture don’t allow for abortion. But in the case of the constrained, God may forgive them.

I didn’t want to have sex with him, but he said that we were going to get married anyway and that I shouldn’t be ashamed. He said if you get pregnant you’ll have the baby. I loved him, but it turns out that it was all lies. I got pregnant, but then one day when we were fighting he told me to get rid of it. He told me he was going to get married to another woman. He didn’t want to see me ever again. There’s nothing I can do. I felt sad because I’m single and the baby’s father doesn’t love him, so I can’t have the baby. I felt scorned. Things won’t get better, but I know that I will be hungry alone, not with a baby.
“WOMEN [WHO NEED TO] WILL ALWAYS FIND A WAY TO ABORT SOMEHOW. IF THEY ARE FORCED TO GIVE BIRTH THEY THROW THE CHILDREN INTO LATRINES OR ABANDON THEM FOR THE HYENAS TO EAT THEM.”

Amare Badada, Ethiopian Family Guidance Association
When he told us the cost it frightened us, because I didn’t work and we couldn’t afford it. So he gave us an alternative - doing it without anaesthesia. I said that since I had already been through a birth and a miscarriage, then I could stand it. We sold our wedding rings to pay for the abortion without anaesthesia and he gave me some pills to take and asked me to come back when I felt cramps. So I took the pills and when I felt the pains I went back. But the worst thing was that I started to bleed. I bled and bled and bled, and I couldn’t even get off the bus. It was horrible. Everything was so crowded and I couldn’t walk. I thought I was bleeding to death. I finally arrived at the doctor’s office and he did the abortion. I felt so guilty, so alone, without any support from anyone, not even from my family, even less support from the State that judges you and blames you and punishes you.

I don’t want other women to go through what I have been through. That is why you have to talk about these issues openly, so that young people can manage that information with a degree of responsibility and start to respect their bodies. They don’t even teach you about all this in school, about ways to take care of yourself, or that there are going to be changes in your body and they are going to cause a series of feelings that will make you want to have sex, that you will feel desire. But then how do you think I got pregnant? No one dared tell me anything and then they all acted surprised when they found out I was pregnant."
“Please help us, doctor. I have this out, he'd kill us both. We would ne Save my daughter.”
Please help us, doctor. I have this only daughter. If my husband found out, he'd kill us both. We would never have any dignity in the society.
Joana was my life till she became a victim of the communist regime and also a victim of our parents’ stupidity. My life has changed since then, I have been low and I have no goal concerning my present life. It is as if I am expecting that something would happen to me, that I should get to heaven and I should meet her, although I don’t believe those stupid things.

I met Joana in the town where we both were born and raised. I started to see her differently when I was in the third year of high school and she was in the first year at the same school. She attracted me by her beauty - she had black long hair having a braided pigtail and big brown eyes; she was always laughing. She had the patience to do every little thing… she was an angel.

She seemed so fragile. At first I was afraid to hold her in order not to break anything. I had always so much patience concerning her. I didn’t rush things. I let her to choose the moment when we could make love. It was two years until she decided that. It wasn’t like we didn’t love one each other enough, but she was always afraid of having an unwanted pregnancy. We were during Ceausescu’s regime when there were no contraceptives and the only method was abstinence. She was afraid of getting pregnant and the whole town would know if she was and she would have to give up school. She was very ambitious and, after she finished high school, she wanted to study foreign languages at university.

More than a year or so passed since we started our sexual life. Meanwhile, I was admitted to a University in Bucharest and we were only seeing each other at weekends.

It was the end of May, when I came home and I ran to see her - I was missing her too much and I wanted to hold her tight. I found her crying - the first time I’d seen her cry since we had been together. She told me that she thought she was pregnant. Instead of getting sad I was happy. I held her, I kissed her and I asked her if that was a reason to be upset. I told her I was the happiest man in the entire world and I wanted her child.
"I will help you concerning our child so that you can learn and I can postpone the university year. There is no problem. We will get married next month and everything will be all right." She was looking more and more amazed by my reaction.

That Monday I didn't go to university, I went shopping with Joana to buy clothes for the wedding and order the invitation cards. On Tuesday I went back to Bucharest and Joana went to school. Two weeks later, I had rented a two room flat because I was supposed to become a married man and I wanted to tidy it up so Joana could move in with me. I phoned Joana to see how she was doing. Her father answered the phone and told me that Joana wasn't home because she was having private tuition for the exams. It seemed strange to me, as I knew she was always home that hour on Wednesdays. Her father sensed my concern and tried to calm me: "Don't worry, she isn't cheating on you. She is probably out with her mother because she is also out."

