

Opinions on abortion as a viable way of improving reproductive health

Would the lifting of restrictive abortion laws help to improve the reproductive health care for women in Malawi? by Thengo Kavinya

The definition of abortion is the “termination of a pregnancy after, accompanied by, resulting in, or closely followed by the death of the embryo or fetus as the spontaneous expulsion of a human fetus during the first 12 weeks of gestation” (Webster Online). Malawi prohibits abortion and makes abortion an offence. According to penal code of Malawi of 1930, abortion is illegal except to save the life of a mother and any person found administering it is guilty of felony and liable to imprisonment. Recent Ministry of Health statistics shows that unsafe abortion was one of the leading causes of maternal mortality in the country.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that more than 500,000 women die every year from pregnancy-related causes. It was from this perception that made the issue of abortion be regarded as one of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) as agreed at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). In the last decade countries worldwide and in Africa have been reviewing their laws and making them less restrictive on abortion and there have been calls by various organizations in Malawi. I sought some views on the issue from different individuals and this is what they had to say.....

Eunice Banda

Hairdresser

No, probably I think this would just worsen the already bad situation. People will become loose knowing that once pregnant they will easily terminate it in the process infecting each other with various sexually transmitted diseases. So I believe that it would be wise to leave the laws the way they are because much as I appreciate that abortion can be done only to save a life of a mother I think there is no need to amend them again.

Agness Phiri

Housewife

No. I think the current laws are okay because I feel abortion is a sin in God's presence and I believe that it is not proper to abort because a child is a Gift from the Lord and anybody who aborts has a case to answer against the Lord because that is violating the fifth commandment in the Bible (You shall not kill). I feel the lifting of the laws would not solve any matters other than worsening the situation.

Lazurus Rajabu

Minibus Driver

Yes. Personally I believe that the restrictive laws are there just to hinder ones right because everyone has a right to control his/her body. I think if there are no laws that regulate sexual intercourse on individuals which results in pregnancy there should also be no laws to restrict abortion and I believe that this would encourage safe motherhood because people will be having children by choice.

George Maliseni

Shop Attendant

I would argue for both answers. Firstly I think if the laws give an opportunity for abortion to a woman in order to save a life then I see no point of changing them because this could result in just aborting carelessly which is also a health hazard more especially to women and I truly think that any unborn child has a right to life.

Raphael Kabango

Journalist

I think lifting of the laws would just do more harm than good. Imagine if cases of unsafe abortions are on the rise in the country yet we know that there are these laws what more if they are removed. There can be better ways to improve reproductive health care than encouraging abortion.

Stella Kaphaizi

Secretary

Terminating dangerous pregnancies can be condoned but just terminating for the sake of running away from responsibility is cruelty and unhuman. So I think that the laws should still be there to deny people who would want to take away innocent lives of unborn children just to satisfy themselves because I think any unborn child has rights just like any other individual.

Mbiri Thekerani

Driver

Being a God fearing country I think legalising abortion can be the gravest sin we can make. The best way to improve reproductive care is to go into communities and sensitize them on the dangers of unsafe abortions and how they can prevent diseases and live health when pregnant.

Madalitso Msuzi

Gardener

Yes. I would opt for removal of laws because just as everybody has a right to have a child he/she has also a right to terminate any pregnancy if he/she feels unfit to have a child. There are children in our communities who are suffering ranging from diseases which their mothers passed to them, some because of starving and indeed some because of lack of parental care. I think if government had come in the open and legalised abortion some of these things could have been avoided.