I felt it like a knife in my heart! I thought the worst. The train to Bacău left every half hour. I got in the first train which was very slow; I felt like getting down and pushing it to get to Joana faster. I had a very bad feeling.

I arrived at Joana's place about 4pm. There was nobody there. I went to my place where I found my sister crying. "Where is Joana? What did they do to her?" I yelled. "She is in Ploiești, at the Emergency Hospital, I don't know what happened. A neighbour told me. She is with her mother."

I took my father's car and I drove like crazy to the hospital. Even if I tried I wouldn't be able to remember how I got to the hospital, who I talked to, who I asked where I could find her. All I remember clearly is that I slammed the door to the wall, that somebody was running after me and saying over and over that I wasn't allowed to enter there. I saw Joana's mother in a lobby but I didn't stop. I entered in the ward. My Joana was lying down on a bed, she was very pale and she had her eyes closed. I kneeled besides the bed. I took her hand in mine and I started to kiss it. She opened her eyes, she was crying, she held my hand with what remained of her strength: "You came. I didn't believe..." Those were her last words. The apparatus she was connected to started to whine. She was dead.

After I let our parents know we wanted to get married, we told our mothers the real reason for getting married in a hurry, and we didn't want to wait until the autumn, like they wanted. They wanted to have more time to get everything ready and Joana would have finished all her exams before moving with me to Bucharest. I had left and they carried on trying to persuade Joana that she was too young to have her own child, that we have a lifetime to have as many children as we wished to, that we should spend time as a couple, have fun for a couple of years and then to have our own children.

First, Joana didn't agree. She was really afraid of having an abortion. Her mother then said that she had heard me and my sister saying that I didn't want a child but if it happened, there wasn't a way out and I had to marry her. Her mother asked her not to tell me she knew that and to have the abortion and she would see for herself how relieved I would be that there wasn't a child.

Hearing all that each day, she eventually gave up and agreed to have the abortion, promising not to tell a soul until it was over. Her mother found out from a friend that an "ex nurse" could carry out abortions and her way of doing it had never failed. All I know is that "the procedure" lasted for a while but when she went home she had heavy bleeding, she fainted and they had to call an ambulance. When they got to the hospital, a lot of time passed whilst they carried out various investigations. Maybe, if they had immediately offered her help, she wouldn't have lost so much blood and she would have been saved. Normally they call the Public Prosecutor and they won't help you until you reveal who had carried out the abortion. Joana was lucky to have a kind doctor who rushed things because, you know, she might otherwise have died before I got there."
WHETHER ABORTION IS LEGAL OR NOT HAS LITTLE TO DO WITH ITS OVERALL INCIDENCE. IN MANY COUNTRIES WHERE ABORTION IS ILLEGAL OR SEVERELY RESTRICTED, ABORTION RATES ARE HIGHER THAN IN COUNTRIES WHERE IT IS LEGAL.

Population Action International
My partner is missing. He’s a drunk and likes women. He comes to my house once in a while. When I told him I was pregnant he told me that it was my problem and that he didn’t get me pregnant, that it was someone else. He left and hasn’t come back. What am I going to do with another child? I can barely manage with my twins.

I’ve had to borrow the money because most of what I earn washing clothes goes to my children’s milk. I take my children with me and, since they are still small, I leave them on the floor because I don’t have another place to leave them.

I am going to get an IUD so that I don’t have to do this again. My partner comes over drunk once in a while and when I don’t want to have sex he beats me and forces me. I can’t complain because in order to complain you have to have money.

Part of me feels bad, but on the other hand I also feel good, because why would I bring another child into the world? To suffer with my other children? What will I feed them? My partner doesn’t help me with anything, he doesn’t even give me money or recognise my children.

People judge without knowing why I’ve decided not to have the baby. I would have liked to go to school, to be a professional and not wash clothes. I can’t get a job because I can’t leave the twins anywhere. I am alone. I don’t have a mother, I don’t have a father. If I could, I would go back to school.”
When I told him we both started crying. I have always dreamed of being an actress and doing lots of things before I have children. So for me the decision was clear. He told me that it was my problem. So I decided, but I didn’t know where to go. I was very frightened. He never said whether he supported me or not. Nothing.

If I met a woman like me I would give her a hug and I would tell her that life is the most valuable thing that a woman has and it’s her choice and that whatever anyone tells her - her parents, her boyfriend, her doctor, God, whoever - her decision is hers alone. I think I’ve saved myself because now I’m much more conscious of life. I’m stronger in what I believe.

Let’s go for a walk he said, I’ll buy you some tacos. I don’t want to, I’m not hungry. He said, let’s go even if you don’t want to go. Just two tacos. We’re friends. I’m not going to do anything. And then I said fine. Then he said, my sister works there, let’s go see her. Fine. And then the door was open and he pulled my hand and he took me in. There was another room and he opened it with a key and then he locked the door. That’s how it happened. I was crying.

I don’t want to, I said. It hurts. I don’t want to. That was my first time.

Then I was pregnant, but it had only been one time. One time. It hurt a lot. After three days it still hurt and hurt.

I have a daughter from my first partner, but he drank a lot and was very irresponsible. Then I met a man who I thought was totally different and I married him and got pregnant again. I was using an IUD and he told me to take it out because he wanted to have a baby and, to make him happy, I did.

I got pregnant and that was when the problems started. We would fight about everything. He started to be abusive to my daughter. At first he played with her, he would take her out on walks. I even started to think that he might rape her. I was already pregnant and I didn’t know what to do. One day he said he didn’t want to be with me anymore. He said have an abortion. That was the last thing he said after saying all these months that he wanted to have the baby. He left me. It was painful for me to do this but I didn’t want to bring a baby into the world in those conditions.

“Every minute, somewhere in the world, a woman is either dying from, or suffering the effects of a pregnancy that was unplanned and, in many instances, unwanted. These deaths and the accompanying social and economic costs are almost entirely avoidable; they are the result of poverty, ignorance, social and economic marginalization, entrenched gender bias, and inadequate access to effective family planning services.”

Global Health Council
Most of the unwanted pregnancies we end up seeing are unmarried girls. Mostly they don’t have work and so they are dependant on their families and others. Many have been raped. Because of culture and economic problems, and because of her family, she wants to get rid of this pregnancy by whatever means she can. And because of the law, she goes to a backstreet abortionist, or a herbalist, or a pharmacist for drugs that will cause bleeding. We have seen many women here who have been damaged; whose cervices have been burned by chemicals to induce bleeding; or who are suffering from the effects of taking huge doses of antibiotics to induce a miscarriage.”
The global gag rule denies foreign organisations receiving US family planning assistance the right to use their own non-US funds to provide, legal abortion, counsel or refer for abortion, or lobby for the legalisation of abortion in their country. The gag rule originally was announced by the Reagan administration at the 1984 United Nations International Conference on Population in Mexico City. It was rescinded in 1993 by then President Clinton, then reinstated in 2001 by President George W. Bush on his first business day in office.

Population Action International

"Under the gag rule, I can treat a woman who comes bleeding after an illegal abortion but I am not allowed to warn her of the dangers before she goes."

Amate Badada, Ethiopian Family Guidance Association

"When abortion is illegal, a lot of people take advantage; they charge a lot and then some doctors sexually molest you. One of my friends, they put her to sleep and when she woke up she had semen on her legs, they raped her. My neighbour said some doctors had tried to fondle her breasts. They said it was to make sure that she was pregnant."

"It’s good to make abortion free or to authorise it because someone’s life isn’t a toy or like a play. It’s bad to forbid abortion without observing and studying someone’s case."
"We have to question the legal regulations that have been decided in the parliaments of present day democracies. The most direct association which comes to mind is the abortion laws...-parliaments which create and promulgate such laws must be aware that they are transgressing their powers and remain in open conflict with the law of God and the law of nature."

Pope John Paul II
"We were not in a position to have one more baby because we are too poor. I know our religion and culture don’t allow us, but my poverty condition doesn’t allow me to keep more babies. May God forgive me."

"Forgive me Jesus and do not pay me back according to my wrongdoings. Though I do what is wrong I do not know what else to do. My child will suffer if I do not do it."

"It’s not just about it being a moral issue, or a sin within religion. In the end a child needs its parents’ love. If you bring a child into the world without that as a guarantee, what kind of child will it be?"
He never wanted me to use a method. He said that if I used a method it’s because I had a lover. He isn’t with me all the time. He’s very violent. He only wants sex and when I say no he gets angry.

He goes to where my cousin lives and everyone says that when he’s there they go out together. When he wants to have sex with me I say no because I don’t know if the other woman has anything. I don’t know if she has other partners. That’s what we fight about and he gets angry and he forces me.

I told him I was a pregnant. I told him I didn’t want to have another child because the situation we were in wasn’t fair. He said that I had to have the child. I said no. So then he said he was going to press charges against me. He said he could because he had more power than I did. I’m not going to tell him. Because if I tell him, he may cause a scandal here and might hurt me. He can press charges against me. And you can go to jail for many years because of abortion. That’s why I don’t want to tell him. When my daughter is done with this school year I’m going to live in another town.

One evening my brother-in-law came into my house. I was there alone, watching TV. He was a bit drunk. Then he grabbed me and was pulling at me. I told him to let go. I started to scream but no one heard me. Then he threw me on the bed and because he’s very strong he raped me. Then he said that if I told anyone he would lie and say that I seduced him. I went to tell his mother and she told me it was all lies, that it wasn’t her son, but another man. So then I went to the pharmacy to ask for emergency contraception and they told me that they didn’t sell them by the piece, that I had to buy the whole box. But I didn’t have enough money.

Sometimes I watch television and they talk about these women and say that they are murderers. It’s not about killing, but about a quality of life that you can give another person. It’s about a decision that you are going to make with the freedom and conviction that you are doing your best. Because when you feel that it’s the right moment, you can have children and help them and treat them the best way you can, and then you won’t feel that you didn’t give one a chance because you had 12. It’s not something that makes you insensitive to those things. That’s not true.

People who fight against abortion haven’t put themselves in the situation of the person who suffers and is desperate and does not have the conditions to support that child.
“When abortion is legalised it will be better because you will know that you can go to a safe place where you don’t risk your life. Now people do it illegally and they end up losing their lives. If abortion is legal, I think this business of producing children and throwing them in a dustbin, in streets, in toilets, will stop.”

“He is the one who refused to use condoms yet he is not ready to marry me. He told me that if I become pregnant we will abort. Ever since I became pregnant I haven’t seen him and my condition is not good. I made the decision myself that I have to abort.”

“Abortion is not good, but producing a child you cannot support is also not good. When you see the street kids, giving birth to a child and then dumping it somewhere is bad. I think abortion is better.”

“I wanted an abortion because of the shame that I had for being pregnant at an advanced age while my first born was also pregnant. Why should I go on the same delivery bed as my child – the shame!”

“Just to remain comfortable within safe legal and religious bounds, we outright rejected the idea and refused to provide the service. Women around us have to get abortions done by illicit providers and perish. They didn’t even bother to consult us knowing what our advice would be. What have we become?”

“I never used contraceptives as I was completely ignorant. My parents became angry with me when they realised I was pregnant. They chased me out of their house. I thank God I had a safe abortion.”

“I conceived when I met my boyfriend. I felt so guilty, disgusted and so worried. I felt like I should die! I decided to have an abortion because I want to go back to school, because at school they don’t want pregnant ladies.”

“I know that it is illegal but consider yourself in my shoes. How I am going to support my already big family? And look at my wife. Will she survive another pregnancy? She already looks torn down. I will do anything to have this pregnancy terminated.”
“NO WOMAN SHOULD ANYWHERE HAVE TO FACE DEATH OR DISABILITY FOR THE WANT OF A SAFE ABORTION. IS THERE ANYBODY WHO WOULD DISAGREE WITH THE RIGHT OF A WOMAN NOT TO DIE IN PREGNANCY? ANYBODY? NO.”

The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP, former UK Secretary of State for International Development
Marie Stopes International (MSI) is one of the largest international sexual and reproductive health organisations in the world, and the largest private provider of safe abortion services globally. In 2006 alone, MSI provided nearly five million people in 38 countries with high quality health services, including family planning; maternal and child health care including safe delivery and obstetrics; safe abortion and post-abortion care; diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections; HIV/AIDS prevention; and tuberculosis treatment. MSI places major emphasis on programming for underserved populations such as rural communities, adolescents, refugees and internally displaced people.

MSI is currently scaling-up both the quality and coverage of sexual and reproductive health services for low-income women and couples worldwide. This global initiative includes the expansion of its clinic networks and rural outreach programmes; social franchising of other quality service providers; and the wide distribution and promotion of high-quality, affordably-priced contraceptives.

Established in 1976, the MSI Global Partnership maintains support offices in London, UK and Melbourne, Australia, and an advocacy office in Brussels, Belgium.

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THROUGH ITS PROGRAMMING AND ADVOCACY, MARIE STOPES INTERNATIONAL SEeks THE ERADICATION OF UNSAFE ABORTION.

IF YOU HAVE BEEN MOVED OR TROUBLED BY THE ACCOUNTS YOU HAVE READ IN THIS PUBLICATION, THEN PLEASE LOG ON TO WWW.MARIESTOPES.ORG TO FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE FIGHT TO ERADICATE UNSAFE ABORTION.

MILLIONS OF WOMEN ARE SUFFERING IN SILENCE. IT'S TIME TO LEND YOUR VOICE SO THAT THEIR'S MAY BE HEARD.